

# Taxpayers, Engineers Talk Sewer System Philosophy, Data

BY LYNN CARLSON

More than three hours into a meeting Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association leaders say they have sought for months, consulting engineers had presented reams of documentation but seemed to have made no dent in the taxpayers' skepticism about the need for a regional sewer system in Southwest Brunswick County.

Five citizens—four representing the 800-member taxpayers' group—met with engineers Joe Tombro and Jim Billups of Powell Associates in the Sunset Beach Town Hall last Thursday for the engineers to present preliminary data showing how they determined that septic tanks are polluting ground and surface waters around the island of Sunset Beach. However, much of the discussion centered around philosophical differences between the taxpayers and the engineers about the efficiency of septic tanks, the reliability of testing methods and historical pollution data, and whether a stormwater runoff system alone might be adequate to solve the pollution problem.

The engineers have said they believe construction of a \$25 to \$30 million sanitary sewer system, plus a stormwater runoff management project, will be necessary to curtail water pollution in Southwest Brunswick County and bring about the reopening of shellfishing grounds closed because of bacterial pollution.

Leaders of the taxpayers group say they are not convinced and have suggested that a much less expensive stormwater runoff system—\$300,000 by one estimate—might

serve the same purpose.

However, the taxpayers said on Thursday they were happy to receive the mountain of maps, flow charts and test results from the engineers, even though the group will probably need outside help to interpret the materials.

Sue Weddle, an SBTA officer, said the group may turn the data over to professors at N.C. State University whose studies have indicated that septic tanks are working "just fine" on some North Carolina barrier islands and who have claimed that central sewer systems have not improved water quality around some barrier islands where they have been constructed.

However, the engineers say their own data and dozens of scientific studies prove that barrier island population density and soil types ensure that septic tanks will not adequately treat wastewater, and that, consequently, they leach fecal bacteria into the surrounding waters.

"We can't find data showing that septic tanks are functioning properly in this environment," Tombro said. "If you can, let me know."

Tombro presented maps indicating pollution trends over the past decade and said there has been a 50 percent increase in fecal bacteria counts around the island. He said bacteria counts are at their highest in the Calabash Creek area and tend to diminish at test sites moving northward toward Ocean Isle.

The process of determining the sources of pollution is made more difficult by Sunset

*"We can't find data showing that septic tanks are functioning properly in this environment. If you can, let me know."*

—Joe Tombro, Engineer

Beach's system of storm drains which connect underground and empty untreated stormwater into the Intracoastal Waterway and Mad Inlet, Billups said. "We've never contended that there's not stormwater runoff pollution," he added.

However, Tombro pointed to the recent installation of a central sewer system in Surf City as an example that sewer service alone can clean up waters. "They have no stormwater control, but their shellfish waters have been opened back up for the first time in years—and they have the same contaminants and the same soil constituency (as Sunset Beach)."

However, the taxpayers argue that in many communities, sewers have not alleviated pollution, because central wastewater

disposal has made denser and more accelerated land development possible.

The engineers provided the taxpayers' group with an outline of their proposed "Southwest Brunswick Environmental Management Program." That document also will be used to seek the blessing of the N.C. Coastal Federation environmental group for the project.

The draft document states, "Within Southwest Brunswick County there are some areas for which it is well-documented that on-site systems are simply not working satisfactorily in regard to providing protection of adjacent water quality. The restaurant area of Caabash adjacent to the Calabash River is one such area."

It also states, "Among citizens and officials, there is general agreement as to the need for alternatives to conventional on-site systems for much of the geographical area. However, many citizens are concerned that the provision of centralized facilities will lead to over-development of the area."

However, it claims, "development is occurring with or without centralized sewer facilities," and adds, "Developers of property have also made it quite clear that they are going to provide centralized sewer service to their properties within the next few years, with or without the cooperation of the local government entities."

The document further suggests that the development issue would be best addressed "through land planning and zoning ordinances."

Under the plan outlined by the engineers,

the newly created South Brunswick Water and Sewer Authority would be responsible for providing wastewater treatment and disposal and would establish and enforce regulations governing on-site systems.

