# Woman Stops Developers' Plan For Manufacturing Zone

**BY ERIC CARLSON**

A Brunswick County housewife succeeded Monday night in her grassroots campaign to stop a local corporation's plan to have property near her home re-zoned to allow commercial manufacturing.

After a public hearing attended by several dozen residents of the area, the Brunswick County Commissioners voted 3-to-2, with Jerry Jones and Donald Shaw dissenting, to deny a re-zoning request by Long Bay Properties Inc. of Southport.

The three-member corporation wanted the county to change the zoning of a triangular 58-acre tract at the apex of N.C. 87 and N.C. 133 from Commercial Low-Density (CLD) to Commercial Manufacturing. The county planning board unanimously approved the re-zoning, despite former Planning Director John Harvey's recommendation against the change.

Chances are, the re-zoning would have been approved by the county commissioners if it weren't for Sabrina Puckett.

Last December, she and her husband Norman bought a house in Moore's Creek, a cluster of spacious homes on large wooded lots just north of the property in question. A few weeks later, Norman asked the county for a building permit to add a family room and two-car garage to the house. The request was denied.

That's when the Pucketts discovered that their neighborhood was in a zone designated for low-density commercial development. Under the CLD rules, their home was a non-conforming use of the property. Any improvements to the structure would have to meet the same public access requirements as a business, including ramps for handicapped persons.

When told of the problem, the county planning department immediately recognized that a mistake had been made and recommended to the planning board that the area be re-zoned residential. The Pucketts and their neighbors have been told that the change will be made.

Meanwhile, Long Bay Properties asked to have its nearby property re-zoned to allow heavier uses than those permitted in the CLD zone. In applying for the change, the corporation noted that the zoning map shows all surrounding lands to be designated for heavy manufacturing or commercial uses (including the Moore's Creek area).

Faced with the prospect of a commercial manufacturing operation near their homes, the residents of Moore's Creek turned out in force earlier this month to ask the county to deny the zoning change. They returned Monday night as the commissioners held a public hearing and prepared to vote on the proposal.

Attorney Mason Anderson, representing Long Bay, asked the commissioners to follow the planning board's recommendation to approve the zoning change. Without revealing his client's proposed use for the land, he said it would be "more than adequately buffered" from neighboring properties.

He read a letter from the Southport/Oak Island Committee of 100 endorsing the change as a way to attract more job-producing industry to the area.

Anderson also argued that the C-M zoning makes sense in that area because the property is surrounded by commercial and heavy manufacturing (H-M) zones, including the Sunny Point military munitions terminal property 400 feet away. Also nearby is Carolina Power and Light Company's Brunswick Nuclear Plant, which is also zoned for heavy manufacturing.

Sabrina Puckett insisted that the entire area around the Sunny Point intersection has been improperly zoned. That mistake that would only be compounded by allowing a heavier use of the Long Bay property, she said.

"The rationale for designating this area as an industrial area is false," she told the board. "Sunny Point is part of the national defense system and CP&L is a public utility licensed to serve the public. Neither in fact are competitive industries."

Consequently, she said neither large tract can actually be developed for heavy manufacturing, as designated on the zoning map. Nor can the county's zoning ordinance control what the U.S. Government does on its Sunny Point property.

"So when you look at this map used by the planning department, your are just as deceived as the public into seeing a large amount of heavy manufacturing that truly does not exist," she said.

Also in her presentation, Puckett referred to a letter to the planning board from one of the developers stating that "our prospective tenant and project are based on the rezoning."

Reading from a book on state legislative zoning decisions regarding "spot zoning," she noted that it is illegal to change zoning "to secure special benefits for particular property owners without regard for the rights of adjacent landowners."

Puckett also read a letter to the planning board from Health Board Chairman Patrick Newton, who owns a mobile home park across the road from Long Bay's property. She said the letter shows that Moores Creek residents have reason to be concerned that the commercial manufacturing zone will continue to grow if the Long Bay property is re-zoned.

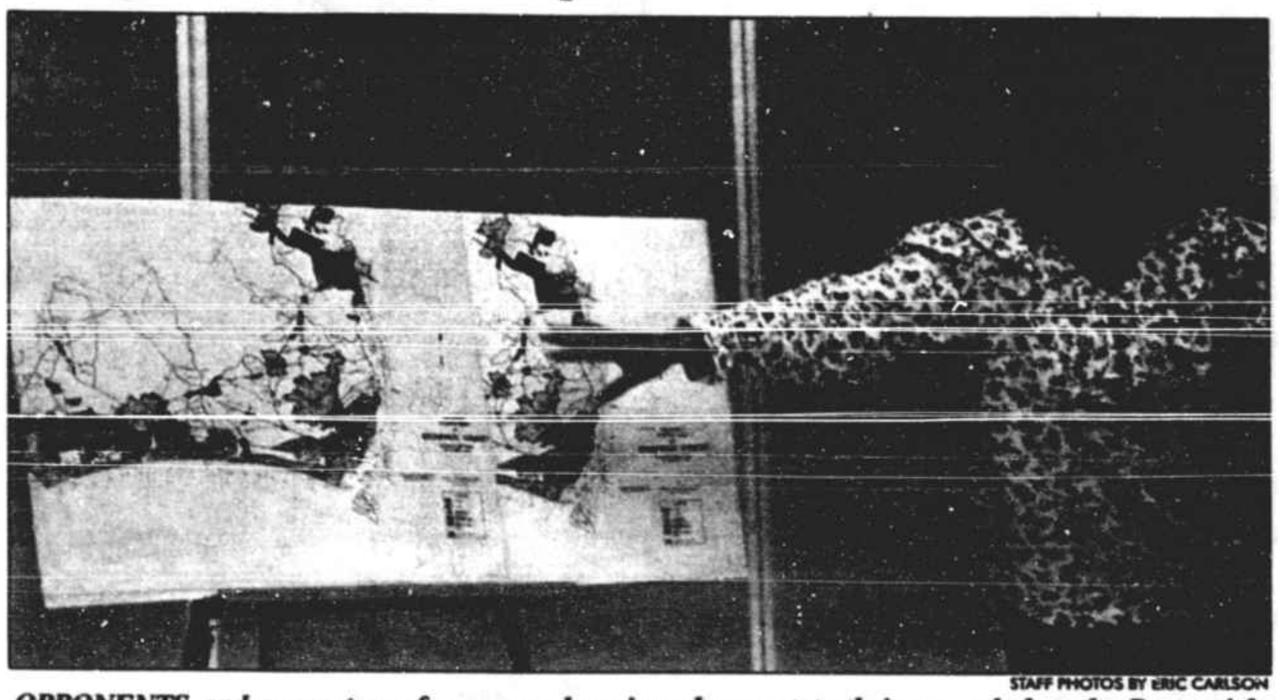
In his letter, Newton wrote, "I would expect such a change to establish a precedent that would increase the probability of allowing my nearby tract to be re-zoned to C-M should I desire to do so in the future."

