



Sports

South Brunswick girls will host an 8-team tournament starting next week -- 12B

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Our Town

Bald Head Island renews its longstanding interest in renourishment -- Page 2

Neighbors

All kids want for Christmas hasn't changed much over the generations -- 1B

No bids received on school

Leland facility \$6-\$8 million

By Holly Edwards
Feature Editor

General contractors apparently aren't eager to build the new Leland Elementary School.

In a bid opening conducted this week, the school system received no bids from general contractors for the project. Three bids from electrical, mechanical and plumbing contractors were received, however.

The school system must now readvertise the project for at least 45 days.

A minimum of three general contractor bids must be received upon the first advertisement for a bid to be awarded, but there is no such requirement for subsequent advertisement.

Superintendent of schools Ralph Johnston offered an explanation for the absence of general contractor bids.

"Timing was a problem," he said. "A lot of contractors are involved in projects already underway."

The Leland Elementary School is expected to cost between \$6 million and \$8 million, depending upon the size of the facility. Architect Charles Boney Jr. said he asked contractors to submit two bids -- one for a 19-classroom school and one for a 27-classroom school. The school board would then decide which size facility to construct.

Brunswick County commissioners have agreed to finance up to \$8 million through issuance of certificates of participation through NationsBank to build the new school. The school system will repay the county with its share of half-cent sales tax revenues.

Even if three general contractors had bid on the project, school board attorney Glen Peterson said the school system cannot award bids until it receives written permission to tap onto a sewer system to be operated jointly by the towns of Belville, Leland and Navassa.

There is, however, disagreement. See School, page 8

Are welfare cuts for our own good?

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Welfare reform may be the toughest assignment facing state legislators in January, but those who work with recipients at the local level are a bit edgy over solutions that may be offered from Raleigh.

The bi-partisan effort to reduce benefits or to cut the number of persons on federal assistance may not lead to reform but instead create even more problems for government agencies to deal with, warns Jamie Orrock, director of the Brunswick County Department of Social Services.

Over the past 20 years the stigma of landing on welfare has been removed for the average person; it has become an attractive offer, one too good to pass up

"You can't isolate social services," said Orrock. "You have to look at human services as a whole. I don't think anybody can really agree on what they want to accomplish."

DSS administrators Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), government welfare assistance for low-income households and the food stamp program.