It calls for purchase of the privately owned Carolina Blythe sewer system, which currently serves Carolina Shores, and expanding the facility to meet the area's needs for two to four years.

Within five years, a new treatment facility would be built northwest of Sunset Beach, expanding capacity from an original half-million gallons per day to two million gallons per day, "based strictly on the needs of the Towns of Sunset Beach and Calabash."

It calls for all of the highly treated waste, or effluent, to be disposed of through golf course irrigation.

In addition, the proposal recommends that a stormwater management plan be "a top priority" of the two towns "for accomplishment within the next year."

The engineers contend that a user fee of \$18 per month for septic system should be adequate to meet the authority's debt service on the system as planned. They add, "For all new wastewater management and stormwater management facilities required to accommodate new development, these costs should be borne by the developers. Period."

State funding will be sought for the system as a "demonstration program," since "this will be the first program in the state to attempt to provide a beneficial effort from a combined wastewater and stormwater management strategy."

## Plant Closing Leaves 118 Workers Jobless; No Pension, Severance

(Continued From Page 1-A)

tion capacity," Connolly said. "This plant is not of a nature that it could manufacture our other products."

"We have had a very successful operation there in the past," he continued. "It is with great regret that we have had to make this tough business decision."

Jim Saunders, who has been manager of the plant for the past 20 years and managed Highlander, Ltd.'s Wamepec, S.C., plant for two years before coming here, said the Smith Avenue plant has operated continuously in that time with no major layoffs.

"We closed an extra week for vacation one year in the mid-70s and we were closed a few days when Perry Manufacturing took over in 1983. That's it," he said. "We've always had at least 150 employees here since I've been here."

At peak, the company employed as many as 160 employees. Approximately 30 employees have been laid off since October or November, he said.

Pelican has made garments for retailers and labels such as Sears, Penney's and Liz Claiborne, upgrading its quality assurance program to qualify to provide garments that sold at higher prices. For the past three years, for example, it has made stirrup pants for The Land's End Co. that sell for \$38.

"Top quality stuff," said Saunders.

Not all employees are accepting the reasons given by Perry Manufacturing officials for closing the plant.

In a letter to the editor of *The Brunswick Beacon* this week, production worker Cathy Coffey of Holden Beach suggests that increased manufacturing off-shore may have been a factor in the company's decision, despite its announcement to the contrary.

"Americans again are paying the awful price for our current administration's policy on foreign trade," she wrote, wishing "a very prosperous New Year" to Perry Manufacturing Co. employees in El Salvador, Costa Rica and Columbia, S.A.

She could not be reached for comment Monday.

The Pelican building has been added by the Resources Development Commission for Brunswick County to its inventory of available local buildings and to a statewide inventory of about 600 idled plants for which the N.C. of Economic and Community Development is seeking tenants.

"I spent time at the plant Friday getting specifications and taking pictures," said RDC Director Tom Monks. "It's a pretty good building; we hope we can do something with it. It's a size we haven't had available."

Since the closing was announced last week Monks has had "just a couple of nibbles" or inquiries, he said. "Really not all that positive."

*"It's a pretty good building; we hope we can do something with it. It's a size we haven't had available."*

—Tom Monks

## Water District To Include Calabash, Leland Areas

(Continued From Page 1-A)

130, Webb said. A second plan would run the line down Stone Chimney Road to provide the necessary boost in pressure.

A third possibility would be to run a line from the U.S. 17 trunk down Red Bug Road, looping through the Shell Point area and back to N.C. 130.

Water system designers prefer to create loops in transmission lines to maintain water pressure and flow. A new Shell Point loop would also allow the county to offer water service to residents along Seashore Road, Boones Neck Road and in Tanglewood and other subdivisions, Webb said.

All three scenarios would require a capital improvement waterline extension that would need approval from the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners.

UOB Chairman Al Morrison said Monday it was time for the board to request the extension.

"We can help a lot of people in a hurry if we can get a line down there. I want to see those people helped," Morrison said. "I'd like to see us get in there and get something cranking in a hurry."

The board asked Webb to recommend the best way to extend water service to Shell Point for consideration at its next meeting.

