



Sports

North Brunswick sweeps past Roanoke for state 1A baseball diadem -- 1C.

The State Port PILOT

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Neighbors

The end of the beginning for graduation -- 1B

Southport to run several Shopping

deal Run page 2

County 68.5-cent rate stays

Compromise cuts charge for water

By Terry Pope
County Editor

When faced with tough decisions Tuesday, county commissioners agreed to a compromise before approving the 1996-97 county budget.

They trimmed a 36-percent increase in wholesale water rates to a 25-percent hike instead by lengthening the financing period from three years to seven years for the N. C. 211 treatment plant rehabilitation project and SCADA systems for both plants, a \$2-million project.

And they gave schools \$200,000. See County tax, page 10

Schools Writing results erratic

By Holly Edwards
Feature Editor

Improvement in end-of-grade writing test scores for elementary and middle school students has been erratic in Brunswick County and county scores continue to fall short of state averages, test results for the 1995-96 school year indicate.

Testing coordinator Bill Detrie presented the results to school board members Monday night.

Third graders in Brunswick County made the biggest improvement in writing skills, with only 19.9 percent of third graders testing at the state proficiency level in 1993-94 and 47.1 percent testing at the proficiency level last year.

But proficiency rates of third graders varied greatly, from 63.6 percent proficient at Supply Elementary School, to 29.2 percent proficient at Waccamaw Elementary School.

State averages for third graders were not available.

Brunswick County fourth graders scored below state average in writing skills, and proficiency rates for fourth graders dropped in all schools except Union Primary.

While 51.5 percent of fourth graders... See Results, page 9



Forecast

Hot and humid are the key words for the rest of the week and the upcoming weekend. Thunderstorms are likely with heavy rains and frequent lightning.

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RAGING INFERNO



Water pours in and smoke pours out as the second act of the Amwax candle factory fire gets going Sunday morning. Apparatus and firefighters from Southport, Yaupon Beach, Long Beach and five other supporting departments fought stages of the Long Beach Road blaze from shortly after 10 p.m. Saturday until mid-afternoon Sunday. There were no reported injuries among firefighters from the paraffin-fueled, wind-whipped flames. Photo by Allen Givhan

Candle factory up in smoke

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Federal, state and local investigators have termed "suspicious" a Saturday night fire which destroyed a Long Beach Road candle factory filled with highly flammable paraffin.

Brunswick County fire marshal Cecil Logan Tuesday said he was not at liberty to discuss investigators' suspicions.

Brunswick County's 911 Central Communications Center received a report of an energizing blaze at the former Amwax candle factory at 10:06 p.m. Saturday and immediately transferred that call to Southport dispatch. Southport volunteer firefighters arrived in minutes, Logan said, and immediately called for mutual aid from Yaupon Beach and Long Beach volunteers.

The Amwax factory, owned and operated by H. W. Grupe, of Southport, was housed in a 157-

'We had never dealt with paraffin before. We know now that it will flash when it reaches a certain temperature.'

Cecil Logan
Fire marshal

by-70-foot metal building, built as a roller skating rink. The candle-making venture had been out of operation since October, 1995, but

inventory remained on site.

The building was destroyed. Damage has been set at the \$250,000 cost of the building, Logan said.

Firefighters fought to contain the blaze throughout Saturday night and Sunday morning, with Logan and Southport volunteer fire chief Gregory Cumbee taking charge of the fireground.

"As the night went on, I don't know how many gallons of water we put on the fire. It wouldn't go out," Logan said. "We decided we'd try foam and we put about 3,000 gallons of foam on it."

The flame-retardant foam quelled the blaze, but not before additional firefighting equipment and manpower was called in from Boiling Spring Lakes and Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point. Civictown, Shallotte and Bolivia volunteers responded to a call for additional manpower.

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36-percent increase Water too high, beach council says to county

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

A proposed 36.6-percent hike in Brunswick County's wholesale water rate is too much and can be avoided, Long Beach Town Council said in a resolution of last Tuesday night.

In a letter to county commissioners the next day, mayor Joan Altman said commissioners should reexamine how water system upgrades are to be capitalized in an effort to lower the rate increase, to become effective with adoption of the county budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

In an initial budget presentation, county staff proposed to finance a

'While there may be justification for a rate increase at this time, an adjustment of this nature is severe.'

Joan Altman
Long Beach mayor

\$2.6-million upgrade of Brunswick County's N. C. 211 groundwater plant

and a \$1.1-million purchase and installation of a telemetry system (SCADA) over a three-year period, passing the cost of these two capital projects to both wholesale and retail customers.

The projects, financed over that period of time, would boost county water rates 53 cents per 1,000 gallons consumed, or from \$1.45 per 1,000 gallons to \$1.98 per 1,000 gallons for wholesale customers.

Long Beach is Brunswick County's largest municipal wholesale customer. The rate hike would also affect wholesale customers ADM, Cogentrix, Caswell Beach and Southport, which buys about ten percent of its water from Brunswick

See Water, page 7

Yaupon adopts budget, faces sewer dilemma

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

With no comment from elected officials themselves and only the suggestions of one citizen at a public hearing Monday night, Yaupon Beach commissioners adopted a general fund budget calling for no tax increase, a water fund budget with no rate hike and a sewer system budget that puts the town on course for default on a loan payment in 22 months.

A \$656,854 general fund budget was adopted, to be supported by a tax rate of 30.5 cents, the same rate levied this year. The new budget will take effect July 1. The water fund budget for the coming year will be \$122,905 and the town's sewer fund budget calls for expenditures of \$497,954, which includes two scheduled debt service payments to a state revolving loan fund totaling \$259,488.

To balance the sewer fund, the town will appropriate \$248,593

See Budget, page 6

Judge says no

County may appeal ruling

By Terry Pope
County Editor

The county's legal battle against Martin Marietta Aggregates' proposed mining operation near Southport continues to take its toll on county resources while huge questions remain over who will pay the accumulating attorney fees.

Judge Ronald Stephens' ruling last week against Brunswick County on all four issues debated in Brunswick County Superior Court last month may send the case to an appeal if county commissioners opt to further defend the public health and safety ordinance enacted in January, 1994.

"I think the commissioners are very concerned with how much it will cost," said county attorney Huey Marshall. "One of the parameters they were working with on this budget was to not increase spending and to keep the tax rate down."

Commissioners have until the end of June to decide if they want to appeal the judge's decision, which ruled Martin Marietta had established common law vested rights in its 1,000-acre tract north of Bethel Church Road for use as a limestone mine prior to the county ordinance. The ordinance was also struck down on the issue of its constitutionality and statutory right to block Martin Marietta from using the property as a mine after it had obtained county building permits.

Judge Stephens ruled the county does not have authority to regulate mines and that such a task belongs to the State of North Carolina. He stated the process by which commissioners enacted the ordinance that bans explosives and dewatering of the Castle Hayne aquifer within five miles of Carolina Power and Light Co.'s Brunswick nuclear plant and Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point ammunitions depot was flawed.

Marshall said the actual content of the ordinance commissioners approved was not picked apart by judge Stephens. His office is awaiting the official order that is being prepared

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