



Happy Easter!
For a listing of Holy Week services at area churches, see Page 7-B

Island Living
Supplement included in this issue.

Spring Forward
Add a little sunlight to the end of your workday; don't forget to advance your clocks one hour Saturday night.

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ISSUE LAST FAILED BY ONE VOTE

Sunset Residents To Vote Tuesday On Participation In Sewer System

BY SUSAN USHER
In 1979 Sunset Beach residents voted to issue bonds for a water system, but defeated a sewer bond issue by one vote.

A much expanded group of town residents will go to the polls next Tuesday, April 5, to answer a similar question.

Since the last sewer bond issue failed the issue has simmered, emerging only in recent years as the towns of Sunset Beach and Calabash explored ways to singly and/or jointly finance a system at a time when state and federal grants are no longer available and low-interest loans are in high demand and short supply.

The result: the fledgling South Brunswick Water and Sewer Authority, which expects to serve a broader customer base than either or both towns could have, at a more affordable cost.

On Tuesday, town residents will vote for or against town participation in the authority, when they approve or don't approve issuance of up to \$5 million in sewer bonds. Voting will take place at the Sea Trail Corporation Building at Sea Trail Plantation between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.

If the vote passes, the town will move forward quickly on the authority. If not, the alternatives include abandoning the project entirely, holding another vote, or the town council voting to pursue the project anyway, said Town Administrator Linda Fluegel. Council has not committed to a particular course of action if the vote fails.

Fluegel said the referendum is the only legal means available to the town to poll sentiment for or against a sewer system, as it had promised earlier. While the town has reiterated its intent to not issue the bonds, a letter sent to residents from the town council in February does leave open the possibility. "If full funding is obtained there will be no need to issue the bonds approved in the order," it states.

Consulting engineer Joe Tombro of Piedmont Olsen and Hensley is confident a general obligation bond issue won't be needed. Barring a mis-step in scheduling, the authority is in line to receive a \$3.8 million low-interest loan through the N.C. Revolving Loan Fund, and another \$5 million low-interest loan from the N.C. Clean Water Bonds approved by voters statewide last year.

The balance of funding for the \$34.9 million project will be financed through issuance by the authority of \$21.6 million in revenue bonds, money it expects to recover from customers through means such as tap-on fees from required hook-ups, monthly user charges for customers and availability charges for undeveloped properties.

The Sunset Beach barrier island—which was the bulk of the town back in 1979—comprises approximately 460 acres or 3 percent of the authority's proposed 15,000-acre service area. It is the location of the greatest concentration and density of residential development and is

(See SUNSET Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTOS BY SUSAN USHER

Easter's On Its Way

Brighton Mintz (right) couldn't be happier after he and his dad, Jeff Mintz, a basket of colorful eggs left by the Easter bunny. Brighton was among the 40 or so children attending the Beatrix Potter Easter brunch at Camp United Methodist Church Saturday morning. Parents and other volunteers provided crafts, an Easter egg hunt and a brunch menu that included carrot sticks and bunny cake. Drew Phillips and Katelyn Humbert (above) transform cookies into art with the help of food dye, a cotton-tipped swab and Drew's mom, Fonda Phillips.



Feds To Explain Nuke Rod Plan Selection Means

U.S. Department of Energy personnel were to explain to Brunswick County Commissioners and residents Wednesday afternoon a government plan to accept, through one or more United States ports, spent nuclear fuel from foreign research reactors.

A special meeting of the commissioners was called for 4 p.m. in the commissioners' chambers at the Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia. Wilmington is on a list of seven proposed ports of entry developed by the DOE for possible acceptance of the used fuel elements. The U.S. Army's Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal near Southport is on a list of seven military sites considered "reasonable alternatives." A determination of which port or ports will be used is expected next month.

Joyce C. Johnson, interim clerk to the board of commissioners, said about five DOE staff members are expected to participate in an hour-long session, providing information about the spent fuel return proposal and the port selection process, and answering questions.

Mayors of Brunswick County's 18 municipalities have been invited, in case they cannot attend a similar informational meeting set by DOE on the same subject Wednesday from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. in Cameron Auditorium on the UNC-Wilmington campus, College Road, Wilmington.

With economic feasibility one criteria to be met, factors that will help determine final port selection range from overland distance of the ports from Aiken, S.C., and distance from the open ocean; cargo-handling capabilities and emergency response resources; experience handling spent nuclear fuel; regular service by commercial shippers willing to transport spent nuclear fuel from European ports; access to the port by truck or rail; and the population of the actual port of entry and along the chosen route to Aiken.

Holden Residents Defend Manager Criticized By Commissioner

BY DOUG RUTTER

Responding to a recent article in *The Brunswick Beacon*, three Holden Beach residents publicly defended Town Manager Gus Ulrich last week, calling him a "good man" who is doing an "excellent job."

"I'd like to thank the board for having a man like Gus Ulrich," said



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Fish Out Of Water

Demaris Russ was dressed for the occasion Saturday when the Greater Holden Beach Merchants Association sponsored its fourth annual Day At The Docks. Wearing a colorful costume designed by Virginia Massey, Demaris was honored as the best mermaid. She rode on the Sundowner during a boat parade that was part of the waterfront celebration. More photos are on page 1B.

Dave Gibson. "He's a good man. He's a Christian man. He lives on our beach, and he cares about the beach."

Gibson, along with residents Jeff Lee and Andy Watson, praised Ulrich during last Wednesday's board of commissioners meeting. It was the first time the board accepted public comments since a March 10 article in which Commissioner Dwight Carroll was quoted as saying he thought Ulrich should be fired.

