

Open House Marks 10th Year Of EMS Service

Calabash Emergency Medical Service (EMS) celebrates its 10th birthday this month, and is holding a party Sunday to let the entire community in on the festivities.

Kathy Morfit, president, announced that an open house will be held at the station building, corner of N.C. 179 and Old Georgetown Road, Sunday, March 15, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Part of the anniversary celebration, she said in a telephone interview Tuesday, will be to honor three of the original founders of the EMS: Barbara Meares, Frances Wrenn and Pam Saulk, who are still active with the corporation.

Refreshments will be offered and "gifts of appreciation" will be awarded to the 17 present members, Mrs. Morfit said.

"We started out really from scratch," she said, explaining that much of the station's progress has been funded by sales at the thrift shop located behind the EMS building.

That money, she said, has helped the squad grow from having just one used ambulance to having three ambulances under five years old, one of which is relatively new.

The Calabash EMS, founded in March 1982 and actually located outside the town limits, serves a 50-square-mile area around Calabash, Sunset Beach and surrounding subdivisions. Its present chief is Mark Christy.

Health Board Endorses Sewer System Concept

BY TERRY POPE

When given the option, the Brunswick County Board of Health believes public sewage disposal systems are preferable over installation of septic tanks.

That's the concept unanimously endorsed by the board Monday at the request of Long Beach Mayor Joan Altman.

Long Beach residents will vote March 31 on whether to approve or disapprove of the town's plan to purchase up to \$15.5 million in general revenue bonds to help finance a municipal sewer system.

"We're pursuing it very seriously," said Ms. Altman, who added that she was not asking for an endorsement of the bond referendum.

Instead, she asked the board to clarify its stance on sewer systems versus continued installation of septic tanks, which have been blamed for estuarine and ground water pollution in coastal counties.

"Historically, the position of this board has been that when we've been given the option, we've opted for sewer," said Bill Rabon, who chairs the board's environmental health committee. "We've endorsed public sewer where it was feasible."



RABON where it was feasible."

Rabon made the motion to endorse the sewer system concept.

Comparisons of septic tanks with sewer systems and possible pollution problems have been ongoing for years, said Brunswick County Health Director Michael Rhodes.

"My personal opinion is that, not to sidestep the issue, it depends on the community itself," said Rhodes, "whether they are in need of a sewer system."

In the 1960s, state and federal governments pushed for regional sewer systems, offering grants to towns that opted for public sewer. Those funds have since disappeared, making it more difficult for growing communities to afford sewer.

"It's hard to point the finger at septic systems," said Rhodes. "Some are failing. There is a failure rate with all systems."

The need for sewer systems may also be determined by soil conditions. In coastal environments, sandy soils often require property owners to install low pressure pipe (LPP) systems as opposed to traditional tanks. LPPs face tougher inspection guidelines in Brunswick County, with the state set to adopt similar standards this year.

Environmentalists argue that septic tank discharge ends up in coastal waters, causing pollution and the closing of shellfish beds.

"I don't think at this point in time I have the information to answer that," said Rhodes. "I would want more

hard data to give you an answer to that."

In the early 1980s, a study on coastal waters showed "movement of viruses and bacteria, moving horizontally...were very high," said Gary McDonald, environmental health specialist at the Brunswick County Health Department.

Ocean Isle Beach is the only barrier island in Brunswick County to build a municipal sewer system, though Sunset Beach is involved in a sewer system study.

"I think the whole idea is how is the public health being served," said board member Brad Williams. "I think we should be speaking on this subject."

Chairman H.J. "Skip" Davis of Ocean Isle added, "That's what we're doing."

Davis was appointed chairman last month. He told the board that he would like to stress education on health issues while he is chairman.

"I would like to educate all of the

people in Brunswick County as to what the Health Department does," said Davis, "so they can better understand our dilemmas and we can understand theirs."

Other Business

In other business, the board: ■ Heard a report from Fauna Schaub, coordinator of the Maternity Care Program, which offers prenatal care for an estimated 176 mothers in Brunswick County. Every dollar spent in the program saves the state \$2.40 in medical bills for the at risk babies, said Ms. Schaub.

■ Heard that Rhodes will travel to Raleigh March 12 to check on the department's joint application with New Hanover County to participate in Project ASSIST, a state and federally funded program aimed at helping juveniles, pregnant women and other volunteers quit smoking.

■ Approved a bad debt write-off of \$320 from July to December 1991 in the Child Health Program.

Holden Committee To Review Studies

Holden Beach's wastewater management committee received background materials but didn't take up any business at its first meeting last Friday.

Commissioners Gay Atkins and Sid Swarts and resident Marlene Thomas were the only committee members to attend the meeting. Harold Steorts and Duncan St. Clair were absent.

Ms. Atkins said committee members received copies of the two wastewater needs studies that have been conducted at Holden Beach in recent years.

The committee, charged with recommending ways to control abuses of septic systems and meet long-term wastewater management needs, will meet Wednesday, March 25, at 1 p.m. in town hall.

INCLUDED IN SPECIAL AUDIT

Audit Suggests DOT Eye Bridge To Replace Ferry

The state Department of Transportation should consider replacing the Southport-Fort Fisher Ferry with a bridge, according to a state audit released last week.

The recommendation concerning the local ferry is included in a special audit that accuses the DOT's ferry division of wasteful spending, on-the-job politics and questionable hiring practices.

That audit has drawn a sharp response from state DOT officials, who assert that elements of the study were politically motivated.

Southport's ferry is one of five in the system that state transportation officials should think about replacing, according to the N.C. Office of the State Auditor report released Friday.

"That's been on the list of DOT studies for a right good while," said Ray Mazingo, a member of the audit special review team. "It's nothing new, and it's not really that we're recommending that one be built."

Mazingo said the audit team merely wants state transportation officials to study the economic feasibility of replacing the ferries with bridges.

A three-mile span between Southport and Fort Fisher would cost about \$30 million, said Assistant State Auditor Denise Roberts.

Besides the Southport ferry, the audit suggests the DOT consider building bridges to replace the Cherry Branch-Minnesott, Aurora-Bayview, Currituck-Knotts Island and Hatteras-Ocracoke ferries.

The performance section of the audit also recommends cutting two of the 23 job positions at the Southport ferry site.

Mrs. Roberts said positions for a trades worker and clerk-typist would be eliminated under the audit recommendation.

In the special review section, auditors say ferry division employees have participated in political activity on state time and the system has created unnecessary positions.

State Transportation Secretary Tommy Harrelson said the special review produced no useful information and focused more on "political witch-hunting than on management assistance".

The performance audit also points out that there were approximately 130 job-related accidents within the ferry division between 1989 and 1991.

Mrs. Roberts declined to say whether she thought the number of accidents was unusually high.

"It's an industry in which there are a lot of accidents," she said. "It's a hazardous industry to begin with."



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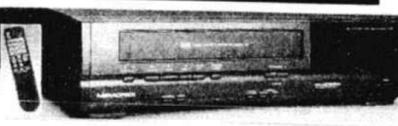
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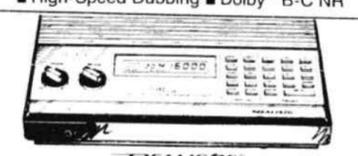
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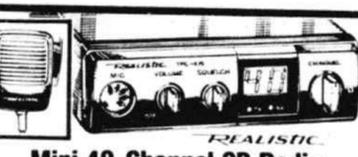
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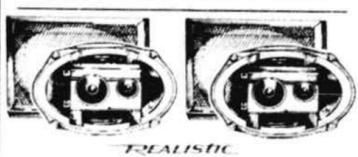


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