

THE STATE PORT PILOT

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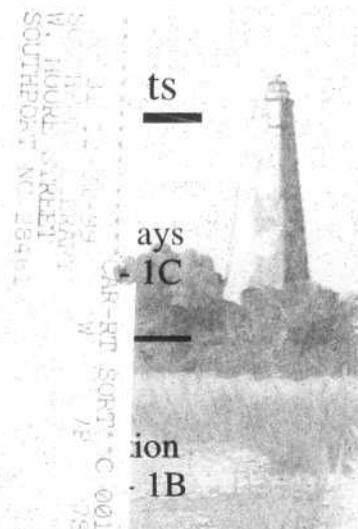
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COMMUNITY BUILDING



Photo by Jim Harper

The first structural steel member of the new Southport Community Building was moved into place on the Garrison on Monday, in replacement of the World War II-era building which burned there four years ago. The project is expected to be completed in June.

Estimated \$7.1 billion Property values soar in county revaluation

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Property values in Brunswick County have increased 57 percent during the past five years, according to revaluation figures released by Brunswick County tax assessor Boyd Williamson on Monday.

Total value of property from the last revaluation in 1994 was \$4.6 billion, while it stands at \$7.1 billion under the new rates, mostly due to an increasing demand for rural homesites and steady growth in coastal developments.

"Rural land is going to be a hot commodity," said Williamson. "People are coming into the county, and the demand is increasing."

County commissioners must decide on a tax rate based on the new assessed values for the fiscal year budget that begins July 1. They must decide whether to change the current tax rate of 68.5 cents per \$100 of property value or keep that rate and bring in more tax revenue.

Residents will get individual property tax statements in the next few weeks and should have them in hand by the first of March. Tax department employees have spent the past 12 months visiting and appraising the county's 100,000 parcels for the revaluation process.

"There are millions of keystrokes entered in the course of this process," said Williamson. "Are there



Brunswick County tax assessor Boyd Williamson points to higher values throughout the county.

going to be errors? Absolutely. If there are errors, we will make them right."

The department has installed a new telephone line with five extensions to answer calls from residents who will question the new values. Residents can appeal their assessment to the Board of Equalization and Review if they are not pleased with the tax department's ruling.

"If the current market value is different from the assessed value, that may be a reason for an appeal," said Williamson. "Or a person may be dissatisfied because

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LONG BEACH

Canal access on hold

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Opponents of proposed public access improvements on Davis Canal at SW 20th Street Tuesday night convinced council that concern for the project was sufficient to warrant more public discussion.

Council will meet in workshop session to discuss the project with members of the town recreation advisory committee and interested citizens on March 9.

In other business brought before council's regular monthly session, councilor Kevin Bell's resignation was accepted, but the naming of his successor was postponed when councilor Horace Collier said he would resign his two-year council seat on February 22 to seek appointment to the four-year term Bell has vacated.

Council also voted to authorize construction of a pedestrian and bicycle lane extending from 39th

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Three-story facility Plans proceed on courthouse

By Terry Pope
County Editor

It wasn't an unanimous decision, but the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners voted 3-2 Monday to proceed with design of a three-story, \$11.5-million new courthouse at the government center near Bolivia.

Grier-Fripp Architects of Charlotte presented its schematic designs to commissioners Monday, depicting a more conventional courthouse with a sandstone facade and columns. It will be constructed adjacent to the present courthouse, which has become too small to adequately handle the criminal case-load and judicial system space needs.

"This truly will be a courthouse for the future of Brunswick County," said Glen Ware, of Grier-Fripp Architects.

It is expected to meet the county's space requirements for the next 25 years and can be modified to add room for another 25 years of

'A lot of work has been done. We definitely know we're going to have to have a new courthouse. I don't want to stop everything.'

JoAnn Bellamy Simmons
Commission chairman

growth. Two commissioners, Bill Sue of Leland and David Sandifer of Holden Beach, voted against the appropriation of \$506,000 to Grier-Fripp so the firm can proceed with a schedule to seek bids in

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Reserve fund extremely low City may need electric rate hike before budget

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Public services director Ed Honeycutt Thursday asked Southport aldermen for an immediate three-percent across-the-board electric use rate increase.

The rate hike would raise residential electric bills between \$3 and \$4 per month, depending on the number of

load management measures for which the customer has opted. Commercial rates will rise between \$1.60 and \$8 per month, Honeycutt said.

Aldermen appeared stunned by Honeycutt's request -- a request he said he made as electrical fund balance failed to grow.

"You want this before the budget?" alderman Meezie Childs asked in ref-

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'There are just certain things you can't afford not to do....'

BRIDGE, OTHER PROJECTS

Tolson claims state ready, feds hold-up

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Transportation Secretary Norris Tolson told Brunswick County residents during a special Friday visit that federal agencies are to blame for holding permits at bay while state officials are ready to build a second bridge to Oak Island.

"We are not going to please everybody," Tolson told a group of municipal and county officials who attended the public meeting held by

the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners. "I don't always control the schedule. We are running behind in letting contracts over what we are ready to build, but we can't let the contracts until we have the permits. The biggest issue is the Corps of Engineers. They don't have enough help. There is one person for the Army Corps of Engineers writing permits for our projects."

Residents also voiced concerns to

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N. C. Secretary of Transportation Norris Tolson told county officials and residents that construction delays can be blamed on permitting.

Rep. Redwine takes appropriations chair

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Eight-term incumbent Rep. E. David Redwine of Brunswick County became one of the most powerful members of the N. C. General Assembly this week with his appointment as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

House Speaker Jim Black, of Mecklenburg County, announced Redwine's appointment as leader of the House's largest and most powerful committee Thursday. Redwine will share the post with representatives Ruth Easterling of Mecklenburg County and Thomas Hardaway of Halifax County.

Redwine, now the tenth most senior member of the House and ninth most senior Democrat, was first appointed to the House from the 14th District in 1983 and has won reelection every two years since 1984. He has been a member of the Appropriations Committee since first appoint-

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