

It Happens Every Year

Spring fever is going around. To fill your prescription for a great lawn, see the **Plant Doctor** on Page 3-B.

Rolling Right Along

Backers of a proposed interstate highway route through Brunswick County are optimistic these days. Page 9-C.

Really On The Ball

Baseball, track, tennis, softball, volleyball, basketball...even football! There's a little bit of everything in **Sports, Section D**.

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INCINERATORS, WASTE DUMPS QUESTIONED

Commissioners Hear More Attacks On County Zoning Law

BY ERIC CARLSON

The Brunswick County zoning ordinance came under fire again Monday night for keeping some landowners from building homes on their property while allowing others to construct slaughterhouses, junkyards, incinerators and hazardous waste facilities on theirs.

A crowd of about 100 people attended the board's regular meeting and an earlier public hearing on the planning board's proposal to revise the zoning law in response to concerns raised by the Brunswick Mining Awareness Committee (BMAC).

The citizens' group, which successfully pressured the commissioners to enact an ordinance banning a proposed limestone mine near Southport, returned Monday to ask that such mines and other "undesirable activities" be permanently outlawed by the zoning ordinance.

Commissioners agreed that the matter needs more study before they decide whether to adopt BMAC's list of prohibited uses or the planning board's alternative proposal.

The planning board measure would outlaw the undesirable activities in H-M (heavy manufacturing) zones,

where they are currently allowed. But it would permit them in a RU-1 (rural industrial) zone. No such zone exists on the zoning map, but it could be created at the discretion of the planning board and commissioners.

Others came to Monday's meeting to protest the proposed rezoning of a pie-shaped, 56.2-acre tract at the intersection of N.C. 87 and N.C. 133, across from the entrance to the Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU). Owners of the land want to change the zoning from C-LD (commercial low-density) to C-M (commercial manufacturing).

Just north of the tract are two subdivisions with 25 lots and 18 existing homes. Residents of the area have already protested the zoning of their land as C-LD. They have reportedly been told that the designation was a mistake that is likely to be rectified by the planning board.

Still, they are afraid that changing the neighboring tract to C-M would allow land uses that are incompatible with a bordering residential area.

Donna Shadid told the commissioners that she and (See ZONING, Page 2-A)

County Says No To Wilmington Zoning Offer

BY ERIC CARLSON

"No! No! No! No! No!"

That was Commissioner Donald Shaw's suggestion for an official response to the City of Wilmington's recent request for zoning control on the Brunswick County side of the Cape Fear River.

Wilmington Mayor Don Betz last month sent a polite letter to County Commissioners Chairman Don Warren, asking the board to "consider approving an agreement to allow the city to exercise extra-territorial land use jurisdiction in a limited area on the west bank of the river" to protect the view from the city's central business and historic districts.

The area requested for city zoning control lies near the USS North Carolina battleship between the Cape Fear River Memorial Bridge and bridges across the Northeast Cape Fear River and U.S. 421. Portions of the area are within the borders of both Brunswick and New Hanover counties.

Betz noted that there have been "significant public and private investments" across the river from the proposed area. He said the area is "of critical concern to the continued development of the city's riverfront and downtown area."

Betz said Wilmington "views its extension of extra-territorial jurisdiction to this area as a means of developing a cooperative planning effort...to encourage sound development in this area."

State law allows a city to extend its control into another county if the commissioners agree to the arrangement. Betz said Brunswick County "would be permitted" to appoint representatives to the Wilmington Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment "to address matters that arise in this area."

The Brunswick County Commissioners briefly discussed the city's request at their regular meeting Monday night. There was no support for the idea.

"I can't believe they even asked us," said Shaw. "My answer would be: No! No! No! No! No!"

The board voted unanimously to decline the mayor's invitation.



Off By Air Ambulance

The crew of a Carolina Air Care helicopter unloads equipment for transporting a patient from The Brunswick Hospital to N.C. Memorial Hospital in Chapel Hill Monday morning. While most medical services are available at Brunswick, the hospital has cooperative arrangements with other facilities around the state for patients who need specialized treatment.

Day At The Docks Sets Sail Saturday

BY DOUG RUTTER

What do boat rides, a shag-dancing contest and the "World's Only Bopple Race" have in common?

They're among the activities planned this Saturday at Holden Beach as the Greater Holden Beach Merchants Association sponsors the Fourth Annual Day At The Docks.

"It's a nice way to kick off the spring," said Jim Lowell, one of the event's organizers. "I think this will be our best one yet if the weather is good."

Festivities will begin at 10 a.m. with free boat rides being offered on the Mega Flite, Intimidator, Miss Sarah and other members of the Holden Beach fishing fleet.

Boat rides will continue until 3 p.m. out of Captain Pete's Seafood on the island and Holden Beach Marina and Intracoastal Marina on the mainland.

Brunswick County residents will display their arts and crafts starting at 10 a.m. at Captain Pete's Seafood and Intracoastal Marina. Booths will stay open until 6 p.m.

Food service also begins at 10 o'clock and continues until 6 p.m. Betty's will be selling seafood. Archibald's and The Barn also will be serving their popular dishes at Captain Pete's and Intracoastal Marina.

At noon, the Brunswick County Concert Band will give a performance at Holden Beach Marina. A shag-dancing contest is planned for 2 p.m. at the marina, and at 4 p.m. the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary will coordinate a boat parade.

The Day At The Docks will culminate with what is being billed as the "World's Only Bopple Race."

Throughout the day, area residents and visitors will have the opportunity to sponsor a bopple (apple) for a \$1 donation. A numbered popsicle stick will be inserted into each bopple.

