

Sunset Beach Council Slates Multiple Hearings

BY SUSAN USHER

Sunset Beach Council members are getting a lot of meetings under their belt these days, between making plans for a sewer system, updating the CAMA land use plan and putting together a 1992-93 budget.

All three of these items will be the topics of upcoming meetings and/or hearings.

Height Limit Eyed

A public hearing will be held June 15 at 7:30 p.m. at the town hall on a proposal that would limit the height of buildings in all zoning districts on the island, tying the limit to 100-year floodplain elevations.

The planning board is also recommending that the town amend the zoning ordinance to eliminate provisions that presently allow a building to exceed the 35-foot height limit under specific circumstances, such as by providing greater setback areas.

Height limit refers not to the total height of the structure, but the vertical distance from the peak from the base flood elevation. The bottom of the lowest horizontal support beam in the floodplain area must be a minimum of one foot above the base flood elevation for the site. Given the typical existing base flood elevations on the island, a typical overall building height might be 50 feet to 52 feet, roughly that of existing island construction. Flood elevations are subject to change.

More Hearings Set

In rapid succession, council scheduled other public hearings to be conducted at the June 15 meeting.

At that time the council will hear public comment on a number of zoning-related proposals from the planning board.

The planners have recommended zoning as commercial the southeast

corner lot at N.C. 904/N.C. 179 north along N.C. 904 to Dale Drive. A narrower (200-foot) strip of land from the far side of the U.S. Postal Service property to the Sea Village subdivision would be zoned MR3, which allows single- and multi-family residential development.

The planning board has recommended creation of a new classification, conservation, and recommended applying that zoning to marshes and wetlands in the town's jurisdiction.

Also a hearing will be held on a proposed amendment to the water ordinance that would require that a hydrant must be located within 500 feet of all lots, not all buildings, in a subdivision. Town Administrator Linda Fluegel said a situation had arisen in Waterway Estates in which the water line ended short of that distance from a building.

In a housekeeping matter, another

hearing will amend a town ordinance to reflect that the town follows all volumes of the *N.C. Building Code*, not just the first two.

Budget Workshop Set

Council members want to have a budget ready for adoption by the June 15 meeting, hoping to make that a combination June/July regular meeting. If not, a special meeting may be called later in June.

With that goal in mind, the board set a budget workshop June 4 at 7:30 p.m. at the town hall.

Lewis Nominated

On a motion by Mayor Pro tem Ed Gore, nominated retired engineer Jerry D. Lewis of Shallotte for appointment to the Coastal Management Commission seat now held by Eugene Tomlinson Sr. of Southport, a retired engineer also. In his recommendation Gore noted Lewis's qualifications for the post and said that Tomlinson had served

the maximum time he could serve on the CRC.

However, Mary Beth Joiner, assistant secretary in the N.C. Department of Coastal Management, said Tuesday that CRC members are not limited in the number of terms they can serve. Tomlinson is a long-time member of the board and is seeking reappointment.

Other Business

In other business, the council:

- Heard routine departmental reports.
- Told the planning board to go ahead and begin drafting a new type of business district classification for the zoning ordinance. The new professional district, MB P, would provide another option for development as the demand for professional services increases in the community.

planning board members indicated. The district would be an appropriate transitional use between residential areas and general commercial areas and might be an appropriate for reclassification of some existing commercial areas. Planning Board Chairman Richard Good said that for a community its size, Sunset Beach has a large proportion of area zoned for business use.

■ Heard from an audience member that a deteriorating ramp to a spoil area is a potential "attractive nuisance" and acknowledged that directing additional street drainage into the waterway and canals is not a good solution. The state Department of Transportation recently completed a drainage project on Main Street, with the drainage going into the existing street drainage system.

Future Of Bird Island Remains In Limbo

State Office of Coastal Management personnel planned to visit Bird Island this week to verify additional information submitted as part of the owner's application for a CAMA development permit.

Concurrently, the Town of Sunset Beach has begun the process of zoning the marshes and wetlands that surround the island across Mad Inlet.

Owner Janie Page Price of Greensboro and Sunset Beach has said she wants to build a family home on the island, and possibly allow other family members to build there as well.

In February she applied for state and federal permits to allow development of the island for residential purposes, including replacement of a former bridge to the island and construction of a pier with docking space for six boats.

