

Replacement project Community center bid expectations are good

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

The striking black-on-white sign at the intersection of Moore Street and Fort Johnston Drive contains just a little white lie.

Says the sign touting reconstruction of the Southport Community Building: Construction to be completed in Summer of 1997." Beyond the sign in this Spring of 1998 lies a field overgrown with weeds.

The Southport Community Building (cir. 1940) burned to the ground in a devastating blaze in the early morning hours of January 30, 1995. Almost immediately the Southport community made a commitment to rebuild the beloved structure by whatever means. More than three years later there are weeds.

The path to reconstruction of the old USO building on the Cape Fear River has been fraught with difficulties. First, the city sought through mail-out surveys to determine what type building taxpayers wanted and at what cost.

Next, the land had to be secured from its owner, the U. S. Army. A 25-year lease was worked out with much difficulty.

Then, because the building rested in the city's historic district, the site had to be assessed by archeologists. The N. C. Department of Cultural Resources had to sign-off on reconstruction plans.

When architect John Thompson was hired to design the new building with the aid of a committee of aldermen, plans for a two-story, expandable building grew bigger than the \$300,000 insurance settlement for the old frame structure lost to fire. A community fund-raising effort was launched to double that amount of available money.

So, when in early 1997 bids for construction of a new Southport Community Building were sought, the architect and the committee felt secure in posting that sign at the entrance to Fort Johnston Drive.

Then the construction bids came back in.

Disaster number two.

Only two contractors sought the work and lowest bids totaled more than \$1.3 million -- far more than the committee felt it could ever raise.

Since that time, the committee has sent its architect back to the drawing board -- literally -- to design a simpler project, a one-story wooden building -- one most area homebuilders can feel comfortable constructing.

Meanwhile, through the summer, fall and winter of 1997 and the Spring of 1998, the sign at the entrance to Fort Johnston Drive continued its little white lie.

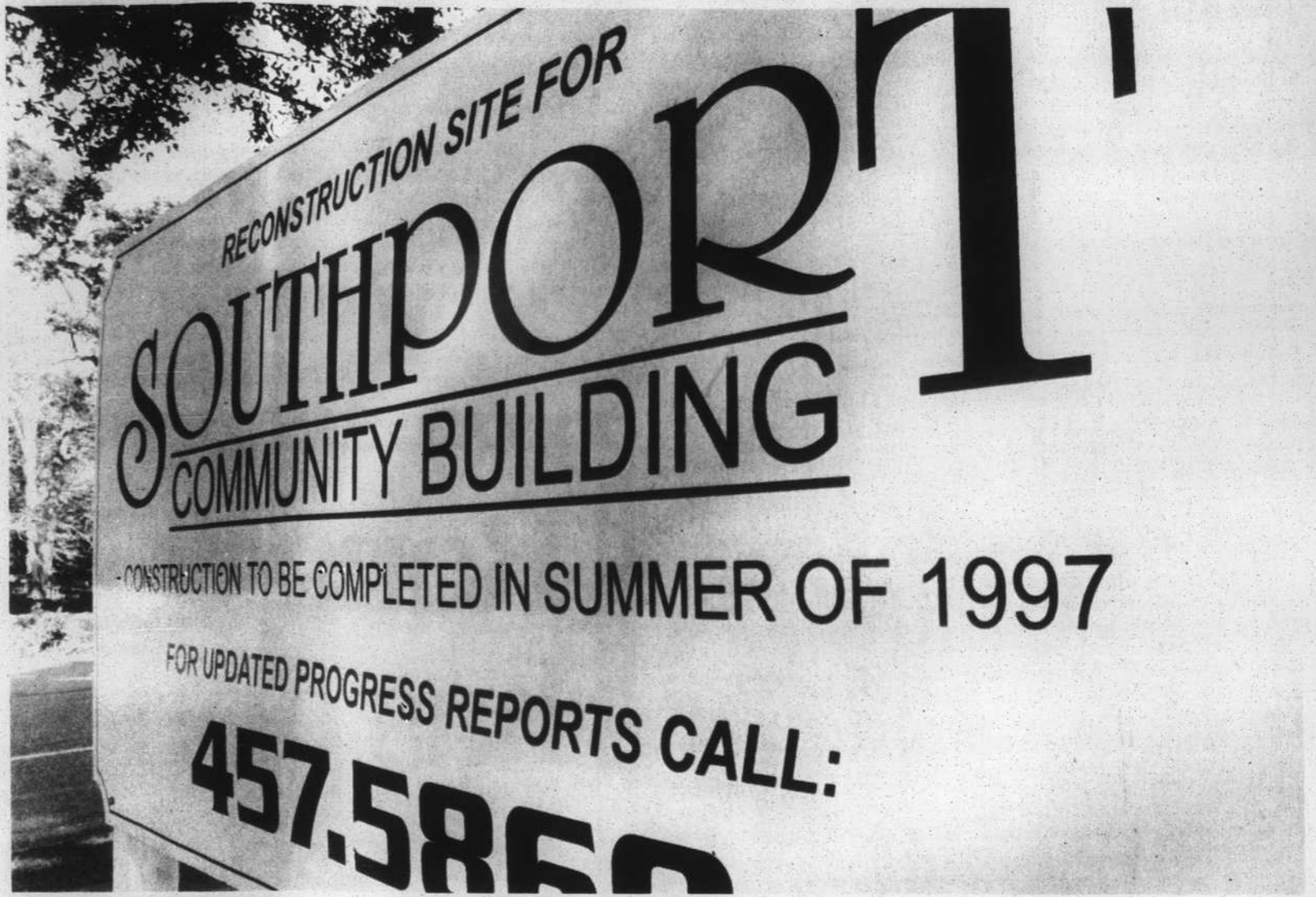
A request for proposals to build a newly redesigned Southport Community Building were advertised last week. Those bids are to be received May 7 and, this time, the city and its committee feel the right bid will be offered.

