

Radioactivity Released

A 'minor' accident at the Brunswick Nuclear Plant is being investigated. Page 14-A.

Agony Of Defeat

The Trojans fall to Waccamaw's Wolfpack in the conference opener. Page 10-B.

Spot Season Gets Started

They're not here in full force yet, but fall fishing is better by the day. Page 10-C.

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Rescue Drama

STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

Johnny Corbett, assistant chief of the Winnabow Volunteer Fire Department, uses a Hurst cutting tool to remove the top of a car that flipped over in the median of U.S. 17 near Town Creek last Thursday afternoon (Sept. 24). Winnabow Chief David Short holds a sheet to protect the trapped victim from falling debris. The Highway Patrol Report is on Page 10-A.

State Approves Upgrade Of Suspended Advanced Life Support Program

BY ERIC CARLSON

For the first time in two months, beginning at 6 a.m. Friday, Oct. 2, Brunswick County emergency medical technicians will be authorized to use defibrillating equipment to stabilize the heart rhythms of cardiac patients.

Brunswick County Emergency Medical Services Director Dr. Harry L. Johnson announced Tuesday that the state had upgraded the county's previously suspended Advanced Life Support (ALS) program to the defibrillator level.

The county's ALS rating, signifying that rescue personnel have intermediate EMT training, was downgraded Aug. 3 after state inspectors discovered that program supervisors had not maintained records to prove that EMT's had completed their internships.

Suspension of the ALS program meant EMTs on ambulances were no longer authorized to defibrillate patients or administer intravenous injections.

Johnson and Brunswick EMS

"We all have copies of the rule book now...and we will make sure that we keep those records."

—Dr. Harry Johnson

Supervisor Doug Ledgett have since developed a training program and schedule to return the system to ALS certification. The plan is being reviewed by the state and officials hope to have enough EMT-I's certified to bring full ALS on line by November.

As an interim step, EMTs were offered a chance to earn or recertify their defibrillator certification by attending three six-hour training sessions. About 60 EMTs completed the course, allowing the county to ask for state approval to bring the

ALS program up one notch, Johnson said.

"A lot of people have put in a lot of hard work and I feel satisfied with the training they've received," Johnson said. "I'm comfortable enough to say let's go for it Friday at 6 a.m."

The upgrade is an important step for local rescue workers. Not only can they now use the defibrillator to re-establish a heart patient's normal heart rhythm, but they can also use heart monitors to better determine a patient's condition.

Johnson said considerable improvements have been made in the ALS training program. He said the medical professionals, including himself and the program's two nurse liaisons, would be "taking a much more active role" including a closer monitoring of training procedures and record keeping.

"We all have copies of the rule book now. We all know what records need to be kept. And so we will make sure that we keep those records," Johnson said.

Debate Resumes Monday On Septic Tank Rules

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach homeowners interested in the proposed ordinance aimed at stopping abuse of septic systems may want to be at town hall Monday night.

That's when town officials are expected to resume their debate of the controversial rules that were tabled last week after a lengthy discussion.

Three of five board members voiced opposition to the regulations at last Wednesday's town meeting.

Commissioners David Sandifer, Gil Bass and Gay Atkins said they oppose the ordinance as written, while Sid Swarts and Jim Fournier favor the rules.

The proposed regulations would prohibit people from advertising that a house can sleep more people than its septic system was designed to accommodate.

State health regulations say conventional septic systems are usually designed for two people per bedroom.

The ordinance also would allow the building inspector to inspect vacant homes to see if they comply with sewage collection and treatment rules.

The intent of the ordinance is to prohibit overuse and limit failures of

"We're polluting for profit is what it amounts to."

—Commissioner Sid Swarts

septic systems.

Some rental cottages are filled beyond capacity with vacationers in the summer, and some officials believe overcrowding leads to septic system failure and pollution of ground and surface waters.

Most Holden Beach homeowners who spoke at recent public hearings opposed the rules. They said the proposal would threaten family vacations by limiting the number of people who can stay in a house.

Speakers also described the rules as subjective, unenforceable and discriminatory and said the town has no proof septic tank systems are failing and polluting water.

Town Attorney Ken Campbell said last week the only thing the proposed rules would allow the town to do is prohibit false advertising of houses for sale or rent.

"The city isn't going to throw

anyone out of their house," Campbell said. "They can't shut down any houses as this is written."

If town officials suspect a home is being occupied by too many people, they can refer the case to the Brunswick County Health Department.

While commissioners didn't come to terms on the ordinance last week, they did agree to mail letters to homeowners letting them know how many bedrooms their septic tank permits allow.

Commissioner Atkins, who suggested the letters, said some people may not know they're putting a strain on their septic system by having more bedrooms in their house than they're permitted.

Sandifer said last week he backs the large majority of people who spoke out against the rules at the two public hearings held in August and September.

While he admitted the town has a density problem, Sandifer said enforcing the proposed rules and invading people's privacy isn't the way to attack it.

"This is overkill," Sandifer said. "This is going to threaten everybody on this island."

Atkins, who also opposes the

rules, said the town should go after people who flagrantly overcrowd houses and make an effort to educate people about how septic systems work.

