

AT HOLDEN BEACH

Hearing Crowd Split Over Chamber Donation

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach residents seem divided over how much money, if any, the town should spend to advertise the island as a family vacation destination.

Plans to give \$10,000 to the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce for tourism promotion drew support from some and opposition from others at a public hearing Monday night.

"I feel like if we give it to the chamber of commerce we might as well flush it down the toilet," said resident Fran Vogt.

Other islanders, including past chamber president Allan Dameron, spoke in favor of the contribution included in the town's 1992-93 proposed budget.

"The chamber is much more than tourism and it does affect everybody's life in this room whether they want to admit it or not," Dameron said.

The chamber donation was a main topic of discussion at Monday's budget hearing. Commissioners plan to adopt a budget at their June 24 meeting.

The \$1.2 million proposal features a 3-cent cut in the tax rate to 15 cents per \$100 of property. No change in water rates is planned.

Town commissioners, like residents, have been split over the chamber donation. Gil Bass, Gay Atkins and David Sandifer have supported it and Sid Swarts and Jim Fournier have opposed it.

Fournier was the only board member who spoke on the issue Monday night. He said there's no proof the chamber attracts more tourists, and that the town should spend its money providing services that will lure vacationers.

Referring to previous comments

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—Fran Vogt, resident

he has made about tourists, Fournier said, "If I've offended anybody I'm sorry, because I've said it like I mean it."

Mack Foster, one of Fournier's neighbors, also spoke against the chamber donation Monday.

He suggested the town use the money to buy mosquito-spraying equipment. "I think it would benefit the tourists and the people on the beach also," Foster said.

Former commissioner Judy Bryan also objected to the proposed contribution in a letter that was read by Mayor Wally Ausley.

She wrote that most vacationers hear about Holden Beach through friends and family, not advertising. Mrs. Bryan suggested that merchants pay for advertising so the town can spend its money on community projects.

Dameron said the chamber of commerce does more than promote tourism. In the past, he said it has supported efforts to clean up pollution in Lockwood Folly River.

The chamber also got involved a few years ago when a paper company was burning land and winds blew smoke on the beach, Dameron said.

John Holden, the town's first mayor, said Holden Beach needs to spend some money on tourism promotion to compete against other vacation spots.

He added that occupancy tax money could also be set aside for erosion control and a future sewer system.

"Somewhere down the line the beach will need a sewer system and I hope you'll give consideration,"

Holden said. Don Pollard said he doesn't oppose a donation to the chamber, but he thinks more occupancy tax dollars should go to the police department for more officers and training.

The town board plans to set aside \$52,700 in occupancy tax dollars for police next fiscal year.

Crawford Hart suggested taking the money earmarked for the chamber and \$2,500 for a Greater Holden Beach Merchants Association brochure and giving it to the fire department and rescue squad.

Hart also said the town should increase the \$10,000 proposed for parks and recreation land acquisition.

Harold Steorts urged the board to pass a "line item" budget, instead of the traditional departmental budget.

A line item budget would prevent the town manager from overspending on any line item without board approval, while the other type allows overspending on line items but not in departments.

Vote Delayed On Renovation

Holden Beach Commissioners postponed awarding a contract for proposed renovations to the town-owned house on Davis Street Monday night.

Commissioners asked for copies of bid specifications and bid proposals after receiving offers from three local companies.

Thomas Gray & Son Inc. of Holden Beach is the apparent low bidder with a price of \$19,500.

Town officials want to renovate the ground floor of the two-story house so it can continue to be used for police department offices.

Holden Beach is also seeking bids from area firms interested in handling the town's annual audit.

Mayor Wally Ausley appointed board members Jim Fournier and Gil Bass to a committee that will review the proposals.

Town Manager Gary Parker expects to get the bids by July 20. An auditor could be selected at the town board's Aug. 3 meeting.



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Down And Dirty

Brothers Michael (left) and Ryan Keaton get down and dirty in the sand at Ocean Isle Beach Saturday after rain showers gave way to sunshine. The Keatons are visiting this week from Medina, Ohio.

CORPS PLANS INSPECTION

Bridge Permit Pending At Holden

BY DOUG RUTTER

Concerns raised by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have caused a delay in the issuance of a permit that would allow construction of a bridge to an island in the marsh at Holden Beach.

Building Inspector Dwight Carroll had planned to issue the minor CAMA permit last week, but held up after receiving a copy of a letter from the Corps of Engineers district office in Wilmington.

It now appears a permit won't be issued until after the federal agency visits the site of the proposed bridge in July, according to Corps spokeswoman Marty van Dwyne.

The Corps wants to inspect the site to see if Holden Beach Enterprises needs a federal permit in addition to a state permit to build the 900-foot-long wooden bridge that would link Ocean Boulevard West and Bacon Island.

The local real estate development company will not need a Corps permit as long as the proposed bridge doesn't encroach into tidal wetlands or waters, Ms. van Dwyne said.

"The bridge must be entirely pile supported and not include any fill material in either tidal or non-tidal wetlands," she added.

The Corps sent a letter explaining its position to Holden Beach Enterprises, which had applied to the town for a minor development permit to build a 12-foot-wide bridge to the 25-acre island bordering the waterway.

Ms. van Dwyne said she doesn't expect Holden Beach's inspector to issue the CAMA permit until the

Corps visits the site next month. Carroll is out of town this week for a training course.

Government agencies typically work "hand in hand" on permit applications, she said, and permits usually aren't issued until all parties involved have a chance to investigate.

"It's a coordinated effort basically between the agencies whenever somebody's applying for a permit," Ms. van Dwyne said.

The Corps spokeswoman said the regulatory branch wouldn't be able to inspect the site until sometime in July due to the extra work that piles up each spring and summer.

Holden Beach Town Manager Gary Parker said the town will wait for the Corps inspection before making its next move.

"They just need to resolve these questions before the permit can be issued," Parker said. "They want to know that the bridge is just going to go over water when it's high tide."

Bacon Island is located north of Ocean Boulevard between Sand Dollar and Swordfish drives and is surrounded by wetlands.

Holden Beach Enterprises doesn't plan to build the bridge or develop the island right away, according to Virgil Roberts, secretary-treasurer.

"There no immediate plan," Roberts told the Beacon earlier this month. "We're just getting our permits in order in case we decide to develop it."

The island is zoned R-1, which would allow construction of single- and two-family houses. Roberts estimated that 12 to 16 acres are developable.

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