

# The State Port PILOT

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SOUTHPORT, N.C.

50 CENTS

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Black History observed with presentation

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**Our**

New Long ter work is ex soon, council

n- gin : 2



**Sports**

Will the third time be the charm? Cougar girls meet West in the semifinals -- 1C

## Bond issue

County weighs funding choice for new schools

By Terry Pope  
County Editor

A financing deal which built the new \$8-million Belville Elementary School didn't raise the county tax rate and involved no bond money over a seven-year period. It will take another two years before \$10 million in bonds used to build three county high schools more than 20 years ago are completely off the books.

That is the example Brunswick County commissioners are likely to mention when school officials ask that a \$50-million bond referendum be placed on the ballot this fall.

"The Belville school did not raise our taxes," said Lithia Horne, director of fiscal operations for Brunswick County. "My recommendation is to use structure financing so we don't raise taxes. The county is financially capable of affording a \$50-million debt, but my recommendation is to structure it so we don't have to request any tax increase. I believe in a conservative approach, and that's how I've been recommending that we finance projects."

The Brunswick County Board of Education has indicated it will ask for a vote of the people for up to \$50 million in general obligation bonds to finance overall capital needs for the next decade -- including expansions, upgrades and new schools to meet a population increase. At a board retreat earlier this month, commissioners requested an update on current bond debt and information on if the county could sustain another \$50 million in bonds.

"Basically, we said when we get the information from the schools, we'll have to analyze it," said District 3 commissioner Leslie Collier of Long Beach. "We will need to get more information first. I'm really concerned about the immediate needs of two schools -- South Brunswick Middle School and Bolivia Elementary -- and their problems can be solved with additions."

A liaison committee of school and county officials met Friday afternoon, See Issue, page 9



Young Addison Phipps had the opportunity recently to enjoy one of Southport's winter delights -- an up-close look at a pair of pelicans at the Potter seafood house on the yacht basin. And these young pelicans had a chance to view Addison, safely shielded from him by a netting barrier.

Photo by Jim Harper

## No permit in hand

# County asks mine lawsuit be dismissed

By Terry Pope  
County Editor

Attorneys for Brunswick County have asked a Superior Court judge to either dismiss Martin Marietta Materials' lawsuit against the county or stay all further proceedings until the company obtains a mining permit from the state.

Martin Marietta filed the lawsuit in December and claims an anti-explosives ordinance the county adopted October 7 and a zoning amendment on October 21 deprive the company of common law vested rights on a 1,000-acre tract it leased and purchased to conduct a mining operation north of Southport.

Contrary to claims made in the lawsuit, attorneys Reginald Gillespie Jr. and Michael Ortiz of Durham, representing the county, argue there is no certainty Martin Marietta will even apply for a mining permit or if it does that one will be granted by the state on the controversial location near

"There is at least a possibility that plaintiff will never apply for a mining permit, or if it does apply, that the application for a mining permit will be denied."

Bethel Church Road.

"In fact, numerous North Carolina state government agencies and others have expressed serious concerns, and some have even objected to" the mining company's plan to locate a See Lawsuit, page 6

## Long Beach decision

# County water policy change is prerequisite

By Richard Nubel  
Municipal Editor

When county commissioner David Sandifer earlier this month suggested county officials "tuck their tail between their legs" to visit Long Beach, he neglected to mention what county emissaries should bring in hand to that visit.

The county commissioners' colorful visitation suggestion was aimed at forestalling a Long Beach effort to develop its own groundwater recovery and treatment system, a possibility in which the town has already invested about \$100,000.

If that municipal drinking water source and treatment capability is developed by Long Beach, the town, now the county's second largest water customer, would be in the water business itself and later could become a competitor of the county's for other municipal water customers in this area.

Long Beach mayor Joan Altman this week said the town is early in the process of weighing its potential as a water provider. The right offer from Brunswick County could change the town's course. But, the county may face a substantial job of convincing Long Beach Town Council it is better off remaining a county water customer.

"Town council's interest is now and has always been in good quality water from a reliable source at an affordable rate," mayor Altman said. "In order to assure those things, we in the town have to do a lot of long-range planning to meet the needs of the future. We would expect the same on the county's part."

So, when the county emissary goes

tail between legs to Long Beach, he must be prepared to assure the town of four things:

- An affordable water rate will be charged Long Beach.
- An agreement for long-range price stability can be reached.
- An agreement whereby water quality issues can be reached.
- A long-range plan for profitable county water system development can be made.

With regard to the issue of water price now and in the future, Long Beach has a strong bargaining point. See Water, page 6



## Forecast

The extended forecast calls for mostly sunny skies Thursday through Saturday with highs in the 60's.

## INSIDE

- Police report ... 7
- Business ... 12
- Obituaries ... 5B
- Schools ... 7B
- Calendar ... 8B
- District Court ... 6C
- Legals ... 7C
- TV schedule ... 8D

## Deadbeats County into the ACTS

By Terry Pope  
County Editor

The crackdown on deadbeat parents will intensify in Brunswick County with installation of a computerized automated collection and tracking system (ACTS) in March.

"It's going to help us give more efficient services," said Beverly Hewett, child support supervisor for the Brunswick County Department of Social Services. "We will be able to track an absent parent quicker. With this particular system, we will be able to locate a parent overnight."

The department's nine employees in the child support division will undergo training See ACTS, page 9

## Blowing smoke?

### County students lighting up despite cigarette ban

By Holly Edwards  
Feature Editor

Tobacco smoke fills the bathrooms at South Brunswick High School during class changes and groups of students smoke and socialize in the school parking lot before and after classes.

Although smoking by students is prohibited on campus, students say smokers are rarely punished for puffing at school.

"Most teachers just run everyone out of the bathroom," said Monique Jackson, president of the school Anchor Club. "And once a year, someone always sets the bathroom on fire somehow."

As the percentage of teens who smoke reaches its highest level in 16 years, the South Brunswick High School Anchor Club, under the guidance of teacher Nellie Westbrook, has initiated several projects to help students quit smoking and to make both smokers and non-smokers more aware of tobacco's health risks.

With a \$2,000 grant from Project ASSIST, the Anchor Club sponsored an essay contest

"I have some friends who smoke and I mess with them about it. They say they don't get anything out of it, but they're always hollering they need a cigarette."

Darnell Hill

about the dangers of smoking, purchased educational videos about tobacco, will display a lung taken from a smoker who died of cancer provided by New Hanover Regional Medical Center, and is conducting a project to target smokers who want See Smoke, page 8