In an effort to keep expenses down by spreading the cost of waterline extensions among as many customers as possible, Webb recommended that the board combine several possible service areas ranging "from Calabash to Mt. Misery Road" into one special assessment district.

Among the service areas proposed for SAD-19 are: Sea Village, located on N.C. 904 at Old Georgetown Road; several subdivisions near Calabash including Carolina Cove and an area between Hunter's Trace and Thomasboro Road; and several developments in

the Mt. Misery Road area of Leland including Red Oak Estates, Four Seasons Mobile Home Park and Eagles Nest.

The board also is considering combining an earlier SAD for Sharrow Estates into the proposed SAD-19.

As in all proposed SAD projects, any property owner who might be assessed for the waterline extension will be notified in writing by the UOB and invited to comment at a public hearing. The board agreed seek approval for the proposed SAD from the county commissioners next month in hopes of holding a public hearing in March.

In other business, the board:

■ Agreed to ask the county commissioners to approve a capital improvements water line extension from both ends of a line on Mt. Misery Road. One end would extend to Hood Creek and provide water for parts of the proposed SAD-19. Extending the other end would allow the duPont plant to tap onto the

county system. The company has said it would contract for 93,600 gallons per day, guaranteeing \$34,700 in annual water purchases, Webb said.

■ Was asked by Sunset Beach Town Administrator Linda Fluegel to endorse the county's purchase of her town's 200,000-gallon water tank. She said the town agreed to build a larger tank than needed as part of a county-wide water system plan. She said the county uses the tank for storage, while the town pays for insurance and maintenance. Webb noted that Ocean Isle Beach, Holden Beach, Long Beach and Yaupon Beach all own and maintain their own water tanks.

■ Heard Webb's "very conservative" preliminary estimate of costs for the Shallotte Point SAD, predicting assessments of \$636.33 per parcel. Webb said he was hesitant to release the above-average assessment estimate, which the UOB requested, saying the figure was "very much an estimate and likely to change."

## Highway 904 Closed At River

The N.C. Department of Transportation closed one local highway Monday and was warning motorists to drive carefully all over Brunswick County due to slick conditions caused by nearly 4 inches of rainfall over the past week.

A portion of N.C. 904 near the Brunswick-Columbus county line was closed around noon Monday because it was under water, said Lee Currie, supervisor of the Shallotte DOT office.

"It was under about 18 inches of water yesterday afternoon and it still had one foot of water on the road today," Currie said Tuesday. "We have water on roads in other areas, but none that are officially closed."

"I would say use a good bit of caution when driving in low-lying areas near creeks and streams," Currie added. "We have some other slick spots but none that are real hazardous."

Currie said motorists should be extra careful when traveling Governor's Road and Funston Road in the Town Creek area. They were not closed as of Tuesday morning, but he said they might be if it continues to rain. He said there's little DOT crews can do to keep water off the local roads. "Basically it's just wait until it recedes. There's nothing that can be done because it's all low-lying areas that are covered with days of rain."

## Report Card Remains Bleak For Brunswick County Schools

(Continued From Page 1-A)

dropout rate than most schools, with a 1.82 percent dropout rate for grades seven through 12. Students also showed greater achievement in reading, mathematics and science in grades three, six and eight. Sixth- and eighth-grade students also wrote better than their peers a year ago.

However students still achieved below the state average and below par in reading/language, science, social studies and mathematics during the past year and the previous two years.

The system failed to meet five

state performance standards for 1991-92:

- attendance (attaining 93.71 percent instead of the required 94 percent);
- number of certificates issued instead of diplomas (3.7 percent instead of the required less than 3 percent);
- sixth grade writing essay, by less than three percentiles;
- Algebra I; and
- United States History.

It showed no gains over previous years' performance in four areas: sixth grade science and social stud-

ies, chemistry and Algebra II.

Starting in 1995, improvement reports will be issued for individual schools as well as school systems under a revision of the act adopted in 1992, the Performance Accountability Program.

Brunswick County was one of 14 city and county school systems to rate both below state average and below par. Others were Anson, Caswell, Franklin, Halifax, Weldon, Martin, Robeson, Reidsville, Rowan/Salisbury, Clinton, Warren and Washington County.

