Zoning, Deed Restrictions Draw Questions At Calabash

BY DORI C. GURGANUS

Residents of Calabash gathered Monday afternoon to hear from a state official about ways to prevent poorly maintained mobile homes from being allowed in their neighborhood.

Tom Cassell, chief planner with the Division of Community Assistance, was invited by the Calabash Planning and Zoning Board to hold an information session with residents to answer their questions about deed restrictions and zoning in Calabash Acres.

CASSELL

Pati Lewellyn, chairperson of the planning board, said that Cassell was asked to visit Calabash "for informational purposes, really."

She said she had heard many questions from residents of Calabash Acres who were not happy that so many run-down manufactured homes exist in that subdivision.

Two petitions are circulating through the Calabash area. One requests that all of Calabash Acres be rezoned to allow manufactured homes.

The other asks that all lots west of Meares Street to Thomasboro Road be rezoned to accommodate manufactured homes as well as double-wides and stickbuilt homes.

Deed restrictions in Calabash Acres prohibit mobile homes, but lots have been sold to many mobile home owners in the past few years, Ms. Lewellyn said she'd been told.

The subdivision east of the town is split by N.C. 179. The section north of the highway contains lots with mobile homes on them, while the southern part has mostly "stickbuilt" houses. The area is currently zoned R-6, which prohibits mobile homes.

Billie Mitchell, a member of the planning board and resident of Calabash Acres, said that many of the mobile homes in her area are unsightly and poorly maintained, which she fears could cause her property values to plummet.

"What protects people who bought because it was zoned residential and now they're having trouble protecting their investments?" Ms. Mitchell said of the subdivision. "Most of us are retired."

Cassell told the group that deed restrictions are not something within the town's authority to enforce.

"Deed restrictions will never be enforced by the town. That's just not going to happen," he said.

However, the town does have several options.

For one, it could allow the concentration of mobile homes on the west side of N.C. 179, he said.

While it cannot enforce deed restrictions, the town does have the power to change zoning regulations. These allow it to regulate the maintenance and condition of mobile homes, Cassell said. The town could require a certain length of annual occupancy, mandate that the wheels be removed or that a home have a pitched roof and solid base.

Cassell asked the group to trust in the work of the town board, but sympathized with property owners' complaints.

"It is a predicament," he said. "I would advise the town that it should decide what's good for the whole community, and for residents to not worry about deed restrictions."

He advised that the town should leave some area within its boundaries where mobile homes are allowed.

"If you prohibit manufactured homes, you'll have that ordinance overturned, I assure you that," Cassell said.

STAFF PHOTO BY DORI C. GURGANUS

Sending Their Hearts

Gwen Causey, teacher at Shallotte Middle School and state president of the U.S. Daughters of 1812, wanted to find a way for her group to provide disabled veterans at Fayetteville's V.A. Hospital with Valentine greetings. When she asked members of Lola Jackson's art club and AA art classes to help, they obliged with more than 1,000 cards. Pictured last Thursday showing off a few of the valentines they made are (front row from left) Shane Marshall, Doug Hewett, (seated at table) Jammerson Gore, Jarrett Caison, Kendall Ward, (third row) Ms. Jackson, Charisma Stevenson, Caroline Sheffield, Christi Donna, Camille Wilmoth, teacher Memory Goforth, (back row) Walter Solano and Charles Van Winkle. Some of the valentines will also go to Board of Education members as well as teachers at Shallotte Middle, Ms. Jackson said.

Health Board Hears Appeal For Soil Expert

BY TERRY POPE

Local developers say they are losing sales because there is no soil expert in the Brunswick County Health Department.

A shuffling of employees also concerns property owners who appear to be waiting longer than normal for septic tank permits.

Shallotte surveyor Bobby Long said he applied for five soil evaluations for septic tank permits on Oct. 16 and did not get results until Dec. 18. Two sales slipped past his office as a result, he said.

The Brunswick County Board of Health said Monday it will ask commissioners in June to fund a soil scientist's position to increase the department's expertise in soils. Last year, commissioners moved soil scientist Walter Marley from the county administrator's office and transferred him to the county engineer's department. He had provided technical assistance to the health department.

"Walter Marley was a real asset to this county," Long told the health board. "He provided many with technical assistance."

Long said he wanted to offer the board any assistance he could to improve the situation within the environmental health section.

"I see both ends of it," he said. "If there's any way the professional community can help or assist, we're willing to do that."

Long also said the department should hire someone "who is a professional of soils" to replace John Crowder, who stepped down from his job as environmental health supervisor last month to become an on-site evaluator.

"This board will request a soil scientist for the next budget year," said Bill Rabon. "Whether we get it or not remains to be seen. Your losing two sales is not all right. That's basically the life and blood of our county."

Shell Point Lots

The board took no action on a request from Tim Powell of Powell and Associates, who wants help in evaluating 42 lots in Shell Point Recreational Village.

Powell purchased the lots in 1986 and has had trouble getting them to perk for septic systems.

To recoup the losses the company needs evaluations on all lots, which could be both time consuming and costly, said Jody Simmons, the Realtor who represents the firm.

The company has asked that the department either, 1) examine an engineer's report on the site to make judgment on the 42 lots or, 2) allow the firm to employ a health specialist by the hour to evaluate the lots individually.

Health Director Michael Rhodes recommended against the hiring of a health specialist by the firm. It would require a change in fees, which must be approved by Brunswick County Commissioners, he said.

Other Business

In other business Monday, the board:

■Elected H.J. "Skip" Davis of Ocean Isle Beach as chairman and Maliston "Mo" Stanley of Shallotte as vice chairman.

■Davis appointed himself, Bill Rabon and Pat Nutter to the environmental health committee; Marcus Williams and Joey Galloway to the personal health services committee; Brad Williams, Ms. Nutter and Stanley to the budget committee; and Bill Rabon, Arthur Knox and himself to the personnel committee.

■Voted to request that commissioners set a maximum of $7 as an adoption fee for animals from the Brunswick County Animal Control Shelter for licensed nursing and rest homes in Brunswick County.

■Agreed to send letters to attorneys asking that they remind clients during land purchases that septic tank permits are good for five years. If a septic tank has not been installed, the landowner must seek renewal of the permit by the health department.

■Appointed Brad Williams as representative to the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) in Wilmington, which serves a five-county region with training programs and classes for health care professionals.

■Met in executive session for about 30 minutes to discuss personnel, but took no action afterward.

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