

The State Port PILOT

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School funding

BCAE leader claims county should do more

By Terry Pope
County Editor

County commissioners continued their budget discussions Tuesday fresh off a lecture by Brunswick County Association of Educators president Linda Callender on figures she says prove the county could be spending more on schools.

Commissioners will hold a public hearing on the budget Tuesday, June 10, at 6:30 p.m. in the public assembly building at the county government center near Bolivia.

"Yes, it is true we are a fast-growing county and we have great needs for water and sewer," said Ms. Callender. "It basically says fast-growing counties need to look at a number of scenarios, and the most unpopular of those is to raise taxes or to reevaluate property more often."

After Ms. Callender addressed the board commissioners Monday, at least one member took exception to the numbers she used.

District 5 commissioner Bill Sue of Leland responded near the close of the meeting by saying the total spending per pupil in Brunswick County is at the top of the list of counties regardless of a county's ability to pay. See Funding, page 6

Pilot wins 23 awards

The advertising department of *The State Port Pilot* again has won the most North Carolina Press Association awards of any newspaper in its division.

Pilot staff members received 23 awards, including ten first places, in competition announced Friday at the NCPA Advertising Conference and Awards Ceremony in Chapel Hill. This marks the fifth consecutive year the newspaper's advertising staff won the most awards in its circulation category; the *Pilot* news staff has done likewise four of the past five years.

In addition, the newspaper earned the Metro Plus Business Award for best overall entries.

"We are proud of the efforts of our entire advertising staff," said Ed Harper, editor, "and are grateful to those businesses that trust in our ability to create strong, effective advertising campaigns on their behalf."

First-place awards include:
■ Best Food Ad -- A Taste of Southport; staff.

■ Best Home Furnishings and Appliance Ad -- Nice & Pretty; Cindy Aldridge and Debi Coleman.

■ Best Institutional Ad -- Orton Plantation Gardens; Renee Elliott and Debi Coleman.

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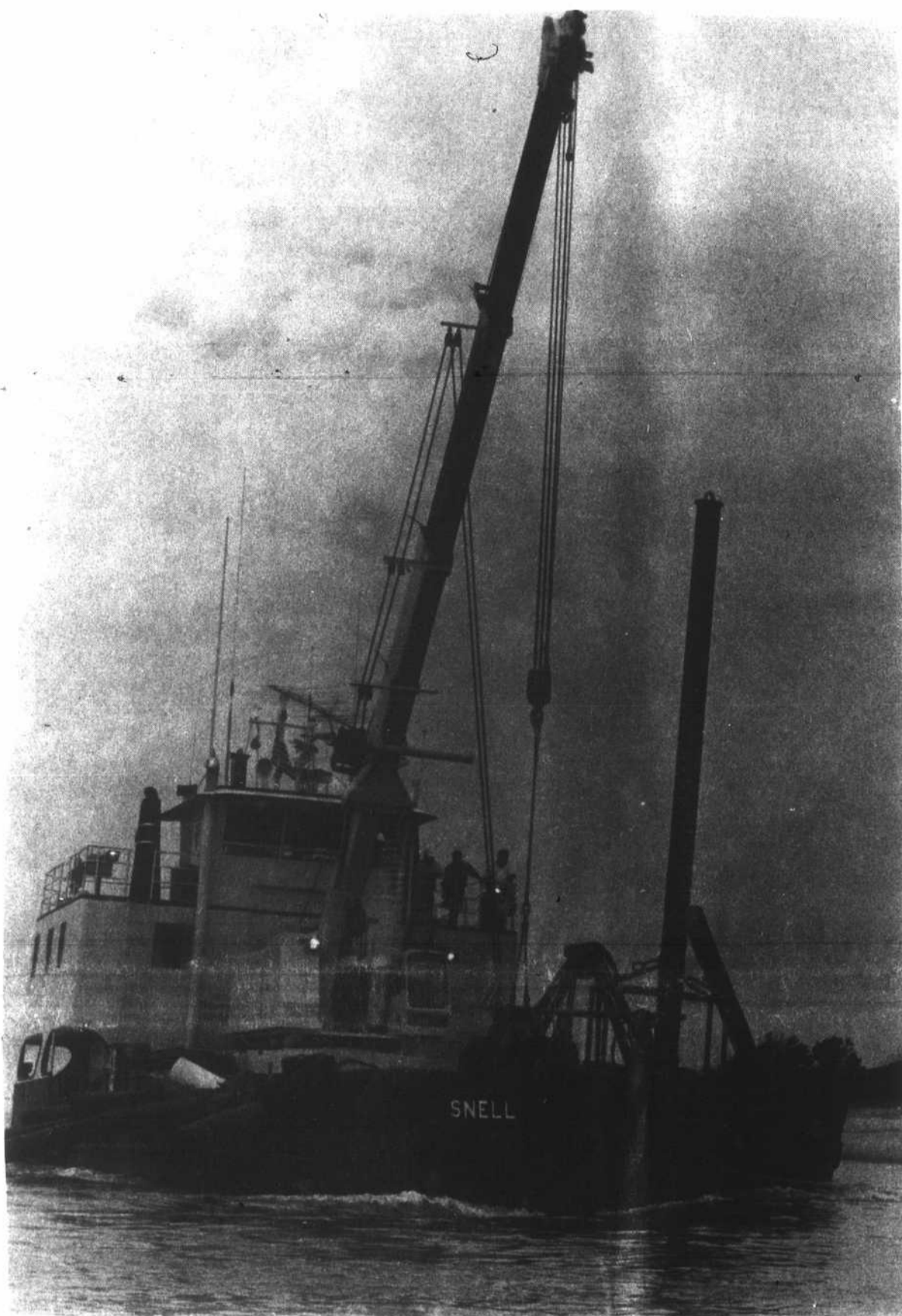


Photo by Jim Harper

Portions of a water line extending beneath the Lockwood Folly Inlet were removed by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers snagboat *Snell* Tuesday, touching off another in a long series of disputes over water system management between Brunswick County and the Town of Long Beach. Brunswick County has apparently won this battle.