Kannapolis, the city system where

Brunswick County Schools Superintendent Ralph J. Johnston was previously employed, also ranked in this category for the second time in three years (1992 and 1990). In 1991 it was listed at average achievement and par.

No schools in southeastern North Carolina were among the 18 ranked as above average and above par. New Hanover County Schools were ranked as above average and at par; Columbus County School, below average but above par; and Bladen and Pender County Schools, below average and at par.

## Two Mishaps Have Brothers Swimming Ashore

(Continued From Page 1-A)

hicle be dispatched to search the beach, just in case the two men made it to shore.

Officer Tom Arnold raced down the strand and spotted Leonard and Canfield coming out of the surf near in the 1100 block. He gave the two men blankets, got them into his vehicle and transferred them to a Coastline Rescue ambulance on Ocean Boulevard. The two were treated for hypothermia at The Brunswick Hospital and released.

When Jeff Leonard learned of the incident, he called the Coast Guard to find out what happened to his boat. They told him it was still adrift and that he would be responsible for getting it to shore, he said.

Junior Hughes at Hughes Marina offered to help him find his boat. On the way to Shallotte Point, he picked

up a friend, Ricky Babson, who decided to go along. The three headed out the inlet in Hughes' open fishing boat.

They were cruising along the west end of Holden Beach when the engine shorted out about a half-mile offshore, Jeff said.

Luckily, they found themselves drifting toward shore. But they were unsure how best to bring the powerless boat in through the surf. "I jumped in and tried to swim to the beach, but I didn't get too far," Jeff said. "It was really cold. I don't understand how my brother made it."

Finally, Hughes secured an anchor off the bow and let it drag as the waves pushed the boat in towards the beach, Jeff said. As they entered the surf zone, a large wave crashed across the bow, partially swamping the boat and driving it

backwards onto the beach.

"It was one heck of a ride," Jeff said as he tightened the line securing the boat to an oceanfront stairway. It was less than a mile from where his brother washed ashore that morning. And it was the second time that day that Officer Arnold helped transport a crew of shipwrecked boaters off the beach.

Later that night, the Leonards' boat washed ashore on Ocean Isle Beach, Jeff said. There was no hull damage and the engine worked fine, however all the electronic equipment was ruined. He said they still don't know why the boat was swamped. But he and his brother are ready to get back on the water.

"It was just a freak accident," Jeff said. "I guess that lady was just giving us a reminder that she's out there."

### HOW TO SUBSCRIBE TO

## THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

POST OFFICE BOX 2558  
SHALLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA 28459

**NOTICE: Reliable or consistent delivery cannot be guaranteed since this newspaper must rely on the U.S. Postal Service for delivery. We can only guarantee that your newspaper will be submitted to the post office in Shallotte on Wednesday of the week of publication, in time for dispatch to out-of-town addresses that day.**

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES BY MAIL:		Sr. Citizen
<b>In Brunswick County</b>		
	\$6.30	\$5.30
N.C. Sales Tax	.38	.32
Postage Charge	3.68	3.68
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10.36</b>	<b>9.30</b>
<b>Elsewhere in North Carolina</b>		
	\$6.30	\$5.30
N.C. Sales Tax	.38	.32
Postage Charge	8.18	8.18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14.86</b>	<b>13.80</b>
<b>Outside North Carolina</b>		
	\$6.30	\$5.30
Postage Charge	9.65	9.65
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15.95</b>	<b>14.95</b>

Complete And Return To Above Address

Name.....  
Address.....  
City, State.....  
Zip.....

### THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Established Nov. 1, 1962  
Telephone 754-6890  
Published Every Thursday  
At 4709 Main Street  
Shallotte, N.C. 28459

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES IN BRUNSWICK COUNTY**

One Year	\$10.36
Six Months	\$5.55

**ELSEWHERE IN NORTH CAROLINA**

One Year	\$14.86
Six Months	\$7.90

**ELSEWHERE IN U.S.A.**

One Year	\$15.95
Six Months	\$8.35

Second class postage paid at Shallotte, N.C. 28459. USPS 777-780. Postmaster, send address changes to:  
P.O. Box 2558,  
Shallotte, N.C. 28459-2558