

Holden Beach Residents Mum Over Bridge Permit

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach residents, who typically oppose development plans that could threaten the environment, have been unusually quiet about a proposal to build a bridge to an island in the marsh.

Building Inspector Dwight Carroll plans to issue a CAMA permit Friday that would allow Holden Beach Enterprises to build a bridge from Ocean Boulevard north to Bacon Island.

As of Tuesday, town officials said they had received just one written comment opposing the plans and heard little or no talk in the community regarding the proposal.

Town Manager Gary Parker said both he and the building inspector were somewhat surprised by the lack of public opposition.

"We had expected more comments on this," Parker said. "For whatever reason, that just hasn't been the case."

Holden Beach Enterprises has no immediate plans to construct a bridge or develop the 25-acre island, according to secretary-treasurer Virgil Batten.

The company's plans call for a bridge 900 feet long and 12 feet wide from Bacon Island over the marsh to the 600 block of Ocean Boulevard West.

Parker said Tuesday the only written comment on the proposal received so far was from a frequent visitor from Rhode Island.

The woman said in her letter that she enjoys watching birds in the marsh and fears they will leave if a bridge is built and the island is developed.

Elected officials at Holden Beach said Tuesday they haven't heard much talk for or against the proposal.

"I have not had a single comment on it," said Mayor Wally Ausley. He was out of town last week, but said he didn't hear anything over the weekend.

Commissioner Sid Swarts also said he hasn't received any calls from people upset about the company's plans.

"It's one of those things that you may not like, but if it's legal it's legal," Swarts said.

The town board member said he thinks most people realize the inspector has no choice but to issue the permit if town and state regulations allow it.

Ausley agreed that Carroll can't deny the minor development permit if rules allow construction of a bridge.

"As far I know, what he's doing is exactly right," Ausley said of the inspector's plan to issue the permit.

Crawford Hart, the town's unofficial environmental watchdog, said he had visited the site and discussed the proposal with Carroll.

"As far as I can see it's legitimate, but I'd naturally prefer it didn't happen," he said. "I haven't heard a lot about it from other people."

Bacon Island is located north of Ocean Boulevard between Sand Dollar and Swordfish drives. Roberts estimates that 12 acres to 16 acres of the island are suitable for residential development.

The island is zoned R-1, which allows single- and two-family dwellings. The Holden Beach Land Use Plan allows development of marsh islands as long as federal, state and local regulations are followed.

CHAMBER DONATION IS STICKY Holden Beach May Cut 3 Cents Off Tax Rate

BY DOUG RUTTER

The Fourth of July is still three weeks away, but there may be some early fireworks Monday night when Holden Beach officials take their 1992-93 proposed budget to the public.

Town commissioners are proposing a three-cent cut in the tax rate, but the hottest topic during budget workshops has been a donation to the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce.

The final \$1.2 million budget proposal includes \$10,000 for the local chamber to use in advertising and promoting the beach as a family vacation spot.

Three commissioners support the contribution, and the other two oppose it. Town Manager Gary Parker proposed \$2,000 for the chamber in his original budget, but the amount was increased twice during recent budget sessions.

The chamber of commerce had requested \$14,000 to come from Holden Beach's occupancy tax revenue, which is paid by tourists when they rent accommodations on the island.

Holden Beach expects to collect \$215,000 in occupancy tax next fiscal year, which accounts for approximately 17 percent of the town's total projected revenues.

Commissioners Gil Bass, Gay Atkins and David Sandifer support the \$10,000 contribution to the chamber. Board members Jim Fournier and Sid Swarts are against it.

Proponents of the donation say advertising will help draw more tourists to Holden Beach. That, in turn, will generate more occupancy tax revenue and allow town officials to keep the property tax rate low.

Commissioner Atkins has said the promotion helps non-resident property owners rent their cottages. Tourism benefits everyone, she says, since occupancy tax money pays for community projects like sidewalks.

Bass has contended that the chamber does more than just lure tourists to the beach. It's involved in the community, he says, and has helped speed up transportation improvements such as the Holden Beach Bridge.

"It's not just tourism and advertising," Bass said at a recent workshop. "It's a whole spectrum of everything that goes on in this county."

Fournier and Swarts both liked Parker's recommended \$2,000 contribution more than the \$10,000 now in the budget.

They have said that people will visit the beach each summer with or without the extra advertising, and the chamber should be funded by the businesses it helps.

Swarts, who thinks the money could be better spent elsewhere, said the people he represents on the town board are against a big donation.

