

The State Port Pilot Opinion

Similar purposes

Contentiousness between two local governing bodies needs to be nipped in the bud

Southeast Brunswick Sanitary District commissioners Monday said they will ask Brunswick County Airport commissioners to hold a public hearing on the airport's expansion plan. That's a good idea.

For a project that is likely to have such a big impact on this area, there is far too little information in the public domain right now. What we think we know is this: As the runway extension project is now designed, some 56 more acres must be bought by the airport and some 160 dwellings -- possibly housing over 300 people -- must be relocated.

Beyond that, things get sketchy. Questions in need of answers include: Will relocation assistance be available to the displaced? How will compensation for property be determined? What is the time schedule for property acquisition? What is to become of owners of older mobile homes which legally cannot be relocated in Brunswick County?

First, Brunswick County Airport officials must justify the airport expansion project to the public. Some SBSB commissioners have charged the runway expansion from 4,000 to 5,000 feet will only be necessary to facilitate airport use by two or three area corporations owning larger jets and wishing access. Is that all there is to it?

Second, airport officials must convince the public there is no other alternative to additional property acquisition. One SBSB commissioner has suggested the need for additional property north and east of the airport can be avoided if the runway were repositioned to run parallel to the Intracoastal Waterway. Is this possible?

Beyond seeking some sorely needed answers to these and other questions, though, SBSB commissioners need to tone-down their rhetoric when discussing the airport and its governing board. The suggestion that Brunswick County Airport should be relocated out of Southeast Brunswick Sanitary District is ill-conceived.

Brunswick County Airport Commission and Southeast Brunswick Sanitary District were formed basically for the same reasons and serve similar purposes in the Southport-Oak Island community. They both exist to promote economic development needs here -- one filling a transportation need and one filling a public health need. Their missions are entirely compatible and their governing authorities should be willing to work together in some semblance of harmony.

A public hearing on the airport's plans is in order. But, the contentiousness that appears to be brewing between these two local governing bodies needs to be nipped in the bud. Everyone needs to take a deep breath.

Regional center

Brunswick's proximity to Wilmington makes it an ideal location for a convention complex

There is one snag in Wilmington's proposal to build a 10,000-seat convention center, concert hall and hotel in southeastern North Carolina: There is no room in Wilmington nor New Hanover County where one can be built.

When the city's mayor, Hamilton Hicks, came to offer a "hand of friendship" to Brunswick County commissioners Monday, the news of his exact nature of business had already arrived well ahead of his entourage. His hand was received earlier in Pender County when folks there were also asked to become part of the effort to bring a much-needed facility to the region.

It seems everyone addressed thus far has displayed a level-headed approach to Hicks' plan and is willing to help or do what they can to improve the chances of bringing a center to our community. There is no place in southeastern North Carolina to comfortably seat a large group of people for any type event -- concert, speech, special show -- without the threat of inclement weather ruining all plans.

Any such event now must make use of the 6,600-seat Trask Coliseum on UNC-Wilmington's campus, a facility designed specifically for basketball games with lower-level bleacher seating. Groups must squeeze into the schedule when it is not being used for school events, games, graduations or team practices. That facility is suitable for sports and not much else.

Brunswick County's proximity to Wilmington makes it an ideal location for a regional convention center, so county commissioners appeared flattered by the notion of working together with the big city to bring the facility here. You could see it in their eyes. One day, we may even have the highways to support easy access to Interstate 40.

As Hicks continues in his effort to land a \$750,000 planning grant from state legislators to plan for and to site a center, let's wish him luck and join his cause. Another benefit from this joint effort is the chance to show teamwork among Cape Fear communities, counties and towns which at times seem to have been separated at birth.

As Hicks declared, "Problems don't stop between the borders of our two governments." The bridge which spans the Cape Fear River between Brunswick and New Hanover counties remains a two-way passage.

We are a lot closer than it seems at times. It's nice to see both lanes are open and that ideas are flowing freely on a project that will take cooperation before it can be achieved. If Brunswick is the site, we will gladly accept it.