At precisely 5 p.m., Holden Beach's mayor and commissioners will toss oodles of bopples from the top of Holden Beach Bridge. The bopples will float east along the waterway, and the first three to cross the finish line will be worth \$100 to their sponsors.

"The bopples are biodegradable and this has been approved by the Coast Guard," Lowell said. "They're actually good for the fish. The crabs will love them."

This year's Day At The Docks is being held in conjunction with the observance of 25th anniversary of the Town of Holden Beach, which was chartered Feb. 14, 1969.

(See FESTIVITIES, Page 2-A)

SUNNY POINT STILL FAVORED

Details Are Sparse On Plan To Accept Spent Nuclear Fuel

BY SUSAN USHER

Are the State Ports Authority at Wilmington and Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal at the top of a "short list" of ports most likely to be chosen to receive radioactive waste from overseas?

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) plans the "urgent return" to the United States of spent nuclear fuel from foreign research reactors. The fuel was enriched in the United States and shipped to those countries as long as 30 years ago.

As part of its commitment to an international effort to reduce proliferation of nuclear weapons the United States has agreed to take back the fuel and store it temporarily at its Savannah River nuclear reactor site near Aiken, S.C., while arranging its long-term storage.

Each spent fuel element is like a small box measuring three feet long by four inches wide and four inches deep. The enriched uranium is "sandwiched" between aluminum plates.

The agency has proposed the spent fuel, sealed inside stainless steel casks and shipped by cargo container, be shipped by sea to an Atlantic Coast port, then transported over land to its Savannah River nuclear reactor site near Aiken, S.C. While truck transport was first proposed, rail movement is now being considered at Sunny Point and other sites where it is available.

Whether Sunny Point is at the top of the list of ports depends on who you ask. No two answers may be alike, even within the same agency.

Brunswick County Emergency Management Director Cecil Logan will answer with an emphatic "yes." He'll add that while hoping otherwise, "in the back of my mind, I've got the feeling they'll choose Brunswick County."

Federal control, extensive on-site security measures, relative isolation,

a large buffer area, containerized cargo-handling facilities, experience handling hazardous materials and the county's comparatively low-density population make Sunny Point an attractive alternative in a politically-charged decision-making climate.

Getting good information, he said, "has been very difficult."

"If they do choose Sunny Point, I hope they do consider rail," said Logan. "If they do we've got a plan in place." Otherwise, one has to be developed.

Under an agreement with the U.S. Army, CP&L already ships spent fuel rods from its Brunswick Nuclear Plant near Southport to the Shearon Harris plant near Raleigh for storage, using the Sunny Point railroad line in Brunswick County.

"Either way we would still have to put together a radiation response team, which I'm in the process of doing now," said Logan. "CP&L has its own response team for its shipments." He expects to train local volunteers and some county personnel in the 40-hour required course.

Compared to other types of hazardous waste, Logan said dealing with radiation is "always more serious" and that the likelihood of an accident is significantly greater with highway transport than with rail transport.

After talking at length Monday afternoon with an environmental management official within the U.S. Department of Energy, Logan told Brunswick County Commissioners he understood the two ports are on a list of five with Jacksonville, Fla., Savannah, Ga., and Charleston, S.C. That was the same conclusion he reached after his initial contact with a DOE contractor three weeks ago.

Missing from an earlier prospecting list of seven ports plus alternate sites are three Virginia ports at Newport News, Norfolk and (See OFFICIAL, Page 2-A)

Shellfishermen Lose Saucepan, Gain Harvest Area In Waterway

BY DOUG RUTTER

Local shellfishermen gained harvest area in the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway last week, but they may have lost harvest rights in Saucepan Creek for good.

After being "temporarily" closed for four years due to pollution, state officials last Thursday re-opened shellfishing in the waterway adjacent to Holden Beach's largest canal subdivision.

At the same time, the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries formally closed 250 acres of shellfish waters in Saucepan Creek, which also had been closed on a temporary basis since 1990.

George Gilbert, assistant director of the state's shellfish sanitation division, said there's a chance Saucepan Creek could be re-opened temporarily in the future. "We'll just have to monitor it in dry weather and open it up when we can," he said.

Bacterial pollution levels typically drop during periods of dry weather. They are usually at their highest after it rains because stormwater runoff carries pollution into streams and rivers, making shellfish unsafe to eat.

Gilbert said the re-opening in the Intracoastal Waterway affects about

a half-mile stretch between channel markers 55 and 57.

The area is adjacent to the subdivision known as Holden Beach Harbor, a development that features nine finger canals that provide boat access to the waterway.

"I don't have any idea why conditions have improved. It's hard to say. There may have been some lots that were cleared at the time it was closed that now have adequate vegetation," Gilbert said.

"Whatever it was seems to have dissipated enough to where it cleared up. Consequently, we were able to open it. There's nothing you can point your finger at and say this is the reason it improved."

Gilbert said both actions were taken following extensive evaluations of water and shellfish samples taken over a three-year period.

At the same time as the Saucepan Creek closure, the Division of Marine Fisheries closed 455 acres of shellfishing waters in Carteret County because of pollution.



Spring Cleaning

Sunset Beach Beautification Committee members converge on the town's fire department grounds with rakes and pruning tools as part of the group's spring cleaning rampage. The committee, which also has decorated the town median in an Easter motif, takes its tongue-in-cheek motto seriously: "Practice random acts of kindness and senseless beauty!"

Inside...

Birthdays.....	2B
Business News.....	7D
Calendar.....	8B
Church News.....	8A
Classified.....	1-8C
Crime Report.....	11C
Court Docket.....	10C
Golf.....	6D
Obituaries.....	8A
Opinion.....	4-5A
People In The News.....	6B
Plant Doctor.....	3B
Sports.....	1-6D
Television.....	8-9D