

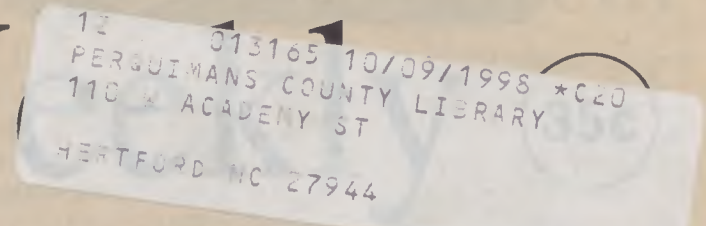
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DOT set to upgrade Holiday Island roads

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Driving through Holiday Island should soon be a less bone-jarring experience.

According to Stan Busteded, a Holiday Island resident who lobbied long and hard for improved roads in the subdivision, the state Department of Transportation has "pretty well assured us that the roads will be taken over."

Busteded said last week that work could begin in August on road improvement. Twenty-five roads in Holiday Island are scheduled to be taken into the state highway system. Research on the right-of-ways has been done, he said.

Property owners in Holiday Island raised \$10,000 in matching funds through an offer made to them by Perquimans County with input from the state. The county will match the \$10,000 property owner contribution if funds expected to come through the Board of Transportation are not available.

Busteded said those roads that can be patched will remain hard-surfaced. The ones that are beyond economical repair will become gravel roads, he said. The blacktop will be taken off and the base relaid with gravel and sand. The work is scheduled to be performed by DOT crews.

After being brought up to state standards, the roads will be accepted into the state's secondary road program and maintained by the state. In addition, Busteded said he hopes the roads that will become gravel streets with the improvements will go on the priority list to be paved when the next DOT plan is completed.

"It'll be years I'm sure," Busteded said, before all the roads in the subdivision are paved.

The commissioners discussed the plan proposed by the state in regular session in April, and authorized County Manager Paul Gregory to pursue the DOT proposal with the Holiday Island Property Owners Association. A letter was sent on April 7 to the Association by the Gregory outlining the plan.

Gregory said it was up to the property owners to decide how to collect the residents' share of the funds.

In July 1997, Busteded asked the county to use its statutory powers to assess and collect funds from subdivision residents to improve the neighborhood's roads.

Busteded said then that the roads were in extremely poor condition, and that he and a group of other residents wanted the roads brought up to state standard so they could be accepted into the state's secondary road system. Busteded's plan called for paving the roads to meet minimum state standards.

None of the county commissioners except Bert Hayes indicated any willingness to explore the county's participation in assessing and collecting funds for road improvements.



PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

Front Street residents Melanie and Derrick James are renovating their home and plan to take advantage of the state tax credits that will be available to them when the Hertford Historic District is placed on the National Register of Historic.

Hertford to be on National Register soon

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

The Hertford Historic District should be included in the National Register of Historic Places by mid-September.

That's what Scott Powers of the North Carolina Department of Archives and History told those at an open meeting held recently to discuss the inclusion of the district on the national register.

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Sandra Smith said the inclusion of the district on the national register will have a positive impact on the town. She said property owners in the district will qualify for tax credits for renovations to qualifying properties as of Jan. 1, 1999 and that the designation should increase the flow of tourists to the community. With those tourists come dollars spent with local businesses, she said.

The district is bounded on the east and north by the Perquimans River, on the west by West Academy and Hyde Park streets and on the south by Dobbs Street. Smith said there are 223 contributing properties located in the district and 63 non-contributing properties.

National Register designa-

tion does not take rights away from property owners, Smith said. Those who own property within the district will not be restricted in any way, she said.

There are, however, guidelines to follow for those who wish to benefit from the tax credits. Smith said owners of residential properties may apply for a 30 percent state tax credit on qualifying renovations. Owners of income-producing properties can apply for 20-percent state and 20 percent federal tax credits on qualifying renovations. The Department of Archives and History will assist property owners desiring to seek the tax credits through the Greenville office, she said.

Front Street homeowners Derrick and Melanie James did not wait until the new year to pursue information regarding renovations and tax credits. Melanie James said she and her husband are in the process of renovating their home and called Reed Thomas in Greenville for information.

"They're (Archives and History) extremely good to work with," James said. "They make lots of good recommendations. They're not difficult at all."

James said she was able to fill out the tax credit applica-

tion in layman's terms and submitted hand-drawn drawings for the renovations.

James said included among the guidelines for receiving residential tax credits are that homeowners must spend at least \$25,000 on renovations which do not include additions, but do include installation of heating and air conditioning, upgrading wiring and plumbing, repairing plaster, painting, flooring and other improvements. The tax credits come off taxes owed over a 5-10 year period, James said.

While there are guidelines that must be met, James said she found them to be reasonable, adding that the staff at Archives and History has made good suggestions on how to maintain the historic integrity of her home while making it convenient.

