

Burlington council winds up long debate over flood plain ordinance

By MARK MORROW
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BURLINGTON — First, they called it a "drainage area." Then it was a "conveyance area." Now, it's a "special flood risk zone."

In short, Gages Slough is anything but a floodway, the city has decided.

"We just gave it a different name," said City Planner Steve Ladd. "It's gone back and forth."

The Burlington City Council finally put an end to months of talking Thursday and adopted a flood-plain ordinance that included the new language.

The city was under pressure from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to adopt an ordinance by January 1985 or lose its eligibility for federal flood insurance.

The city will now be able to enter the regular flood insurance program on Jan. 3, city officials said.

Coverage for residences will increase from \$35,000 to at least \$70,000. Non-residential structures can increase their coverage from \$100,000 worth of insurance to \$200,000, City Supervisor Stan Kersey said.

"I think we're going to find our insurance rates (for new construction) will be about a third of what they have been," Kersey said.

If the city finds older structures that have their lowest habitable floor at least one foot above the 100-year flood level, those buildings also will be eligible for the new rates, Kersey said.

"Nobody's rates will increase as a result of going into the regular insurance program," Ladd added. "People who built to the 100-year level will be rewarded with lower rates."

The "special flood risk zone" includes those portions of Gages Slough having a ground elevation that is three feet or more below the 100-year flood plain elevation and that have "alignment with other such areas along Gages Slough to allow passage of flood waters."

Maps that outline flood risk zones will continue to be available for viewing at the offices of Leonard and Boudinot at 612 Fairhaven Ave. After the first of the year, the maps will be available at city hall, Kersey said.

New construction can take place in the "risk" zone, but it

must be elevated so floodwaters can pass underneath in some fashion. Devices to accomplish this include such things as "breakaway walls" and pilings or foundations "oriented to the axis of the flow path."

The special zone also takes in areas lying within 300 feet of the landward toe of dike levees along the Skagit River — or those areas that can expect to experience greater velocities in times of flooding.

Ladd said the city did not have to put the slough and the special flood risk zone in an official "floodway" to satisfy FEMA's requirements.

"We're hoping the Department of Ecology will buy it, too," Ladd said.

To call the area a floodway would be even more restrictive on development and be very "disruptive" to the existing community, Ladd added.

The document adopted by the city also covers such things as adequate construction materials and methods to be used in the floodplain, utilities, on-site sewage disposal systems, and minimizing flood damage in subdivisions.

Schroeder improving after stroke

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — William Schroeder survived a partially paralyzing stroke, his second setback since he became the world's second recipient of a permanent artificial heart, but motion in his weakened right side improved overnight, his doctor said today.

The stroke, which froze Schroeder's arm in midair as he was eating, came just hours after he received a Social Security

check that was hand-delivered by two officials Thursday, as a result of his complaints to President Reagan in a telephone conversation the day before.

But Schroeder began recovering quickly, and "he is even better still" today, Dr. Allan M. Lansing, chairman and medical director of Humana Heart Institute, said this morning. The patient had improved steadily since 8 p.m. Thursday, two hours after

the stroke, Lansing said.

Tests indicated there was no permanent damage in Schroeder's right leg, although "the arm motion is still not normal," Lansing said.

Schroeder, 52, was in serious but stable condition today, his 19th day with the artificial heart. His blood pressure and other vital signs were normal.

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