Mayor Pro Tem Bass said he's concerned about the legality of the proposed ordinance and if it would stand up in court. Nobody answered his question about how many systems have failed on Holden Beach due to overcrowding.

Bass said the town may be able to work something out with homeowners and rental agents to reduce overcrowding. "The property owner is ultimately responsible for his property," he said.

Commissioner Swarts, who chaired the committee that came up with the proposal, was the most vocal supporter of the rules last week.

He said property owners can't keep building houses on 50-foot-wide lots and think pollution won't occur.

"We're polluting for profit is what it amounts to," he said. "Polluting for profit, and that's exactly what we're doing."

Swarts said a lot of people who spoke at hearings want the town to let them continue violating the con-

(See SEPTIC, Page 2-A)

Small, Vocal Group Voices Opposition To Zoning Plan

BY ERIC CARLSON

Some called it apathy. Others blamed it on a lack of understanding. A few said it represented a vote of confidence.

But nearly everyone was surprised that only 75 people showed up for a public hearing on a law that will officially establish the permitted uses for every piece of property in the unincorporated areas of Brunswick County.

Residents were invited to speak for three minutes each at a joint meeting of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners and the Brunswick County Planning Board Tuesday night. Commissioners Chairman Kelly Holden said each speaker's comments were recorded for future consideration and specific questions would be answered by letter.

Of the 22 residents who voiced their opinions, only one was entirely in favor of the law. The largest number said they disagreed with the idea of government deciding how a property owner should use land. Others opposed the way their land had been zoned or took issue with specific regulations in the law.

A few speakers noted the bleak job market in Brunswick County and cautioned that zoning would inhibit growth and discourage industry from locating here.

Brunswick native Wanda Beam of Holden Beach said, "It would take a lawyer to understand your book. Zoning is OK to a certain extent, but you went too far. We own the land. We pay taxes on the land. And then you tell me what we can do with it. To me that's communist!"

She expressed concern that the law might prevent her from rebuilding her mobile home if it was severely damaged. She asked the board to revise the law.

George Mintz of Leland agreed saying, "I haven't read your book, but I'm totally against zoning. If I have a piece of property I ought to be able to do what I want with it."

(See CITIZENS, Page 2-A)

Abnormally High Tides Force Bridge To Close On 5 Days

BY DOUG RUTTER

Exceptionally high tides forced operators to temporarily close Sunset Beach Bridge to motorists five days in the past week and caused erosion at Holden Beach.

The one-lane, pontoon bridge at Sunset was closed a total of 6 hours, 20 minutes between last Thursday night and Monday morning. The tide never got high enough to require a closing Tuesday.

The bridge was first closed to ve-

hicular traffic last Thursday from 6:45 p.m. to 8 p.m. It was shut down again Friday from 7:10 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. Operators also closed the span Saturday, Sunday and Monday mornings for at least an hour each day.

At Holden Beach, Town Manager Gary Parker said the abnormally high tides didn't affect traffic but caused "considerable erosion" at the east end of the island. Waves washed away sand near the end of Ocean Boulevard East, exposing protective sandbags and moving closer to threatened homes on the north side of the street.

"We lost a good bit on that end of the road over the weekend," Parker said Tuesday afternoon. "Pavement fell in and sand washed away from behind the sandbags."

B.J. Jahy of the National Weather Service in Wilmington said tides were one to two feet above normal due to the moon's gravitational pull and a tropical depression off the Atlantic coast.

The moon's relative position to the earth caused tides to be 6 to 12 inches above average. A depression off Florida fueled persistent easterly and southeasterly winds, which kept water from draining when the tide fell.

"It was really a combination of

the monthly astronomical tides and the depression," Jahy said. "The were complementing one another."

Gerald Messer, operators supervisor at the Sunset Beach Bridge, said the span must be closed when tides lift the floating section of the bridge 12 inches to 13 inches above the normal high tide mark.

The level of the floating bridge normally fluctuates 5 1/2 feet between low and high tide, Messer said. When the tide is too high, ramps connecting the fixed portion of the bridge to the floating section aren't safe.

Sunset Beach Police Chief J.B. Buell said Monday he was concerned for the safety of residents and visitors who got stranded on the island.

Whenever the bridge is closed, police cars, ambulances and fire trucks can't get to the island.

"That's the scary part, not knowing what's going to happen over there," Buell said. "It's consistent right now and that's what disturbs me."

Buell said school teachers and a school bus had to wait to get off the island last Friday morning.

"Odds are something's going to happen sooner or later," he contin-

(See TIDES, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY LYNN CARLSON

A COMBINATION of lunar tides and a tropical depression off Florida brought unusually high tides which made instant waterfront in some Brunswick County neighborhoods. Here, an expanse of marsh at the 500 block of Ocean Boulevard West in Holden Beach was full enough on Friday to resemble a broad canal. The high tides continued through the weekend and early this week to cause beach erosion and to force the closing of Sunset Beach's one-lane floating bridge during high tides on five consecutive days. On Tuesday, another tropical depression off the Atlantic coast was becoming increasingly well-defined.

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