James said she would not have been supportive of a historic district that included restrictions, but believes national register designation will have a positive affect on Hertford.

"They have no control over anything you do unless you want the tax credits," she said.

James said she believes the tax credits have the potential to encourage people to buy or renovate properties in the district.

Holiday Island considers incorporating

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Holiday Island could become Perquimans County's third incorporated municipality if a move by some residents is successful.

According to subdivision resident Pat Phillips, a group of citizens in Holiday Island formed a task force to study pros and cons of incorporating the subdivision to form a municipality. Phillips is a member of that group.

Phillips said there are concerns in the subdivision that can best be addressed through a municipal government with elected officials, a town clerk and taxing power. The main advantage of incorporating, Phillips said, would be that Holiday Island could qualify for state and possibly federal grants to help improve the community. Powell Bill funds, monies set aside by the state for municipalities to use for road repair, could help Holiday Island, Phillips said. From the research done by the municipality study group, Phillips said Holiday Island could receive \$80,000 in Powell Bill funds.

Phillips said only the residential area, not the camping sections, is being considered for incorporation.

In order to become a town, residents must present a petition signed by 15 percent of the 385 registered voters in Holiday Island to the General Assembly. Phillips said Bill Culpepper (Dem-Chowan) has agreed to introduce legislation on the group's behalf should they be able to get the required signatures. The legislature would then pass a bill allowing Holiday Island to incorporate upon approval by referendum.

In addition, a proposed budget, charter and map designating the area to be incorporated would have to be submitted.

Ken Ries, a member of the Holiday Island Property Owners Association (HIPOA) Board of Governors and a resident of Holiday Island, said there would be several advantages to incorporation.

HIPOA lacks the power to raise money, Ries said. The only funds HIPOA can collect come from the \$36 per year assessment to maintain common property stipulated in the property deeds in the subdivision. The residents do not have a good track record of paying assessments, as evidenced by four judgements issued in district court recently against property owners failing to pay the assessments. In addition, the assessments are not sufficient to maintain common property in the community, which include a pool, clubhouse, marina, tennis courts, park, pier, bulkhead and public safety building. Both Phillips and Ries said some of these facilities are in dire need of improvement.

HIPOA would continue to own the subdivision's common property even if Holiday Island becomes a municipality. Ries said perhaps some agreement could be drafted between the proposed municipal government and HIPOA to allow for the lease or transfer of the common properties to the municipality. This would allow tax monies to be used for

improvements.

Another advantage Ries cited for incorporating is that the streets in the subdivision which do not meet state standards could be maintained by the municipality.

Ries said the town could also offer garbage collection, law enforcement and ordinances specific to the subdivision. An example of an ordinance that might help the subdivision would be those that help to enforce the restrictive covenants. Ries said at present the only way to enforce covenants dealing with junk cars and the like is for one resident to take another resident to court. With town ordinances, the governing body would be responsible for that action, Ries said.

Ries also said there are disadvantages to incorporating. Incorporating would add another layer of government and more taxes. He said some people also believe it would be difficult to get qualified candidates for the town council because of the small full-time population, but Ries does not think that would be a problem.

One of the biggest arguments against incorporation is that many property owners will not get to vote on the issue, according to Stan Busteded, a resident who opposes incorporating.

Busteded said that under state law, only a very small number of residents can make the decision on incorporation for a large number of lot owners. That's because only those residents who are registered voters in Perquimans County could vote in the referendum. But a great number of Holiday Island property owners live out of state, Busteded said, and therefore cannot be registered voters here. Busteded said he does not think it is fair that all property owners will not have a voice in the referendum.

There are 1,947 lots in the Holiday Island subdivision, 1,283 in the residential area and 664 in the camping sections, according to Ries. Busteded said that 735 of the residential lots are dormant, mainly because the lots no longer qualify for septic tank permits under today's statutes. Some of the lots are owned by individuals, others by Coastland Corporation, the original developers, or their successors, Ries said.

Busteded said the default rate on the undevelopable lots is already high, and that a municipality probably would not collect taxes on those lots. Foreclosing on the lots would only mean the municipality would own lots which they could not sell, Busteded said.

"I don't think a municipal government can solve these problems," Busteded said.

Ries said that at a HIPOA meeting held Saturday to address other issues, those opposed to incorporation were collecting signatures on petitions. He said there were many signatures on the petitions, but not necessarily those of registered voters. Some were property owners who do not live in the subdivision, he said.

"We feel that of the registered voters that are here, the majority will approve incorporation," he said.



DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY

Gene Boyce of Hertford Savings Bank presents a one-quarter carot diamond to Thomas Sharp. Sharp was the lucky customer who won the diamond Hertford Savings gave away during its 75th anniversary celebration last month.