"All the people who have called me have supported keeping the chamber low, and I have to go with my constituents," he said. "Most of them feel it's a supplement for advertising for the Realtors."

"It's not just tourism and advertising."

—Commissioner Gil Bass
On role of chamber

Other proposed uses of the occupancy tax include \$44,000 for police salaries, \$40,000 for sidewalks, \$25,000 for sanitation and \$20,000 for administration salaries.

Commissioners also have proposed giving \$2,500 to the Greater Holden Beach Merchants Association to help pay for brochures.

Tax Rate To Fall
Holden Beach's tax rate will drop from 18 cents to 15 cents per \$100 of property valuation if the budget is approved. That would save the owner of a \$100,000 house \$30 in taxes.

In lowering the tax rate, commissioners plan to keep a promise made by a previous town board that raised taxes two years ago to rebuild the town savings fund.

At the time, town officials said the tax increase is needed to replenish a fund balance that was depleted following Hurricane Hugo. They said 3

cents would be taken off the tax rate in two years.

To cut the tax rate, town officials plan to take \$113,000 from the fund balance to pay off a bank loan used to buy the house on Davis Street.

That will eliminate \$42,404 in payments next fiscal year, and additional payments over the next two or three years.

With a 15-cent tax rate and 98 percent collection rate, the town expects to receive \$343,380 in taxes next year. Holden Beach's property valuation is about \$236 million.

Besides town property taxes and occupancy tax transfers, other general fund revenues in the budget include \$64,000 in sales tax, \$42,000 in franchise tax and \$30,000 in Powell Bill.

Proposed general fund expenses next year include \$210,030 for police, \$164,120 for administration and \$127,850 for streets.

The streets budget includes \$40,000 for sidewalks, \$32,900 to pave Crab, Raleigh, Seaside and Frigate streets, \$22,500 for street lights and \$20,900 to improve Seaview, Windjammer and Seagull streets.

Also in the general fund is \$56,550 for trash pickup and recycling, \$50,000 for canal dredging, \$20,000 for the fire department contract, \$15,000 for two police cars and \$10,625 for water rescue.

Town Manager Gary Parker said he's pleased with the budget. It includes enough money to cover operating expenses, he said, and sets aside some cash in reserve funds for future use.

Commissioners plan to put \$29,000 in the capital reserve fund next year, including \$10,000 each for town hall improvements and parks and recreation.

Town officials wrapped up the budget proposal May 28 after a series of lengthy workshop sessions. The meeting, which began May 8, was recessed and reconvened six times and lasted more than 24 hours.

The public hearing Monday, June 15, starts at 7 p.m. in town hall, where a copy of the proposed budget is available for inspection. People who can't attend the hearing can submit written comments.

Calabash Budget Would Fund Security Guard

BY ERIC CARLSON

The Calabash Board of Commissioners last week unveiled its proposed 1992-93 budget, which calls for \$45,000 in improvements to the town hall, a \$17,888 contract for a year-round security guard and \$4,500 to pay board members for attending meetings.

The budget was presented at a sparsely attended public hearing at the local fire station Thursday night. The commissioners plan to vote on the draft budget line-by-line and adopt a final version at their next meeting June 23.

Included in the package is \$440,820 in general fund spending, yielding a property tax rate of 13.5 cents per \$100. Last year's tax rate was 10.5 cents.

In outlining the public safety portion of the budget, Commissioner Jon Sanborn said the most controversial item in the package would be the first-time funding of a town security guard. He said the idea was presented as a compromise between the current arrangement, under which county deputies patrol the area, and the hiring of a town police officer.

"People don't want a police department, but they want some kind of increased security," Sanborn said. "The sheriff's department can only go so far."

Sanborn said the guard would be contracted through a security service that would provide a patrol vehicle equipped with a police radio. The guard would be unarmed and would notify other authorities of any criminal activities or emergency needs.

The budget calls for a total of \$116,800 spending for administration, including a \$35,000 for expanding the town hall building, \$10,000 for new office equipment, \$30,000 for salaries and wages and \$25,000 for professional services.

For the first time, the \$6,000 allocation for the governing body includes \$4,500 to pay commissioner for their services at a rate of \$25 per meeting. Commissioner George Anderson said Shallotte pays its board a like amount, while the town of Burgaw in Pender County earmarks a total of \$31,500 in annual board payments.

The sanitation department would get a total of \$145,457, with \$78,407 going to buy land for dump

sites and \$30,000 in capital improvements for other improvements.

A total of \$66,500 is earmarked for the street department, including \$38,650 for ditch mowing and maintenance and \$24,000 for new street lights.

