

The State Port PILOT

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'94 The year in quotes

By Terry Pope
County Editor

It was a battleground in 1994. County officials struggled with Martin Marietta Corp. over a proposed rock quarry near Southport.

But the community also witnessed what has become an annual debate between the county and schools for more funding. The nation turned its eyes to the Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point as shipments of highly radioactive nuclear fuel rods from overseas entered the United States here.

However, the picture is best told with quotes from 1994's news makers:

• January 5 -- "If it hadn't been for the lawsuit, I'd been with them. But if \$2 million comes out of taxpayers' pockets, that's a lot of money."

District 5 county commissioner Donald Shaw votes against a county ordinance to block Martin Marietta from opening a mine.

• January 19 -- "It was a dumb idea then, and it's a dumb idea now. And here we are again. We've got to go to an incinerator sooner or later."

Bolivia resident Melba Edwards opposes a new county landfill near the Lockwood Folly River.

• January 26 -- "We're fighting 1994 crime with a 1982 model. I need some more help."

District attorney Rex Gore asks for more prosecutors from the state.

• February 2 -- "This is not to stop one project, and I'm not asking the commission to act as a board of adjustments. The aquifer is public trust waters."

Long Beach's Rosetta Short asks the Coastal Resources Commission to protect 5,000 acres near Southport.

• February 9 -- "I saw a great shortage in areas of safety equipment and microscopes. One classroom had just five microscopes for 30 kids to use in a 45-minute class. There were other mass shortages of items."

Commission chairman Don Warren lobbies to give schools \$250,000 for "critical needs."

• February 23 -- "If everything we are told is true, then everything is above board. It's everybody's money, not just the schools."

District 3 commissioner Wayland Vereen calls for a state performance audit of the schools.

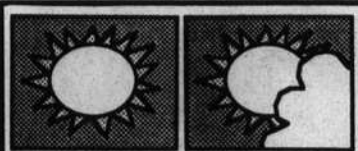
• March 2 -- "We have to live here, too. It's not an easy role to take."

Planning board chairman John Thompson, on criticism leveled at his board for not adopting zoning restrictions against Martin Marietta.

• March 16 -- "We want to discover the full extent of any improprieties. We will pursue it in as expeditious a manner as we can, but we're not going to leave any stones unturned."

School board attorney Glen Peterson, on the controversial sale of over \$10,000 in surplus cafeteria

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Forecast

The extended forecast calls for cold weather to finally settle into our area. We can look for low temperatures in the 20's and highs in the 40's for the period of Thursday through Saturday.



The possibility of all things stood fresh and clear recently as he'd heard of good catches at 69th Street and was working in Worth Jackson cast for trout on the Long Beach strand. He said that direction, one hopeful cast at a time.

Photo by Jim Harper

County, DuPont settle tax

By Terry Pope
County Editor

A two-year court battle over back taxes with the DuPont Co. has ended with an \$856,000 settlement county officials approved Tuesday night.

The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners also agreed, on a 3-1 vote, to fund five new sheriff deputies.

That will allow sheriff Ronald Hewett to keep his office open 24 hours as pledged during his fall campaign.

District 3 commissioner Leslie Collier of Long Beach voted no, stating she'd rather consider the move at budget time in June.

The settlement with DuPont was expected after the N. C. Court of Appeals upheld the county's

It's ... a matter of making it right. We found a wrong, and DuPont officials sought to make it right.'

Boyd Williamson
Tax administrator

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Consumers can do their part

City has the power to control costs

Other cities finding a way

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

There may be no other way to shave electric costs in the City of Southport than by managing load -- particularly at times of peak demand.

That's the conclusion other cities, including Elizabeth City, have reached. And, by tackling load management head-on, municipal power costs have been cut significantly in that city.

Ralph Clark, city manager for Elizabeth City, like Southport a member of the N. C. Eastern Municipal Power

'The decision at that time was, we had to take what we had and make the best of it. We've gone through the problems five years ahead of anybody else. We found we can't afford to throw our hands up.'

Ralph Clark
Elizabeth City manager

Agency, says his city, each of its heavy power users and each of its citizens has a role to play in electric

load management. All it takes to save municipal electric costs is a little creativity.

"We spend a lot of time dealing with that," Clark said. "There are a lot of creative ways to make it better for our customers. We've tried to be creative."

And Southport may have to be just as creative as Elizabeth City has been.

Faced with the prospect of a 30-percent raw power cost increase over the next five years, Southport officials recently went the way of others among the 31 member cities of NCEMPA -- looking for ways out of its contract with the agency and looking to sell its electric distribution system.

What Southport found was this city is tied by debt and by contract to NCEMPA until the year 2026. That relationship may even prove to be of longer term if NCEMPA mayors are

successful this year in getting state treasurer Harlan Boyles to allow a restructuring of agency debt.

The city also found that its electric system, as an asset, is worth about \$1.5 million. But to sell it, a buyer would have to assume the more-than-\$24-million debt Southport has assumed on behalf of NCEMPA.

Clark said Elizabeth City learned those hard lessons about five years ago when a citywide committee of business people, attorneys and elected officials went looking for ways to end that city's contractual obligation to NCEMPA.

"The decision at that time was, we had to take what we had and make the best of it," Clark said. "We've gone through the problems five years ahead

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Third highest in state

Schools are alarmed by violence statistics

By Holly Edwards
Feature Editor

Why do Brunswick County schools have the third highest rate of violence in the state?

And what can teachers, principals, administrators, students and parents do together to solve the problem?

School officials hope the upcoming Safe Schools Forum on school violence will generate some answers to these questions.

The forum is intended to unite everyone involved in the school system -- from the student body to the administration -- and will focus on causes of and solutions to school violence.

It is scheduled Thursday, January 26, 7 p.m., at Supply Elementary School.

A likely topic of discussion also will be a recent "school climate survey" that indicates students view

school as a much more dangerous place than do teachers.

Students in grades seven through 11 and all teachers were asked to assess the safety of the school environment in a series of 55 questions.

Safe Alternatives For Everyone (SAFE) program coordinator Linda Shaddix is expected to present details about the survey at the school board's next meeting Monday, January 9.

A total of 87 violent acts and 32 cases of drug possession were reported in Brunswick County schools during the 1993-94 school

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School dropout rate on the rise

By Holly Edwards
Feature Editor

More students dropped out of Brunswick County schools last year than the year before, but the county dropout rate is still below state average, statistics released by the N. C. Department of Public Instruction indicate.

A total of 103 students in grades seven through 12 dropped out last year, up from 71 the previous school term.

The county's dropout rate was 2.54 percent, nearly a point lower than the 3.35-percent state dropout rate.

Statewide, 17,371 students dropped out last year, a 1,731 increase over the previous year but down significantly from 1988-89 when 24,559 students dropped out.

State superintendent of schools Bob Etheridge blamed job growth for luring students away from school. He

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