



Sports

South Brunswick opens basketball season, will meet Wildcats, Devil Pups -- 1C

The State Port

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50 CENTS

Neighbors

Entries are invited in the Pilot's annual cookie contest with microwave prize -- 7B

Our Town

Smith Island Land Trust increases effort to preserve Bald Head 'point' -- Page 2

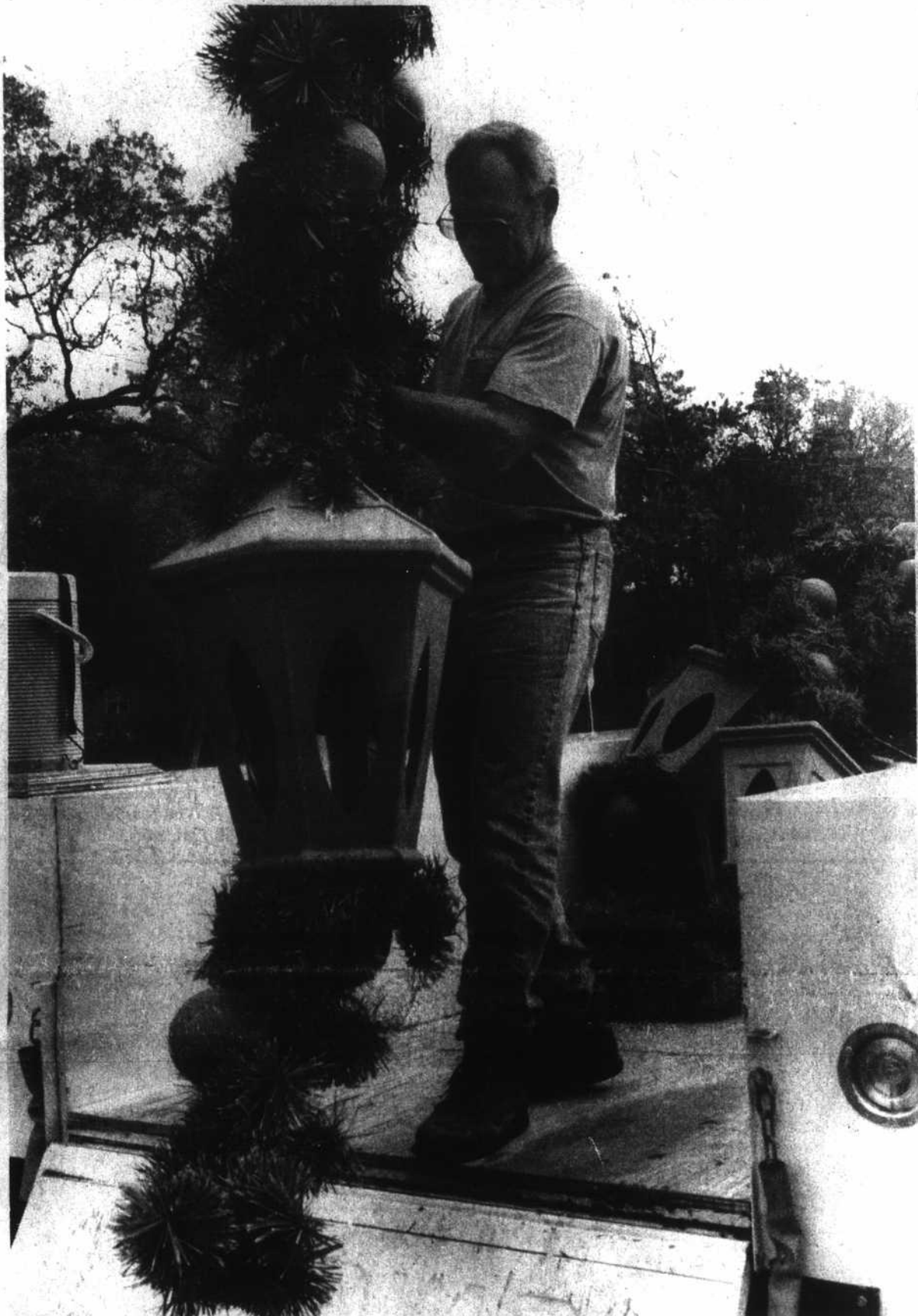


Photo by Jim Harper

Terry Wilson sets out Christmas decorations to be suspended from Long Beach utility poles. Both Long Beach and Yaupon Beach decorations are now up, ready for the annual Christmas-by-the-Sea parade down Yaupon Drive and Oak Island Drive on Saturday. Step-off time for paraders is 3 p.m.

Long Beach weighs cost

County water rate puts drain on town

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Long Beach Town Council now knows that it can immediately sell 1,000 gallons of drinking water for \$3 or less if it decides to develop a wellfield and build a treatment plant.

The town also knows that its cost to recover water from the ground and treat it will drop over the years, as the town sells more water to more customers. Engineers estimate the cost may drop to \$2.50 per thousand gallons as early as 2009 and to \$2.25 per thousand gallons by 2020.