Not exactly news

Talk to Quinton McCracken this week and he'll tell you about the expansion Tampa Bay Devil Rays being a game out of first place, winning their first two series and matching the best start ever by a first-year team. He'll tell you mostly about team things, so we'll tell you what Quinton has done. Through Tuesday's games, the former South Brunswick High School player was batting .485 and led the Major Leagues in hits. He had two or more hits in six of his first seven games, and doubled in the other. And, to top that off, he was named co-player of the week in the American League. No, he's not going to keep this up -- no one ever has -- but we will say it's nice to see Co-coo's name up there with the best-known players of our time... The writer would be remiss in not mentioning that Morgan Harper of Southport appeared in the CBS Sunday night movie "The Patron Saint of Liars," a videotape of which will remain in our library only because she is in it. We're not movie critics, but we like movies that make us think, not make us wonder... And also on

the small screen, Dee Dee Hemby (also of Southport) is scheduled to make her debut May 7 on "Veronica's Closet," a Thursday night comedy in which her husband Dan Cortese plays a leading role.

Indeed we did enjoy both the Brunswick Little Theater and Southport Baptist Church dramatists and choir over the weekend. At the Centennial Center on Sunday afternoon we saw the closing performance of "Godspell," another fine presentation by director Stuart Callari and the occasion when tenor Thom Clemmons clearly achieved Superstar status. We were particularly pleased by the number of young performers in the "Godspell" cast, and with their colorful and spirited work... Then at the Baptist church that evening the drama and music of Easter was presented in "Who Do You Say I Am?", setting the course and mood for celebration of Holy Week throughout the entire Christian community.

Wherever we went that day something seemed familiar, until it dawned on us -- the keyboard

player for "Godspell" was the organist at the Baptist church that evening... And not only did Linda Tronzo perform these two roles; she also sang in the alto section of the Sea Notes in their March 29 spring concert. A music teacher on Oak Island, she clearly is a woman with a song in her heart, another in the briefcase, some in her glove compartment, a few atop the refrigerator, and so on and on.

Radio listeners tuned in to Morehead City on Tuesday morning heard an interview with Southporter Jay Barnes, not in his role as hurricane historian but as director of the North Carolina Aquarium at Pige Knoll Shores. Barnes was talking about the aquarium system in general and telling that a rather large expansion of the Fort Fisher facility might be expected soon... We note that the Southport-Oak Island Interchurch Fellowship will sponsor Easter services at 6:30 a.m. Sunday both at Caswell Baptist Assembly and on the Southport waterfront.

Public opinion

Fallen trees

To the Editor:
Before anyone else writes a letter about the trees, let me ask you this: Have you checked your mailbox lately?

I wonder how many trees had to die to provide us all that wonderful junk mail that most of us glance at and throw in the trash. (If you don't believe me, check the trash cans at the post office.) Who do we write to complain about that? And what about the advertising inserts in that other newspaper that comes out of Wilmington daily? On special holidays, like the one coming up promoting the "Bunny," the carrier has to make two trips on Sunday to make sure you get "all" of your paper. Most of the ads are for stores and shops that don't even operate in Southport. What happens to all that paper? It all starts with a tree.

I am not saying cutting down the trees was the right thing to do but you can't take everything before the aldermen. In addition to all the other city business they have to deal with, their plate is pretty full right now dealing with people who want to cut down trees and build houses

And anyone who really loves pine trees should have helped rake my yard!

Paula Spelts
Southport

Health care

To the Editor:
I would like to take this opportunity to applaud Doshier Memorial Hospital and its staff, and Dr. James Adams, for their excellent care during my recent illness and hospitalization.

I observed professionals at work committed to giving our community the best possible care and service.

Michael J. Wecker
Long Beach

Good eggs

To the Editor:
I would like to express my appreciation to the volunteers who helped with the March 28 Community Easter Egg Hunt sponsored by Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department and the Communities In Schools family resource centers.

A team of Americorps, Partnership for Children and Brunswick County Literacy Council volunteers, along with

parks and recreation and the family resource centers staff, held three Easter egg hunts in Leland, Shallotte and Ash, serving approximately 500 participants.

Thank you to all the volunteers for making the hunts so successful and for all their hard work.

Emma Thomas, special events coordinator
Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department

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