

THE STATE PORT PILOT



Top dollars
Tampa Bay outfielder McCracken and man are still half-million

Downhill ra
Cub Scouts test engi in annual Pinewood

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North sewer

Timing right to seek grants

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Designers for Brunswick County's \$26-million northern regional sewer project believe the joint effort is proceeding at an opportune time.

More than \$600 million in state grant funds were made available following a bond referendum in November, and the joint project that will serve the Leland community may be one of the first in line for funding this June.

"There's a lot of grant money out there," said David Pond, senior vice-president of W. K. Dickson and Co. of Charlotte, engineers for the project. "What I tell my clients is, the people who snooze are going to lose."

The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners doesn't plan to be caught napping. The board hired Dickson and Co. last week to design the system and carry it through the bidding phase, possibly by May, under a contract that will pay Dickson \$400,000. The company See Timing, page 1

SPEED DEMONS

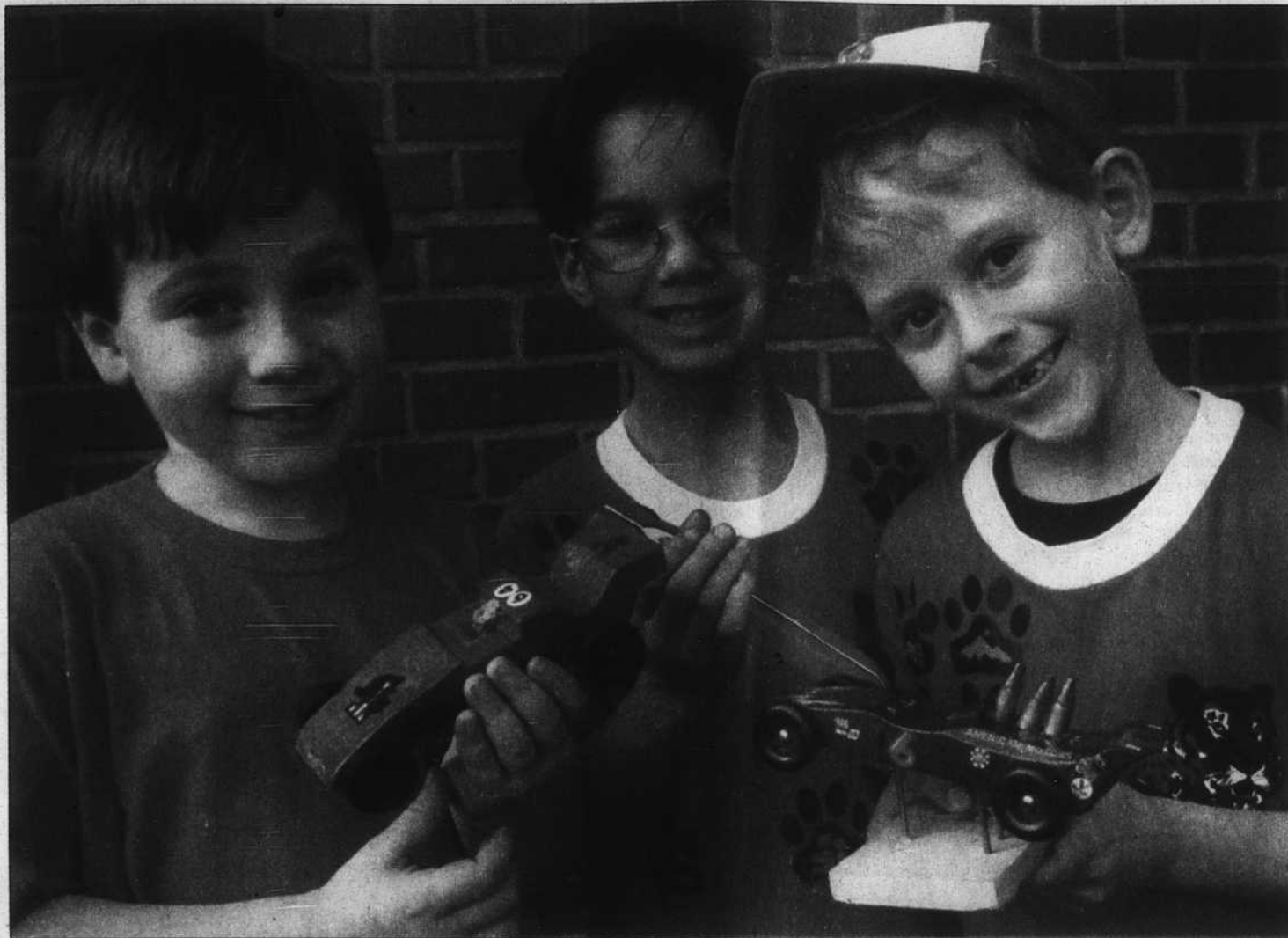


Photo by Jim Harper

Andrew Padden, Adam Blair and Todd Hardee were the three top Tigers in Saturday's Pinewood Derby races in Southport's city gym. The annual competition of miniature gravity-powered race cars involved 41 members of Cub Scout Pack 238 of the Cape Fear Council. More photos in the Neighbors section.

Oak Island Resolution for merger approved

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

With unwavering resolve and unshakeable unanimity, Yaupon Beach and Long Beach elected officials Monday night quickly approved a draft resolution of consolidation they will ask the N. C. General Assembly to ratify, creating the new Town of Oak Island.