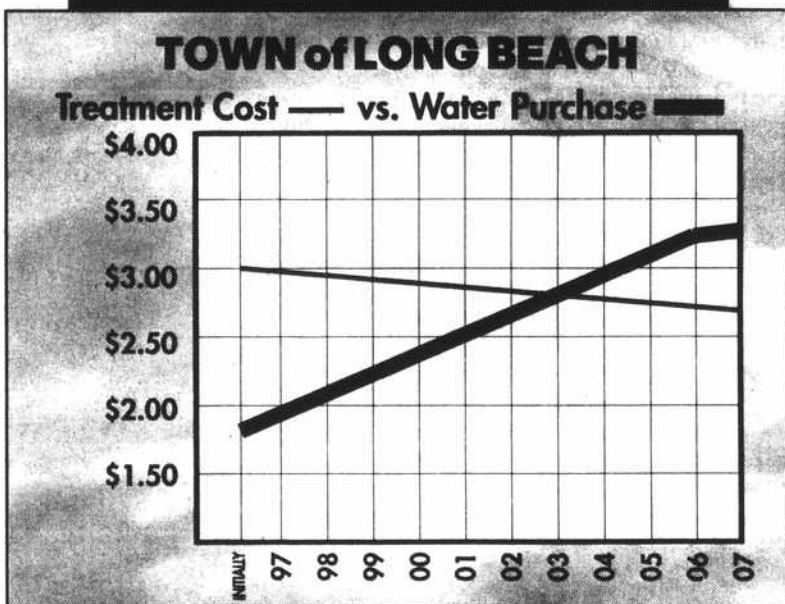
What is not known to Long Beach is: How much will it cost to continue buying water from Brunswick County?

"That's not an easy question," admitted assistant county manager Robert Hyatt, into whose realm of responsibility the Brunswick County water system falls.

Brunswick County has no firm projection of water costs even over the next two years, much less over the next 20.

Faced with Brunswick County's request for a 36-percent water rate increase this year -- a request later negotiated to a 25-percent increase passed to Long Beach water customers -- Long Beach Town Council this year appropriated up to \$300,000 to explore the feasibility of developing a municipal water supply and treating drinking water.

Two weeks ago Rivers and Asso- See **Water**, page 6



Most squads won't

County to bill for EMS calls

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Brunswick County began billing patients for ambulance transports Monday, a policy aimed at recouping some of the costs for emergency medical services and 911 response.

It is also a policy which does not sit well with some county volunteer units that do not want to bill their patients.

Only one, Town Creek Volunteer Rescue, has started billing its patients for transports. So far, the others have chosen not to participate although county EMS agreed to help with the billing procedure.

Revenues from ambulance service fees will help cover part of the operating expenses when Brunswick County EMS units respond to calls, said EMS director Tracy Jackson.

"Brunswick County is not alone when it comes to billing for ambulance services," said Jackson. "Many counties around the state have been billing for a number of years."

Jackson said the county's service fees are economical when compared to the cost of medication and care pro-

vided in the hospital environment. Patients will be charged the same amount, based upon level of care, regardless of the amount of care, number of medications or number of procedures they may receive while in transport to hospitals or care facilities.

EMS officials studied the issue carefully for the past year before approaching county commissioners about initiating the fees. The county will not aggressively bill patients that do not have insurance or can't afford

See **EMS calls**, page 10

Area grocery stores

VIC holds food drive

The Brunswick County Volunteer and Information Center (VIC) will sponsor a food drive at most Brunswick County grocery stores this weekend.

The drive will be conducted Friday, December 6, from noon to 6 p.m. and

Saturday, December 7, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Volunteers will be collecting food for the VIC Christmas Basket program.

"Please schedule your grocery shopping so you can help the needy in our county to have a merrier Christ-

mas," a spokesman urged. A VIC volunteer will be outside the grocery store and will have a flier noting the most-needed food for the Christmas baskets.

Trees of Hope are also placed in See **Food drive**, page 6

Long-range plan seeks public input

The Brunswick County Long-Range Planning Committee will distribute 25,000 copies of a four-page informational sheet this week in hopes of gathering input from county residents on a number of planning issues.

The inserts are included in this issue of *The State Port Pilot* and were also inserted in *The Brunswick Beacon* in Shallotte. All but 2,000 copies were placed in the two county newspapers, said committee chairman Mike Royal.

Royal said the remainder will be placed at county libraries, municipal See **Long-range**, page 6

New school plans simple as 'ABC'

Progress is judged by students' prior year performance

By Holly Edwards
Feature Editor

Comprehensive improvement plans for every school in Brunswick County were reviewed last week by the board of education and are expected to be formally adopted Monday night.

The plans describe specific goals and the strategies and resources needed to achieve them, as well as "Safe Schools" plans and staff development plans.

"The school improvement plans allowed us to pull all of the elements together into one package," said assistant superintendent for instruction Mary McDuffie. "The primary pur-

"The plans ... seem to have more direction in dealing with student improvement. Our goals are more clearly defined."

Billy Carter
District 3 member

pose of the plans is to allow us to focus all of our energies on student achievement, and we'll be constantly reviewing and updating them."

Implementation of the plans is required by the state's new school improvement program, the New ABCs, which replaces the Performance Based Accountability Plans (PBAP).

While much of the PBAP goals were included in the new plans, the New ABCs holds schools accountable for achieving a certain level of student improvement from year to year. The level of improvement expected will be based upon prior student performance and will be unique to each school as well as each grade level, McDuffie explained.

"The biggest difference for us with the new plans is that we will compare this year's fourth grade class to that classes' performance last year, instead of comparing it to last year's fourth grade class," she said. "Each grade will be compared with its own performance the previous year."

The state will hold each school accountable for achieving a specified level of student improvement. Schools that fall short will be offered assistance by the state, or in extreme cases could be taken over by a state-appointed team.

On the other hand, schools that exceed expectations See **New School**, page 6



Forecast

The extended forecast calls for mostly sunny skies and near record low temperatures for the period of Thursday through Saturday. Highs will only be in the mid 50's.

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