

Sports

South's Lady Cougars try for a Waccamaw conference tournament title -- Page 1C

The State Port



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SOUTHPORT, N.C.

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Neighbors

The history of Brunswick County Training School is a long, proud one -- Page 1B

Our Town

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How old is old?

Mobile home ban unsettled

By Terry Pope
County Editor

County planners are not recommending a ban just yet on older mobile homes moving into the county.

Restrictions were debated by the Brunswick County Planning Board last week, but members could not agree on how old is too old when judging mobile homes.

The planning staff has recommended that no homes more than ten years old be allowed to enter the county. County commissioners will hold a public hearing on any change and will have the final say.

"Right now, our concern is not so much with existing mobile homes that are connected to sewer and electricity," said Brunswick County zoning administrator Judy Russell. "Our concern is the continuous number of older mobile homes outside of the county that are being brought in and set up in this county."

That leads to safety concerns and erosion of the county's tax base, planners say. In 1996, mobile home permits outnumbered stick-built housing permits by a four-to-one margin in Brunswick County. Neighboring counties have already banned older units, but the county's current age restriction is 1976.

The ordinance also allows mobile units built between 1970 and 1976 that bear a seal of approval from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) showing they were built to standards approved by the manufactured housing industry.

The proposed zoning change would allow manufactured homes already in the county to move to another location if they are beyond the ten-year limit, if a prior inspection shows existing and legal electrical and sewer service.

But permits would not be issued for any outdated units that want to cross the county border. Some representatives from mobile home sales lots questioned the board on how they are to handle trade-in units if they are not allowed to locate in the county.

"I could support the ten years, but I'd very much like to have some reason to support the ten years," said county planning board chairman John Thompson. He has asked for further data from the N. C. Manufactured Housing Institute and N. C. Department of Insurance.

"We selected ten years because that's a number we discussed with the building inspectors," said Ms. Russell. "We thought about five years, but thought we could get ten."

Gerald Beck of Shallotte, who owns a mobile home sales lot, said each unit should be examined on an individual basis. Some older units are in better shape than those less than ten years old, he said.

"When somebody trades in a home, See Old, page 6



SNEAK PREVIEW

Having completed their roles as extras in Saturday's filming of "The Crying Child," aspiring local actresses Jade Potter and Erica Morgan peeped in the window at Port Charlie's Restaurant as more filming was going on. The for-television film also will feature scenes from Howe Street, Brunswick Street and the Southport-Fort Fisher ferry landing.

Power play

City develops plan to reduce electricity cost

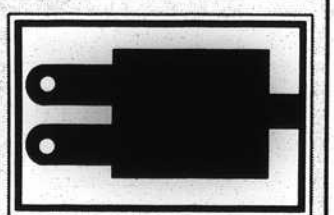
By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

By June 30, the beginning of the next fiscal year, city officials hope to have in place a new formula for charging electric customers -- a formula that will allow many electric customers, residential and commercial, to substantially lower, in partnership with the city, the amount they pay for electricity each month.

Central to the premise on which the new rate structure will be formulated is the customer's willingness to help the City of Southport reduce its own electric costs, by managing the entire city electric load, particularly at times of coincident peak demand when the city's electric costs jump by 2,000 percent.

The formula is simple: The more a customer allows the city to manage electric load, the more that customer saves.

Putting the philosophy more simply: A customer will only pay electric rates in direct proportion to the amount of electricity used. See Power, page 8

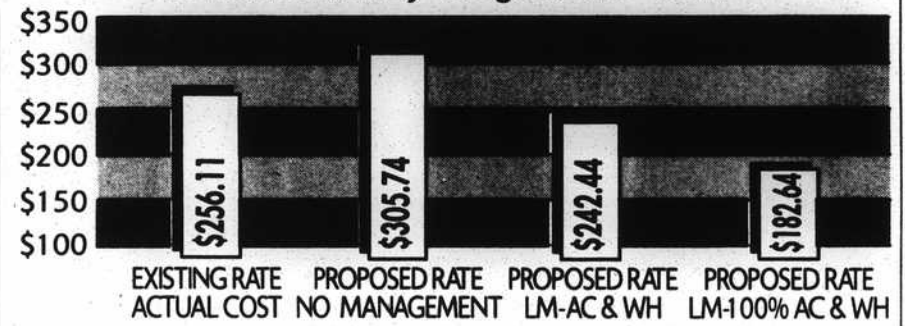


This is the first of a five-part series in which a proposed restructuring of electric rates charged by the City of Southport will be examined. The restructuring plan under study will require involvement of the electric customer in a plan to lower his costs.