The inspection department would receive \$26,500, of which \$23,600 would go toward salaries.

Under the \$20,750 planning and zoning budget are \$10,000 to be spent on contracted services and \$4,000 for printing.

The budget expects \$79,300 in Powell Bill revenues and expenditures. The water and sewer budget is balanced at \$30,900. Total of all funds is \$551,020.

The Calabash board also met in regular session Tuesday night. At that meeting the board:

—Directed the town attorney to take action against Lloyd Milliken, owner of Larry's Seafood Restaurant, for what Commissioner George Anderson called an "illegal sign" erected Tuesday on the roof of the business.

—Heard a complaint from Commissioner Ray Card about a towel in the window of the Wings

store on River Road that depicts three women wearing "thong" bathing suits. Card said the board should consider drafting an ordinance banning depictions of nudity in the town. No action was taken.

—Awarded contracts for ditch and lot mowing to Tripp's Mowing Service, at specified rates for each type of cut.

—Awarded two-year solid waste contracts to Chambers Waste Service Inc. of South Carolina for dumpster maintenance, \$617.25 per month, and curbside trash pickup, \$2.19 for two pickups a week; to M & J Recycling Co. for operating the town's recycling center, \$300 per month plus variable hauling charge; and to Bob's Clean-Up Co. for collection of yard debris, \$50 per 5-cubic-yard load.

—Set a July 14 public hearing to consider rezoning a portion of Clariday Woods subdivision from residential to commercial.

—Set a 7 p.m. June 23 public hearing to consider correcting an error in the town zoning map that shows an improper designation for nine lots in Cedar Tree subdivision.

Workshops Set On Disposal System Management Rules

The Brunswick County Health Department will sponsor two workshops next week on management of on-site subsurface sewage treatment and disposal systems.

Public Health Educator Jan Reichenbach said the workshops will be held at the Public Assembly Building at the Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia June 17 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and June

18 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Topics to be discussed included upcoming requirements for management of all low pressure pipe (LPP) sewage systems and all systems designed for daily wastewater flows greater than 3,000 gallons per day.

All owners of subsurface sewage systems that meet the above criteria are encouraged to attend one of the sessions, she said.

Teena Little Wins Big In Brunswick Runoff

With a tiny percentage of voters showing up at Brunswick County polls for the June 2 runoff elections, Teena Little more than doubled the votes cast for her opponent Vernon Robinson, as Republican nominee for State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Little received 164 votes and Robinson 77, in what may have been the election with the poorest turnout in county history.

An intern at the county board of elections said at least three precincts reported only three votes cast: Longwood, Mosquito and Leland, while the heaviest voting occurred at Oak Island 2, where 34 votes were cast.

Little won handily statewide, though not as overwhelmingly as in Brunswick County. She garnered 23,729 votes to 21,722 for Robinson.

Little has enjoyed the support of Governor James Martin, while Robinson campaigned energetically for sweeping changes in the educational system. He was endorsed by former federal education czar William Bennett.

The new Republican nominee faces Democrat incumbent Bob Ethridge in the Nov. 3 election.

Man Commits Suicide In Leland Church Yard

A retired deputy with the New Hanover County Sheriff's Department apparently used his service revolver to commit suicide in a Leland church yard last week, according to police.

Texas Neil "Tex" Cheney, 56, of Sandy Creek Drive, Sandy Creek, was found at approximately 7 a.m. Thursday on the grounds of Goshen

Baptist Church. He had what appeared to be a self-inflicted gunshot wound, said Det. Capt. Phil Perry of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department.

Cheney's 9mm pistol was found nearby.

Perry said Cheney had suffered health problems in recent years.

Volunteers Needed For Dolphin Watch

Volunteers are needed to help gather information on coastal bottlenose dolphins in the Cape Fear area.

Cetacean Awareness Programs, a group interested in the protection and preservation of marine mammals and their environment, is seeking helpers to look for dolphins.

The "Day of the Dolphin" is planned for Saturday, June 20. From 8 a.m. until noon, volunteers will monitor dolphin activity along beaches from New River Inlet to Corncake Inlet.

Volunteers at Wrightsville, Kure, Carolina and other beaches will be stationed at observation points within the study area about one mile apart.

Two dolphin watches were held earlier this spring. Seventeen participants sighted 28 dolphins last month, and 27 people documented more than 50 dolphins in April. Participants must attend an orien-

tation program Friday, June 19, from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at UNC-Wilmington.

For more information, call Cetacean Awareness Programs at 919-469-8780.

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