

Kure Beach access plan draws fire

By Todd Volkstorf
Staff Writer

Public access to the shoreline at Kure Beach hasn't kept up with the town's 10-year population boom, but that's likely to change as the town tries to plan for more growth.

That growth could include oceanside public restrooms and paving and expanding to the town's existing access lots. However, it's riding on the controversial Shoreline Access Plan, which the Town Council will consider adopting Tuesday. The town has grant money to pave three of the lots.

Holland Consulting Planners Inc. of Wilmington developed the plan from July to November last year.

Some residents feel the community wasn't involved in designing the plan. "It's a good plan and we're heading in the right direction, but I don't think the community input was always there," said Mac Montgomery, a Kure Beach resident.

He said he believes the town's growth in recent years



STAFF PHOTO | NICOLE CAPPELLO

Kure Beach Mayor Betty Medlin stands in one of the gravel parking lots the town wants to pave. The plan is drawing criticism from some residents.

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demands involvement from its residents, who Mr. Montgomery said have felt shut out of the process in the past.

To get that community input, the Town Council held a public hearing last week that drew a standing-room-only crowd. The questions and concerns raised prompted town officials to schedule another public hearing for 5 p.m. Tuesday.

"People that have problems with it are saying once we accept this plan it will take on a life on its own and be the law of the land. But that won't happen with this council. This is a road map, not a directive," said Jim Dugan, Kure Beach councilman.

He said having the plan in place would aid the town as it applies for grant money through the Coastal Area Management Act.

"... There's a lack of understanding for what the plan calls for the town to do or a lack of trust of elected officials," he said.

At last week's meeting, Councilman Tim Fuller pushed for further debate. He argued that the community hadn't had enough time to discuss its concerns with the council.

Mr. Fuller said he agrees that the town needs a shoreline access plan but wants to be sure concerns are addressed and details are thoroughly discussed.

Mayor Betty Medlin said she agrees with some of the residents and council members that some of the plan may need to be

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clarified, but maintains that adopting it doesn't mean it has to be followed word for word.

Mayor Medlin said having it in place is vital for the future of Kure Beach. "A lot of time and effort has gone into it with good intentions," she said.

While Mr. Fuller said he un-

derstands that the plan, which will be considered Tuesday, wouldn't force any action without further debate, he worries what effect it might have on future funding and grants if it's not followed.

He asked, "This plan will be presented to the Army Corps of Engineers and CAMA as a demonstration of our good faith effort to qualify for state and federal funds. If we pass a plan and then choose not to implement parts of it, how will our funding be affected?"

The public hearing to address resident concerns will be at 5 p.m. Tuesday at Town Hall, 117 Settlers Lane.

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