In this offering, an overview of the restructuring plan and its goals will be discussed. In the following weeks, the impact of the restructuring plan on base rates, residential customers, commercial customers and commercial demand customers will be examined.

ELECTRICITY COST STUDY

for the month of July - Usage (KWH) - 2917



Majority may rule

Total ban on smoking sought by DSS group

By Terry Pope
County Editor

A group of employees at the Brunswick County Department of Social Services wants the building to go smoke-free.

But the request now before the board of social services has lit a fire under fellow workers, who brought in a tobacco spokesman and local farmers to defend their smoker's rights Monday.

"We believe a total ban on indoor smoking does not meet the needs of a significant number of our employees," said DSS fraud investigator Shirley Weston.

A survey of the department indicates that of 83 employees, 26 are smokers. Those in favor of smoking See Smoking, page 11

"If I had a problem with smoke, and I saw that sign on the door, I would think that there would be no smoking allowed. That's very misleading to the public."

Carolynn Price

Dosher to seek nursing facility

By Holly Edwards
Feature Editor

Dosher Memorial Hospital wants to construct and operate a 60-bed nursing home facility.

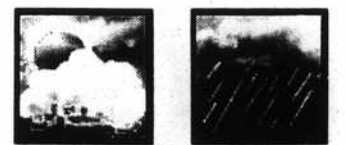
Trustees discussed the proposal in closed session Monday before voting to appropriate \$25,000 to apply for the required state license. Hospital administrator Edgar Haywood said the closed session was held to protect Dosher's confidentiality.

"Competitive health care activities are deemed confidential by North Carolina state law," he said.

Dosher will compete for the beds with the adjacent Ocean Trail Convalescent Center and Autumn Care nursing home in Shallotte.

If the state approves Dosher's application, trustee Gene Tomlinson said, the facility would be constructed on what is now the parking lot and the parking area would be moved to the hospital's vacant property across Howe Street. Or, he said, the facility could be constructed near the future site of Dr. Brad Hilaman's office behind the Chart House Restaurant.

Tomlinson said trustees are seeking a state license to operate the nursing home facility "to ensure the financial success of the facility." See Dosher, page 11



Forecast

Warmer weather will prevail throughout the period of Thursday-Saturday. High temperatures are expected to reach near 70.

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Loan repayments may benefit investors

Some on swindler's list express dismay

By Holly Edwards
Feature Editor

Asked last year why he contributed large sums of money to individuals and non-profit organizations in the Southport-Oak Island area, businessman Michael Tessari said he gave money only to those "truly needy and deserving."

Tessari now faces a maximum sentence of 50 years in prison and fines of \$1.5 million after pleading guilty last week in U. S. District Court in Harrisburg, PA, to wire fraud and money laundering charges involving an estimated \$6.7 million.

"Some people relieve people of money at the barrel of a gun -- Mr. Tessari used his considerable persuasive powers to relieve these people of their money," said David Barasch, U. S. Attorney in Harrisburg.

S. Attorney in Harrisburg.

The federal government now wants to recover as much as possible from local recipients of Tessari's ill-gotten gains to repay investors victimized by Tessari's fraud, which he operated under the company name IBI Inc.

U. S. Attorneys in Pennsylvania and North Carolina allege Tessari defrauded over 100 investors in Pennsylvania and used a portion of the money to purchase at least 19 pieces of real estate in the Southport-Oak Island area, two of which were titled to local residents.

Tessari also made several large charitable donations in the area and has agreed to help the government recover nearly \$300,000 in personal loans he says he made to local and Pennsylvania residents.

While the amount of the loans ranged from \$5,000 to \$110,000, the U. S. Attorney's Office is not likely to seek to recover these loans in lump sums, said U. S. Attorney's Office assets and forfeitures section supervisor Tom Swain. Instead, the repayments will be diverted from Tessari to the federal government, he said.

Similarly, Swain said he does not believe the government will seize property local residents purchased from Tessari, but would require these residents to repay the government. Terms of the repayments and the federal agency to collect them have not yet been established.

"The first thing we'll do is give notice to the victims and make arrangements for payments to be made to the government." See Repayment, page 8