Citizens of the two towns will be heard on the matter of consolidation at a public hearing officials have set for February 15 at the Long Beach Recreation Center. That hearing is to begin at 7 p.m.

The action of Monday night keeps the Yaupon Beach Board of Commissioners and Long Beach Town Council on a time-line to realize consolidation of the two municipalities by July 1. It is hoped the bill of consolidation will be introduced before the General Assembly as soon as its 1999 session begins. Ratification by state lawmakers may come as soon as May.

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In a parallel action Monday, Yaupon Beach and Long Beach elected officials also, in separate actions and by unanimous vote, adopted a draft charter for the new Town of Oak Island.

Creating the new municipality by consolidating the two towns originally incorporated in 1955 has gone smoothly to this point. The move to consolidate was prompted last fall when officials of the two towns began work on a plan whereby Yaupon Beach would allot Long Beach wastewater treatment capacity. Talk soon turned to other areas of cooperation, and shortly officials were talking about an all-out merger of the two local governments. The two governing bodies announced their intention to pursue consolidation at an October 1, 1998, joint meeting.

To date, residents and property owners from the two towns have met together in two public participation sessions at which issues relevant to consolidation have been aired: Development issues and, particularly, wastewater management concerns have dominated discussions of consolidation. On February 5, residents of the two towns will have a crack at drafting a mock budget for the new town at a 7 p.m. public participation session at the Long Beach Recreation Center. That session will be repeated on February 13 at 10 a.m. for out-of-town property owners. On March 2, officials of the two towns will preside over a fourth and final public participation session.

As the public continues to hash-out issues of concern over consolidation, professional staffs of the two towns have begun development of the Town of Oak Island's first budget.

Although elected officials of both towns Monday night appeared pleased with the proposed bill of consolidation and the draft charter for the Town of Oak Island, evolution of the proposal will continue through the legislative process.

"It should be emphasized that this is a draft, subject first to your input and also subject to the will of the bill introducer and the local See Oak Island, page 6

St. James rezoning request County takes a look at N.C. 211 corridor

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Another commercial rezoning request has been recommended for busy N. C. 211, this time near the entrance to St. James Plantation.

But the application has prompted Brunswick County planners to ask for a joint meeting with county commissioners to discuss growth along that corridor.

The Brunswick County Planning Board voted 4-2 last week to recommend to commissioners that six-tenths of a mile road frontage (3,400 feet) west of St. James' entrance be rezoned from residential to commercial manufacturing. The 22-acre tract extends 400 feet from the highway and is managed by St. James Development Corp. and Tri-City Inc. of Rockingham, which is also trying to develop a large tract at the Long Beach Road intersection where a Wal-Mart shopping center is proposed.

Two planning board members, Sharon Marshall and Stuart Smith, voted against the St. James application, saying county planners first need to draft an overall development plan for the entire N. C. 211 corridor between Southport and Supply which would protect against strip commercial zones. They point to traffic problems from steady and continued growth as their prime concern.

'If I had anything to say, it would be to give serious consideration to the entire corridor of N. C. 211. We're looking at one section at a time. It ought to be looked at in its entirety.'

John Thompson

"If I had anything to say, it would be to give serious consideration to the entire corridor of N. C. 211," former planning board member John Thompson said at last week's public hearing. "We're looking at one section at a time. It ought to be looked at in its entirety."

Mark Brambell, project manager at St. James, told See St. James, page 10

Young offenders have day in court

By Laura Kimball
Feature Editor



Travis Faircloth served as a prosecutor at Tuesday's session.

Court was called to order Tuesday night, but instead of professional adults, local students were the attorneys, bailiffs, clerks of court and jurors.

The first session of Brunswick County Teen Court, used only for juvenile first offenders who already have admitted guilt, was in session.

Teen Court is a partnership between the district attorney's office and Communities In Schools, and is designed to educate county students — whether a defendant, juror, bailiff or lawyer — about the legal system by giving them first-hand exposure in the courtroom.

Offenses handled by Teen Court fall into three categories. Each category has a list of mandatory requirements for sentencing, including varying hours of community service, observing a certain amount of Teen Court sessions, following school rules and regulations and maintaining satisfactory grades.

Optional guidelines for sentencing also are listed, and are left to the discretion of the jury.

The first case before the court Tuesday involved a student who See Offenders, page 10

\$77-million schools proposal County checks fund options

By Terry Pope
County Editor

It would be the largest funding project the county has ever tackled: Finding \$77 million to upgrade present school facilities to standard and to build new schools to keep up with growth.

But the real test is whether county officials can manage such a project and keep the property tax rate steady. Surprisingly, it can be done even with a public bond referendum with the series spread out over seven or ten years.

"If we do this, it will fundamentally change the way we've been financing our school capital projects," said Brunswick County fiscal operations director Lithia Horne.

A meeting between the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners and Brunswick County Board of Education to discuss funding options was canceled Saturday and will be rescheduled at a later date. Commissioners have asked Ms. Horne to map spending models of how the county could fund the entire See Finance, page 9

'That half-cent tax revenue is designated for school construction. That's like having a revenue source to pay the debt.'

Lithia Horne
Finance director



Chamber booklet

The 1999 Vacation and Residents Guide published by the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce has been delivered. More than 75,000 copies will be available locally and at visitors centers throughout North Carolina.