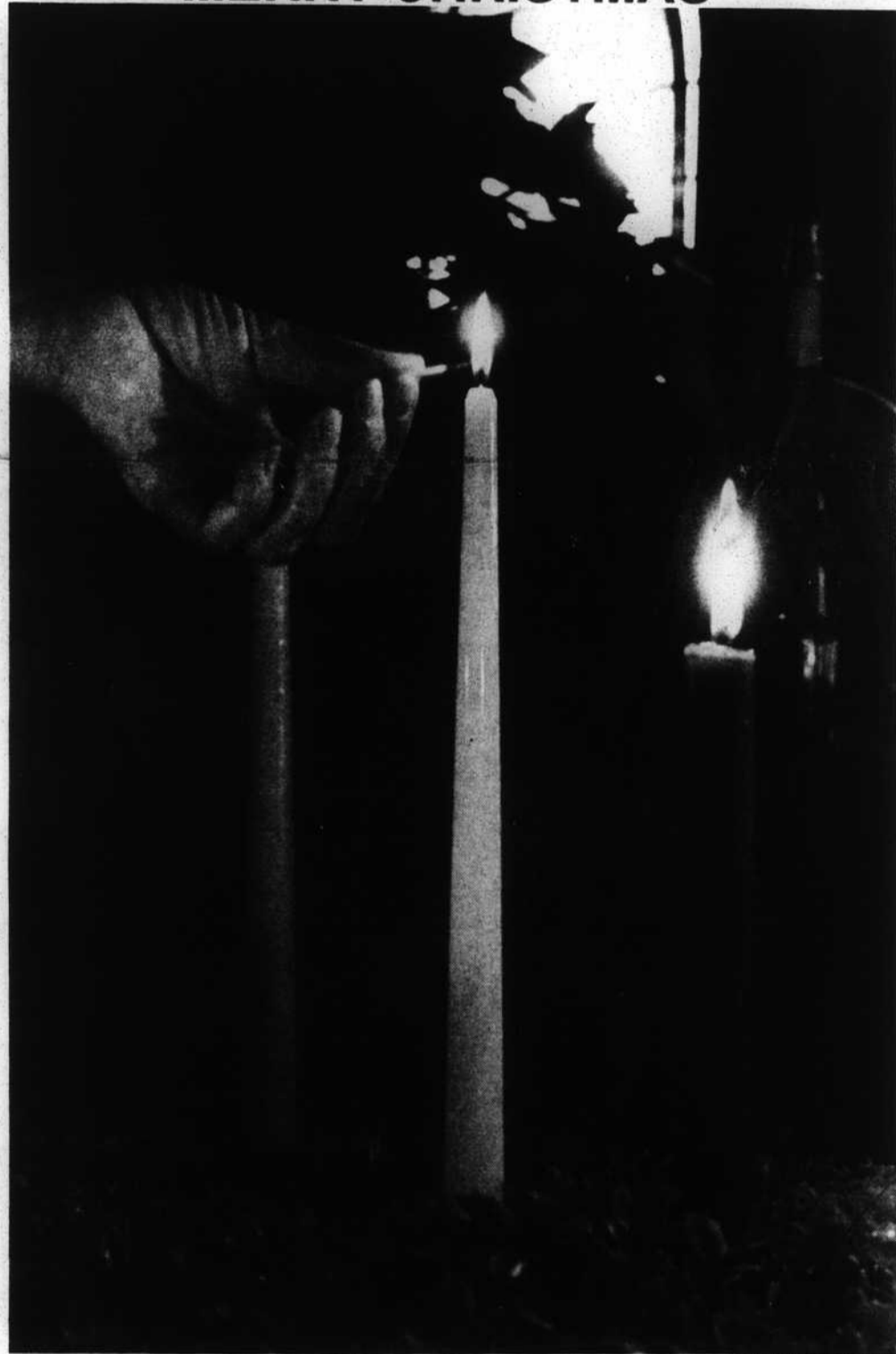
In October, the number of active AFDC cases in Brunswick County was 1,272 homes, up from 1,215 cases in September. The number of families

that received food stamps was 2,511, for a value of \$442,604 in October. That was up from \$411,671 for 2,492 recipients in September. Increasing numbers statewide have both Republicans and Democrats scrambling for answers before the system goes broke. State Rep. David Redwine (D-

Ocean Isle Beach) co-chairs the Welfare Reform Study Commission seated in March to examine the whole purpose for welfare programs and to identify disincentives that keep persons from becoming independent, responsible and productive workers.

Redwine, who represents most of Brunswick and Columbus counties in the 14th House District, said it has been a learning experience for the commission, which includes two county DSS directors -- E. C. Modlin of Cumberland County and John Blair of Wayne County. See Welfare, page 9

MERRY CHRISTMAS



Lighting of the Christmas candle in the Ad-holiday ceremonies this week. A listing of relevant wreath is a central ritual in many religious observances is in section B.

Boyd new commissioner

Long Beach adds 'planner' to staff

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

A new office was added to the management structure of the Town of Long Beach Tuesday night as town council approved the employment of a full-time planner.

Council also Tuesday formally accepted the resignation of commissioner David Durr, who is moving to Yaupon Beach, and appointed newcomer R. Whitney (Bob) Boyd as his replacement.

Boyd was sworn to office by town attorney James R. Prevatte.

In leaving the post to which he was first elected three years ago, Durr cited the job's "ups and downs" and said he felt more work could have been done at times.

"I want to express my appreciation to the people of the Town of Long Beach and this board for allowing me to serve," Durr said.

The departing commissioner was awarded a plaque and a resolution of the board citing his efforts to improve the quality of life in Long Beach.