Puckett also produced memos from Harvey to the planning board advising against the zoning change. In them he said the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) Land Use Plan classifies the Long Bay property as rural. The state is also studying possible changes to lanes and highway rights-of-way in the area.

Nearby lands are also being considered for special protection as an Area of Environmental Concern by the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission, he said.

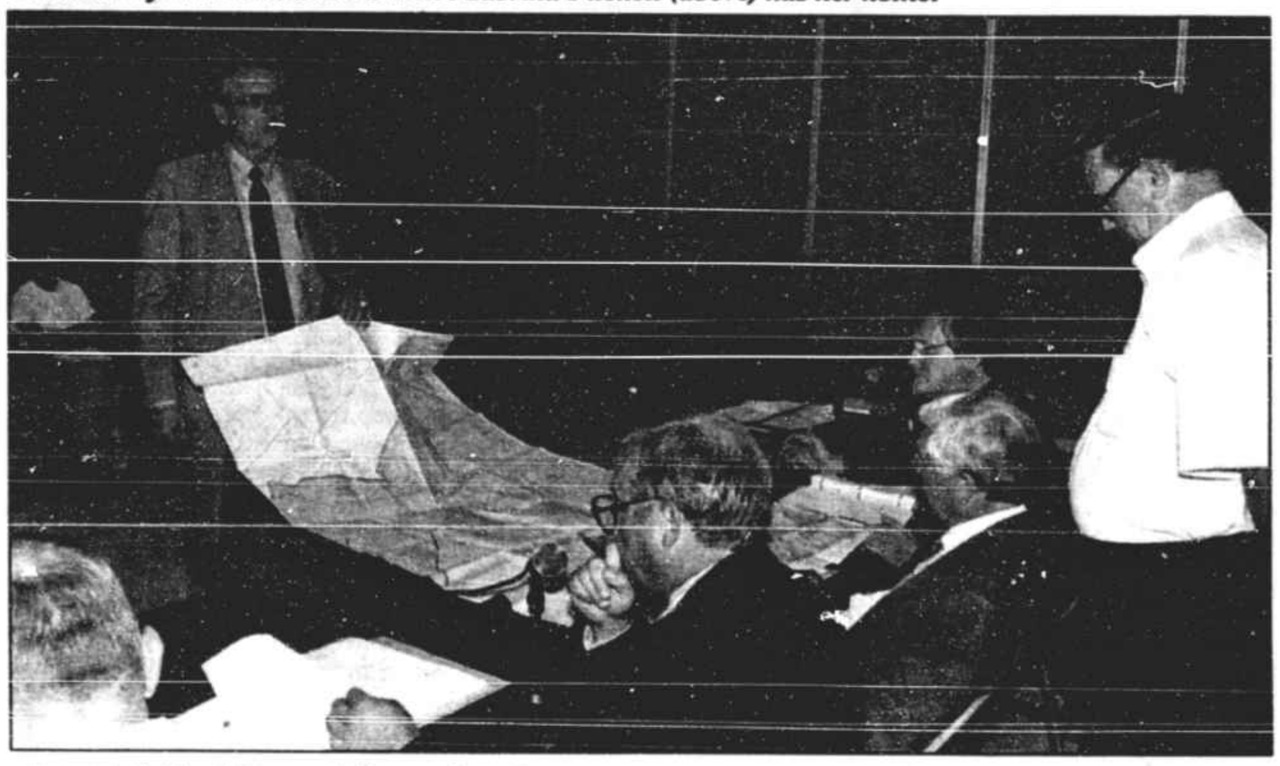
Harvey recommended that consideration of the zone change be delayed until such time as "the various studies and actions under way and suggested for this immediate area will have clarified and solidified."

In addition to Puckett, 13 others voiced opposition to the zoning change. Anderson was the only speaker in favor of the proposal.



STAFF PHOTOS BY ERIC CARLSON

*OPPONENTS and supporters of a proposed zoning change state their cases before the Brunswick County Commissioners Monday night. The board voted to deny the request from Mason Anderson (below), attorney for the developers, for an industrial use of property near Southport that is bordered on the north by a residential area where Sabrina Puckett (above) has her home.*



*"When you look at this map, you are deceived into seeing a large amount of heavy manufacturing that truly does not exist."* —Sabrina Puckett

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