Lockwood Folly Water line is removed

By Terry Pope
County Editor

County officials say a water line anchored beneath the Lockwood Folly Inlet has aged beyond repair and is now viewed as a navigational threat.

The line broke free and floated to the surface May 20, and last Friday a decision was made to remove the line rather than pay \$30,000 to \$50,000 to chain it back to the inlet bottom.

"The Coast Guard reports it has been struck by boats, and we saw it as a tremendous safety hazard," said county manager Jim Varner. "We put some signs up to warn the public. We were in agreement that it was best to pull it up."

See Connection, page 6

Quality concern

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Although they appear to be on the losing side of the argument, Long Beach officials this week objected to removal of a water line spanning Lockwood Folly Inlet.

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Tuesday removed a portion of the county-owned main water line which has connected Long Beach since 1978, but has been used sporadically

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Budget proposal

Taxes, sewer rate increase to hit Yaupon

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

A substantial property tax increase and a sewer rate increase of up to 127 percent for some in-town customers are included in a budget proposal on which Yaupon Beach commissioners may act Monday night.

The proposed \$1.387-million budget -- prepared in a series of commissioners' workshops over the last month -- is to be the subject of a public hearing beginning at 7 p.m. Monday. Subsequent to that public hearing, commissioners may act to adopt the budget, or may do so at any time prior to midnight June 30. An agenda for the regular monthly board meeting Monday night indicates budget adoption will be discussed.

As the board itself has compiled the budget proposal, adoption is almost a certainty.

Here is what impacts cost of living in Yaupon Beach in the year to begin July 1:

■ A tax increase of seven cents per \$100 valuation has been proposed. The tax rate for the coming

Proposed changes in sewer billing have been necessitated by a dangerously low fund balance

year will be 37.5 cents per \$100 property valuation. Property taxes are expected to generate \$272,687 next year, based on total valuation of \$72.7 million and a collection rate of 98 percent.

■ What will amount to a sewer rate increase for many customers -- most notably those who use their homes seasonally -- has been proposed. The \$11 monthly flat fee for sewer service will be increased to \$25 per month, but customers will receive service for 4,000 gallons of water use for that \$25 flat rate. Sewer service for water purchases above 4,000 gallons monthly will be

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BEMC reduces its rate to users

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Area cooperative members will enjoy a nice surprise when July bills arrive -- a four-to-five-percent electric rate reduction.

Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation announced the rate cut Monday. The reduction comes on the tail of a two-percent decrease from the cooperative in November, 1996.

"We are delighted to pass on such savings just prior to the warm summer season," BEMC general manager David Batten said at a press conference. "We have promised our customers quality service at the lowest possible cost and, with this rate reduction, we are continuing to fulfill that pledge."

Batten said the lower rates are the result of lengthy negotiations between the N. C. Electric Membership Corporation, of which he is a director, and power suppliers. Further, Batten said, the rate reduction comes as evidence of the early effects of gradual deregulation of the electric distribution industry.

"We're going into an era, a point in time, when deregulation will open

access to wheel in blocks of power," Batten said.

With deregulation, electric cooperatives in North Carolina will, under terms of new contracts, be able to purchase power at increasingly frequent intervals from the provider offering the lowest cost.

"We have negotiated block power contracts outside the area," Batten said. "This clearly is the first stage of open access to transmission" which will be enjoyed by the state's 28 electric cooperatives.

Batten said the cooperative expects power costs to remain level for about the next five, and possibly ten, years.

"We have worked hard to assure that BEMC's wholesale costs would remain low for the foreseeable future," Batten said. "As long as our wholesale rates stay low, member rates will reflect this reduction."

BEMC estimates the lower rates will leave some \$3 million in members' pockets. Batten stressed the cooperative's policy of returning capital credits to its members through general retirement and estate retirement funds. Capital credits in both funds totaled more than \$348,000 last year and had reached \$117,000 by

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Carney: No valid reason for dismissal

By Holly Edwards
Feature Editor

Yellow ribbons were placed on the fence surrounding Southport Elementary School Monday in a show of support and protest over the forced resignation of principal Patt Carney.

Carney said superintendent of schools Marion Wise told her last Wednesday during her annual evaluation he would not renew her contract and offered her the opportunity to resign before being terminated.

Primary reasons for not renewing Carney's contract cited by

SOUTHPORT ELEMENTARY

Wise were low test scores and poor communication with teachers and parents, Carney said. Specifically, she said Wise told her he did not approve of the way she had dismissed some staff members and a volunteer.

"I don't believe I've been presented with anything like a valid reason for not renewing my contract," Carney said. "I had no indication anything was wrong until last week. It's horrible. I had no time to get ready for this. I left that

meeting shell-shocked."

Wise would only confirm Carney's resignation and said he could not comment on confidential personnel issues.

Test results for the county will not be compiled and verified until later this week, but Carney indicated some test scores at the school went up this year and some went down.

Carney said she now regrets submitting her resignation and wished she had opted to fight Wise's decision instead.

"I was given 25 hours to make a decision, and instead of thinking rationally about it I cried," she said. "In hindsight, I'm so

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