Approval to add a full-time planner to the town staff came on the recommendation of town manager Jerry Walters, who said the person to whom the job is awarded will split his time between duties now assigned the building inspections de-

partment and special assignments.

In July of this year, council approved a budget which contained \$12,900 for a part-time planner, but the job was never filled. The funds budgeted for the part-time planner will be used to pay the full-time planner when he is hired. Walters said he will try to have the new employee in place by February 15.

The town manager said the greatest need for the new staff member is to "free some of my time." He said the new planner will "pay great attention to some of the bigger planning items we will be facing."

Among the "bigger" planning items the town will face in the coming months is completion of an on-going study of wastewater alternatives and water quality measures now being undertaken by consulting engineers.

Council approved the mid-year addition of the staff position on a 4-2 vote, with councilmen Jeff Ensminger and Danny Leonard dissenting.

Commissioner Bill Easley said with all the special projects underway in Long Beach the new staff member will likely serve as an assistant to the town manager.

Ensminger said he did not want to hire additional personnel at mid-year.

"We approved a part-time planner at See Long Beach, page 13

Sheriff asks funding

Open-door policy can't come cheap

By Terry Pope
County Editor

A mandate from the public during the fall election drove new sheriff Ronald Hewett to keep his department open 24 hours -- at all costs.

Now that cost is being realized by the ones that must foot the bill.

Brunswick County commissioners Monday appeared receptive to Hewett's plan but delayed a final decision until next month.

District 5 commissioner Bill Sue of Leland was ready to vote, but the Democrat's motion to allocate the \$76,000 Hewett says is needed during the next six months for extra manpower was defeated 4-1.

"One of the problems we have with crime is that we don't have enough deputies," said Sue.

However, the board agreed to shelve the proposal until January. That will allow more time to study the figures and comparisons with other local sheriff departments.

"To me, it's worthwhile, and I will not close that office. We've got to have that office open. It's incumbent upon me to do so."

Ronald Hewett
Sheriff

"I may not have a problem with the request, but I'm not ready to make a decision tonight," said Republican chairman Jerry Jones of District 2.

Former sheriff John Carr Davis made a decision not to pull road deputies from patrol to staff the department 24 hours. Opening the See Policy, page 10

NCEMPA cities owe big

Apex also sees bottom line

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

With electric costs for 32 member cities of the N. C. Eastern Municipal Power Agency scheduled to increase 30 percent over the next six years, Southport isn't the only city looking to bolt the alliance.

"We haven't found any way to do what our attorney calls 'unscrambling the egg,'" said Bill Sutton, town manager of Apex, a Raleigh bedroom community. "He says once the egg is scrambled, it is awfully hard to put it back together."

But Apex tried.

And, Southport mayor Norman Holden said last week this city, too, will try to unscramble that egg.

NCEMPA operations manager Ken Raber

old aldermen December 8 inescapable contracts bind Southport to the heavily mortgaged power agency until 2026. Southport executed two contracts with NCEMPA's forerunner agency in 1982. A Project Power Sales Agreement made Southport responsible for just under seven percent of the power agency's debt -- debt that was incurred to purchase ownership interest in six power generating facilities owned by Carolina Power and Light Co. and other electric producers. In a second, supplemental power agreement, Southport agreed to buy the 40 percent of power that was not supplied it by ownership interest, from NCEMPA.

In 1982, power agency founders said by acquiring ownership interests in power generation facilities, member cities could control costs to their consumers.

In 1994, Raber said the agency was founded on false beliefs and economic assumptions that never materialized. Simply, the agency founders overestimated the growth this state would realize in the 1980s and '90s. CP&L hedged its bets years ago, canceling plans to construct additional generating facilities.

Apex signed similar agreements with the agency when it became a NCEMPA member city.

"We looked at the contracts and tried to see if there were any loopholes," Sutton said. "The problem is the agency is backed with public money."

Bonds, backed by the credit of the member cities, were sold by NCEMPA to acquire partial ownership of the generating facilities. For a city to escape its relationship with the

See Bottom line, page 9