Carroll, who previously worked as Holden Beach's building inspector under Ulrich, told the *Beacon* he doesn't think Ulrich enforces ordinances fairly and doesn't "try to get a dollar out of a dollar."

Carroll's comments were made in a telephone interview following a March 7 executive session in which commissioners began a routine evaluation of the manager's job performance.

At last week's meeting, Lee said Carroll's comments "were the worst case of the pot calling the kettle black that I have ever witnessed."

"We are very fortunate to have someone of Mr. Ulrich's qualifications serving as our town manager," Lee said. "His years as town manager of Garner should send a message that he must be qualified with 17 years service in that town."

A builder at Holden Beach, Lee said Carroll was "sadly lacking in job performance" when he was the

inspector.

"I feel that, considering the problems that Holden Beach has had with keeping qualified town managers, we had better leave a good situation alone. We have enough real problems that need to be addressed," Lee said.

Watson said he thinks Ulrich is doing an "excellent job" and urged the board of commissioners to put the issue behind them. "I just hope some of this can get behind us because we are a small community and we all care about each other," Watson said.

Watson recommended that the town board make minutes of its executive sessions available to the public once issues taken up in executive session have been resolved.

However, Mayor Wally Ausley said the board does not keep minutes of its executive sessions because it is not required by state law.

"Any conclusion that is reached in an executive session we come out and announce it always," Ausley said.

Watson said he thinks the law does require town boards to keep minutes of executive sessions and eventually make them available to the public. "It is not a good practice, even if you consider it legal, not to keep minutes," he said.

The law concerning minutes of executive sessions is vague, according to a booklet published by the N.C. Institute of Government,

"Open Meetings and Local Governments in North Carolina."

"The purpose of minutes is to provide both a record of the action taken by a board and evidence that the action was taken according to proper procedures," it states.

"If no action is taken in an executive session, nothing need appear in the minutes other than the fact that the meeting was held. If some action is taken, however, the minutes should reflect that fact."

The law also says that minutes of executive sessions may be withheld from the public "so long as public inspection would frustrate the purpose of the executive session."

The booklet, written by UNC- (See ULRICH, Page 2-A)

First Gypsy Moths Hatch; Aerial Spraying To Begin Next Week

BY ERIC CARLSON

They're hatching!
They're hatching!
After a long, sleepy winter in the forests of Brunswick and New Hanover counties, the light brown egg masses of the Asian gypsy moth are beginning to come alive with thousands of tiny caterpillars.

The first hatching of these damaging leaf-eating insects was detected last week, according to Bill Dickerson, plant pest administrator for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture. The discovery sets into motion the largest aerial pesticide spraying program in the state's history.

"Right now our best estimate is that we will begin spraying on or shortly after April 6," Dickerson said Tuesday. "Cooler weather in the next few days could slow things down a bit. We should know better by Thursday (March 31)."

The operation will involve two or more observation planes and about six crop-duster-type aircraft that will distribute two applications of pesti-

cide across a 160,000-acre area. Planes will take off and land at the Brunswick County Airport near Southport, Dickerson said.

Each application will take about 25 to 30 hours within a 7-to-10-day period, depending on weather conditions. Delays may be caused by high winds, which could prevent accurate coverage. A forecast of imminent rain would also force a postponement, since the spray is water soluble and could be washed off tree leaves before they are eaten by the caterpillars. A period of 24 hours or more without rain would be ideal, Dickerson said.

The planes will be equipped with sophisticated Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite navigation equipment to precisely plot the area sprayed within about 10 feet, Dickerson said. Warmer inland forests—where the caterpillars are likely to hatch early—will be sprayed first, followed by coastal areas, where the temperature is slightly cooler.

"The GPS will allow us to keep

precise records of exactly where an aircraft has sprayed," Dickerson said. "We don't want to miss anything."

State and federal agriculture officials began planning for the eradication program within days after a German ship at the Sunny Point military ammunition terminal was found to be infested with Asian Gypsy moths last July. Although the ship was immediately sent back to sea and fumigated, insect traps set shortly after the discovery indicated that the moths had made their way to shore on both sides of the Cape Fear River.

Experts consider the Asian gypsy moth to be one of the most damaging plant pests ever brought to our shores. Its close relative, the European gypsy moth, already affects more than 4.2 million acres of forest each year.

The Asian variety poses an even greater threat. Female European gypsy moths are flightless and lay their eggs near where the emerge from their cocoons. But female

Asian gypsy moths can fly up to 20 miles before depositing their eggs.

Once the eggs hatch, gypsy moth caterpillars go through five larval stages, Dickerson said. They begin to feed immediately, but 90 percent of their food—tree leaves—is consumed during the fifth stage, when the caterpillars are about 1.5 inches long and a quarter-inch in diameter. The pesticides used to kill the larva are most effective in the second and third stages of development.

"We want them to be large enough to consume a sufficient amount of treated leaf material for the spray to be effective, but not so large that it takes a lot (of the pesticide) to do the job," said Dickerson.

Because the caterpillars emerge at different times throughout the hatching period, a second application of pesticide is necessary to assure that all the larvae are killed.

An extensive trapping program is planned to monitor the effectiveness of the spray program. The Asian Gypsy Moth Management Team is prepared to apply a third dose of in-

secticide if necessary, Dickerson said.

Most of the infested areas will be sprayed with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), a naturally occurring bacterium (See MOTH, Page 2-A)

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