

Calabash Landscaping Committee Considered

BY DORI C. GURGANUS

The ball is now in the court of the Calabash Planning and Zoning Board as to whether the town will have any kind of landscaping control or review panel.

Representatives of that board, the town board of commissioners, and the defunct landscaping commission met Monday night to discuss whether such a group is needed.

Their consensus: That Calabash would have no landscaping review commission, since an ordinance is required to establish one. The representatives agreed that sub-committees on an advisory basis would be the best structure, if the rest of the planning board agrees.

Meeting with only two or three representatives of each group, much of the confusion and frustration regarding the controversial review panel was cleared up.

Attending were Chairperson Pati Lewellyn and members Al Smith and Bruce Kibblehouse of the planning board, Hank Rutter and T.J. Morgan of the landscaping panel, and Stu Thorn and Ed Rice of the town council.

Much of the hour-long meeting was spent reviewing events of the past few years and the mistakes made by lack of communication on all sides.

"There has been a lack of communication over the last three years," said Morgan. "But whatever you decide, that's fine with me."

Morgan said that it didn't bother him if the review panel was dissolved by the planning board. He asked, however, that they take some form of action to ensure the beautification of Calabash.

The representatives also discussed an increasing need to control landscaping and building in Calabash.

"All you have to do is drive around Carolina Shores to see the benefit of this sort of group," said Rutter of the beautification group in the Carolina Shores Property Owners Association.

"Right now there's no ordinance that if a businessman thinks he can sell another million burgers that he can't put up golden arches in this town," said Morgan.

He and Rutter volunteered to serve on such a landscaping committee should the planning board form one.

Smith also suggested that the planning board may need a sewer committee since the town is moving toward obtaining one.

A decision on forming sub-committees should be discussed by the planning board in the next few weeks, said Ms Lewellyn after the meeting.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Former Rest Area Closed

The rest area operated by the N.C. Department of Transportation since 1955 on U.S. 17 near Bolivia closed last week with the opening of the new rest area at the Southeastern Welcome Center near Shalotte. Monday, workers moved the mobile unit to Wilson, where it will remain in storage until another state rest area's upgraded, said Tommy Zandy of the division landscape unit. Zandy said he knows of no plans for the abandoned site. Workers busy above are (foreground from left) Charles Register and Larry D. Bannerman; (background from left) Harry Hayes, Bill Dodson, Philip Burke, Johnny Walker, Mark Honeycutt; and on the roof, Sylvester Merritt and Isaiah Pyatt.

County Policy Imposes Returned Check Charge

An increasing number of returned checks may be a sign of tough economic times, but it's also cutting into the Brunswick County Finance Department's already busy schedule.

A policy adopted unanimously by Brunswick County Commissioners Tuesday night will allow county government to charge \$20 for returned checks, a fee similar to what most local businesses now impose.

"I'm not doing this in terms of being greedy," said Lithia Hahn, Brunswick County's finance director. "It's eating up staff time to deal with that bad check."

She hopes the new policy will cut the number of bad checks received by county government in half. Departments will post signs where money is collected to warn persons they will be charged \$20 if a check is returned from the bank for insufficient funds.

In 1986, Brunswick County Commissioners voted not to impose a bad check charge, 2-3. Former District 2 commissioner Benny Ludlum led the opposition, saying that persons who have trouble paying their county bills also couldn't afford the surcharge.

The proposed charge in 1986 was \$15. Ms. Hahn hasn't asked for the

policy since, but now feels it is needed to deter those who may be taking advantage of the situation.

"It's not that I'm wanting the money," she said. "When they see that sign, maybe they'll think twice. I think it'll cut down on the number of checks that are returned."

The policy will affect the building inspections, water and health departments. Sheriff John Carr Davis and Register of Deeds Robert J. Robinson will have the option of whether to impose the fee in their departments since they are elected officials.

State law has already given tax departments authority to collect for bad checks. If a returned check causes a property owner's tax payment to be late, the department also charges a late penalty on taxes.

For persons who cannot afford to pay their taxes in one sum, Tax Collector Nancy Moore will work out a payment schedule to allow periodic payments.

"We have quite a few employees who take advantage of that," said Ms. Hahn.

When checks are returned from banks to Ms. Hahn's office, workers send them back to department heads to collect. That process will be the same under the new policy, only the

departments will be asked to collect the \$20 surcharge, too.

"People are pretty good about making their checks good," said Ms. Hahn.

By law, the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office cannot take checks for payments. Persons there must have money orders or cash.

At the building inspections department, contractors are allowed to keep monthly accounts for permits and to pay in one sum. Those accounts have not been affected by the recent economic slump, said Ms. Hahn. All appear to be up to date on payments.

"There have been no problems that I'm aware of," she said. "I've not been apprised of any problems from over there."

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16 County Workers Affected In Trash Deal

BY TERRY POPE

Hiring a private firm to collect the county's garbage will affect the jobs of 16 Brunswick County employees.

Eight solid waste workers will remain on the county payroll while those cut as of March 1 are guaranteed jobs on a probationary status with Waste Industries Inc. of Raleigh.

Officials from Waste Industries met with the 16 workers last Thursday, Jan. 30, to explain company benefits, drug tests and license requirements of its employees.

County Manager David Clegg said those affected by the move include employees both in the solid waste collection and landfill departments. Seniority played a key role in choosing the eight kept on the county payroll.

Of those, four are black and four are white. There are seven males and one female.

"It was not gerrymandering to reach that result," said Clegg.

Clegg said he did not know the racial makeup of the 16 cut. He added that, by percentages, blacks outnumber whites in the department.

Under the plan, Solid Waste Director Leo Hewett will assume an emerging role as a landfill coordinator/director. Solid waste, landfill, operation services and the county engineer's department will still work closely together when Waste Industries begins hauling next month.

The eight employees chosen to keep their county jobs have an average longevity of 12 years with the county, said Clegg.

"Seniority was important, but we looked at all of the issues," he added. "They were evaluated on the basis of what they could perform."

Some landfill employees were surprised when they received notice that their jobs would be terminated, he said. The county will still operate the landfill in Supply. Some workers were under the impression that the cutback affected just those in the collection department, or those who drove trash trucks.

"Collection and disposal have never been separate," said Clegg.

The county's personnel policy requires that employees be given a

two-week notice before their jobs are cut. Employees affected by the cut were given notice earlier to prepare for last week's meeting with Waste Industries.

"There was absolutely no way that I was going to run from the reality," said Clegg. "They have been valued employees of Brunswick County. However, the board made a decision which mandated a RIF (reduction in force)."

Waste Industries will haul the county's garbage and operate 10 recycling stations for \$561,000 per year. That figure is guaranteed until 1993, when the contract price is tied to the Consumer Price Index for the balance of the five-year deal. For the 1991-92 year, the county had budgeted \$878,000 for trash collection and close to \$1 million for landfill operations.

The county had negotiated with Waste Industries to hire the 16 workers cut by the move.

"I could not have lived with it," said Clegg, "had I known that I had not done all I could to make sure those people would be employed March 2. I feel that we have provided for them. Had we not done that, I would have felt there was more we could have done."

Waste Industries has submitted a bid of \$153,000 to purchase some of the county's trash disposal equipment, subject to upset bid. The remaining equipment will be auctioned March 14 at the government center in Bolivia.

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