The application was incomplete, however, and her agent was asked to submit additional information.

"We have just received that additional information," Jim Herstine, manager of the agency's Wilmington regional office said Tuesday. "We are in the process of making sure it is accurate and complete."

That will entail an on-site inspection of the island, he said. After that it will be about two weeks before the office completes a field report. That report will be distributed to a variety of state and federal agencies for review and comment, said Herstine.

He said the state will have a 75-day period in which to make a decision on issuance of a devel-

opment permit, or else it will have to request an extension of time.

At its meeting Monday, Sunset Beach Town Council set a public hearing for Monday, June 15, at 7:30 p.m. at the town hall on the proposed creation of a new classification, conservation, in the town's zoning ordinance, and on the zoning of the marshes and wetlands within the town's jurisdiction as conservation area-including those along the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway and around Bird Island.

Neither the town's land use plan nor zoning ordinance had a conservation district.

The designation would allow use of the areas so classified for dredge spoil disposal, and would allow construction of docks, piers, bridges, bulkheads and causeways.

Planning Board Chairman Richard Good said that, on the advice of town attorney Michael Isenberg, the planning board will not recommend zoning Bird Island itself as a conservation area.

"We're still working on a zoning recommendation for Bird Island," said Good. "The attorney advises us we must allow the property owner to make reasonable use of that property."

At its regular meeting in April the council adopted a resolution supporting the purchase of the island by a public or private entity for the purpose of maintaining it in a natural state.

However, at this time there is no formal commitment by any organization to attempt to buy the island, said Bill Ducker, a Sunset Beach property owner interested in seeing the island remain undeveloped. Despite the town attorney's recom-

mendation to the contrary, Ducker has advocated that the town zone the island for conservation. He says he is concerned that even if the island is initially zoned only to allow limited development, that over time the zoning would be changed to permit development at a greater density.

While no fund has been established yet for purchase of the island, Ducker said there are several individuals working at the state and federal level to determine what funds might be available from public and private sources at those levels.

"It's difficult to start a fund, not knowing what we're working for," he said, or if the asking figure is within reach.

"Having a fixed price on the island or being told it is not for sale would be very beneficial," he continued. "We're probably approaching that point, but it could be a month or it could be a year."

The zoning of the island could affect the price he suggested, as could a decision on development permits.

Without knowing the sum needed to buy the island, Ducker suggested, those who want the island preserved in its natural state have few remaining options.

"Then the only choice is to try to stymie development through the permitting system," he said, by trying to block issuance, for example, of a permit to build a private bridge over public bottom.

"If Mrs. Price's ultimate goal is sale of the island for conservation purposes, I think it is incumbent upon her to set a price," Ducker suggested.

Sunset Builders, Town Council Compromising On More Flexible And Quiet Work Hours

A compromise reached Monday night by Sunset Beach Town Council will allow construction workers more flexibility in work hours, while ensuring quieter Sundays.

At the council's April meeting, a proposal to prohibit construction activity year-round on Sundays passed, and led to additional restrictions as well, despite a warning from one audience member that the board was "fixing something that isn't broken".

Mayor Mason Barber predicted then that builders would be before the council at its May meeting, seeking redress.

He was right. With a handful of other builders and/or construction industry personnel in the audience, Annette Odom, representing her family's business as well as the island's general contractors, asked the town to reconsider.

"Those hours are unacceptable to us," she said of the 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday year-round schedule.

The schedule was adopted with the idea of accommodating tourists.

Mrs. Odom asked the council to consider changing the hours from 7 a.m. until dark during the off-season months, with provisions for hardship cases, such as when a builder is up against a deadline. Before the April meeting there had been no set ending time during the off-season for the workers.

She said the contractors should not have found out about the changes through local newspapers and that the restrictions should have also included other noise-generating activities.

Agreeing that the changes were more than what the town needed, the council adopted a new schedule: 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday for the period from Memorial Day through Labor Day, and 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. other times. The Sunday ban remains in effect.

"Tourists are very important to us, but so are people trying to make a living," said Councilwoman Cherrri Cheek.

Mayor Barber said the town plans to hold a workshop with local contractors to discuss other concerns expressed regarding the types of projects for which building permits are required.

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