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Legion baseball playoffs are underway and Brunswick is on a roll -- Page 12

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The State Port

PILOT

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Thousands of N. C. Fourth of July Festival spectators gathered at the riverside stage to enjoy performances throughout the weekend. They were grandly entertained there on Monday evening by the ever-popular Embers. Photo by Jim Harper

Maybe to court

School, county boards locked over funding

By Terry Pope County Editor

If school officials want more tax dollars to operate the system this fall, they'll have to go to court.

County commissioners abruptly ended a two-hour joint meeting with the Brunswick County Board of Education Tuesday without offering more money for local spending.

School superintendent Ralph Johnston said he will call for an emergency meeting of the school board Thursday, July 7, 6 p.m. at the Carolina Power and Light Co. conference center near Southport.

The school board has until midnight Friday to ask clerk of court Diana Morgan to mediate the funding dispute between the two boards. The schools requested about \$13.4 million in local appropriations and received \$9.7 million last month.

"I think commissioners will probably evaluate any additional information we received," said Don Warren, chairman of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners. "They just were not ready to make any financial decisions tonight on additional funding."

The clerk of court can either weigh evidence in the dispute or defer the matter to a Superior Court judge. That was the case last year

*'We couldn't make an offer in public. The two chairmen talked, but it didn't work out. That's fine. Maybe next time, I don't know.'*

Donald Shaw District 5 commissioner

when judge William C. Gore Jr. ordered that a professional mediator try to reach an agreement between the two sides.

"I thought tonight there was a good, free flow of information," said school board attorney Glen Peterson. "I think the school board was able to give commissioners a lot of information they didn't have. Even though no resolution was reached tonight, I felt the meeting was useful and very, very positive."

Last year's funding dispute went See Schools, page 8

Writer returns to Pilot

Richard Nubel has rejoined the staff of *The State Port Pilot* as municipal editor.

The veteran reporter, who was employed by the newspaper from 1982 to 1992, will be responsible for coverage of government and community events in Southport, Long Beach, Yaupon Beach, Caswell Beach and Boiling Spring Lakes.

Those duties were previously handled by Holly Edwards, who will move into the position of feature editor while retaining some general assignment duties.

*Pilot* editor Ed Harper said the newspaper is "fortunate to have a staff of award-winning journalists who will maintain the level of reporting and overall quality we have achieved in recent years."

Nubel, 41, who worked for the past two years with his wife Kitty in their insurance business, has been a resident of the Southport-Oak Island area for 14 years. He has been active as a community volunteer, serving as chairman of the U. S. Open King Mackerel Tournament in 1987 and 1988 and as president of the Southport Lions Club in 1988. He has received 12 personal awards for writing and reporting excellence from the state press association.

Edwards' new position will allow her to pursue special topics more thoroughly. Her assignment reporting will include the Brunswick County Board of Education, Brunswick Community College and Doshier Memorial Hospital.

Terry Pope will continue as county editor, responsible for coverage of all departments of county government and the court system. His beat also includes municipalities in northern Brunswick County.

Jim Harper will continue his coverage of Carolina Power and Light Co., Southeast Brunswick Sanitary District and Bald Head Island.

Federal court tossed it

Alexander's lawsuit refiled in state court

By Terry Pope County Editor

A new lawsuit filed in Brunswick County Superior Court claims the former clerk to the board of commissioners was wrongfully fired from her job because she happens to be a black Democrat.

Previous claims were dismissed by a U. S. District Court judge in Wilmington but are now outlined in another suit filed in state court by Raleigh attorney Martha Geer.

Regina Alexander, who is now employed by the City of Boiling Spring Lakes, says in the new complaint that she was a victim of discrimination and that her constitutional rights were violated.

She has filed suit against former Republican commissioner Kelly

*The board voted to eliminate the position and to appoint the county manager's secretary to a joint position, which included the clerk's job*

Holden and current commissioners Donald Shaw, Jerry Jones, Wayland Vereen, Don Warren, Tom Rabon Sr. and against Brunswick County.

In June, 1991, Holden, Jones and Shaw voted to eliminate the job held by Ms. Alexander and to hire another person to fill a dual role of clerk and secretary to the county manager.

In a ruling last month, chief U. S. District Court judge James Fox dismissed a similar complaint on the grounds that commissioners were protected in their action by the legal doctrine of "legislative immunity."

That doctrine recognizes that governing bodies, such as county commissions, are immune from lawsuits for decisions made in a legislative capacity.

But it has been tested only in federal court and not state court. The county has 30 days to answer this latest complaint or else file for an

See Lawsuit, page 7

Our record crowd was well-behaved

By Richard Nubel Municipal Editor

They came. They saw. They parted. And then they crept out of town.

"This was the biggest crowd at night I've ever seen, without a doubt," Southport police chief Bob Gray said of the Monday night throng at the 1994 N. C. Fourth of July Festival.

By some estimates, visitors to downtown Southport may have reached 45,000. The mega-crowd Monday night -- bigger than any Saturday or Sunday and maybe bigger than ever -- came to dance in the streets to the beach sounds of The Embers and to gaze skyward as fireworks round-after-round burst into streams every color of the spectrum.

Everywhere there were people. Crowds jammed the Garrison and flooded the foot of Howe Street. See Record crowd, page 3

Line may cross waterway

Clean Long Beach water is on tap

By Richard Nubel Municipal Editor

No more of that grungy mess at the bottom of your water glass. No more of that flaky stuff falling out of your ice cubes as they slowly pollute your beverage of choice.

These may be two among several other benefits to Long Beach water users as Brunswick County pursues expansion of its water delivery system from the west end of Long Beach across the Intracoastal Waterway to Sunset Beach.

Brunswick County engineer Robert Tucker informed Long Beach officials in early June of county plans to interconnect with the town's Oak Island Drive water main at a point near Robin Schuster Park at the road's

extreme western end. The line will be extended some 6,000 linear feet across the Intracoastal Waterway.

Long Beach public works director Charles Derrick said that is good news for both the town and water users.

"It will at least give us an outlet on the west end in the harbor which we don't have now," Derrick said.

Long Beach purchases treated water from Brunswick County. Water is delivered by the county to the town at 79th Street, but the town's water delivery system is not looped -- water is not constantly circulated through the system, rather it sits in delivery lines until it is used.

In the summer, when usage is high, there are few problems. But in the fall and winter,

when the seasonal population dwindles, water sits unused for long periods of time in delivery lines. Sedimentation forms in the still water and is particularly present at the extreme western end of the island and along the beach strand.

Increased water flow out of the Long Beach line to Sunset Harbor is expected to go a long way to correcting the sedimentation problem, Derrick said.

In the past, Long Beach has been forced to help correct the water-line sedimentation problem by costly flushing of the lines. Fire hydrants are opened and water is allowed to flow out of the lines, emptying them of the grungy, flaky sedimentation.

"Now, this will give us an outgoing flow and help the water quality," Derrick said.

It should also help cut the cost of line maintenance. Flushing is expensive. Water flowing from the Brunswick County system is metered at 79th Street and Long Beach is charged for every gallon of water that passes that point -- including water that is flushed from water lines into the streets and drainage ditches in the effort to remove sedimentation.

Long Beach pays \$1.35 for every 1,000 gallons of water it flushes away and is not resold to town customers.

"Last month I went out and flushed a line on the west end. I got 600,000 gallons out of that hydrant alone," Derrick said. "At \$1.35 per 1,000 gallons, that gets expensive. But, we have no alternative right now."

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