"We hope to see a bid in the \$700,000 range," architect John Thompson said. "This time we had a really good bidder list. There has been lots of activity. We've attracted a lot of bidders."

Thompson said the "pared-down" structure that has been described in bid packages calls for construction of a one-story frame building.

"There will be no upper floor this time," Thompson said. "It will be a solid, well-constructed building."

The May 7 bid receipt means Southport residents can hope to hear the sound of hammers striking nails within weeks.



Summer of 1997? No way. But, the Southport Community Building reconstruction project has been rebid. City officials and the project architect hope construction of a new Southport Community Building can begin within weeks now. The city will know for sure when bids are opened May 7.

"Provided bids are in-line and we can make a recommendation, we feel we can begin construction by the end of May or the beginning of June," Thompson said.

Also paving the way for resumption of the Southport Community Building reconstruction project is the substantial completion of a memorandum of understanding the city, Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point and the N. C. Division of Archives and History will execute. The memorandum sets out what is to be done with any artifacts or archaeologically significant items found on the Community Building site.

Thompson said the city effort was stalled for months when it sought to obtain permits it did not need on advice that was poorly given. The memorandum takes the place of those unneeded permits.

"Basically, the project has not been dead for the last year, we've sort of been in a state of limbo with this permit problem," Thompson said.

With renewed optimism the committee awaits the May 7 bid opening and construction this spring.

Then, perhaps the sign on Moore Street at Fort Johnston Drive will fill no more.

Domestic abuse suspect remains at-large for week

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

A Southport man with a \$500 price on his head remained at-large through Tuesday of this week.

Authorities have not received any information as to the whereabouts of Bryan Tommie Goodwin Jr., a.k.a. "Beefhead," of the Dutchman Acres community.

Goodwin, 32, has been charged in

connection with what Brunswick County sheriff Ronald E. Hewett described as a "relentless" campaign of terror aimed at his estranged wife, Becky Goodwin, 32, whom he has vowed to kill.

In his attempt to find and harm Becky, Bryan Goodwin has forced his way into domestic violence shelters in both Brunswick and Columbus counties. On two occa-

sions he has run vehicles in which Becky Goodwin was a passenger off the road. On one of those occasions, the couple's children, ages four and five, were in the vehicle.

Goodwin is charged with stalking, assault with a deadly weapon, child abuse and communicating threats. In all, he is charged with 12 separate counts in his month-long spree of alleged domestic abuse.

When Goodwin on April 14 attempted to break through the door of Becky Goodwin's Supply home, she answered by discharging two rounds from a .25-caliber handgun at Goodwin. Apparently she missed.

Goodwin called the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department after that incident, but, in a lengthy conversation with Hewett, he refused to say where he was and renewed his vow to kill Becky. He also told Hewett he had been struck by one of Becky's bullets, but with another week gone by and no sign of Goodwin, Hewett now discounts the claim Goodwin was injured.

Hewett has stressed the \$500 reward that has been offered is for information leading to Goodwin's capture only. Certain charges against Goodwin will stick; Hewett says he will pay the reward to anyone who tells him where the fugitive can be found.

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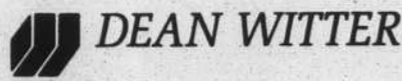
Guided tour of both facilities will be held until 5:00 p.m.

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