

THE STATE PORT PILOT

Phone 910-457-4568/Fax 910-457-9427/e-mail pilot@southport.net

Volume 68, Number 50

Published e

ly in Southport, NC



The gra
Brunswick Co
class of '99 ta

Dixie Y
Play ball! as
to statewide

0000000
SOUTHERN
W. HOOVER
SOUTHERN
NC 28466
3-1-2-3-CAR-RT
SOUTHERN
W. HOOVER
SOUTHERN
NC 28466
host
-IC
7S

Traffic meeting planned

Hot about traffic this summer? Cooler heads will prevail Sunday, September 26, when state officials and N. C. Department of Transportation representatives are invited to a public meeting at Hatch Auditorium at Fort Caswell. A full house is hoped for, and expected.

The topic will be overall traffic management in southeastern Brunswick County, including a second Oak Island bridge, improvements to N. C. 211 and a connector from the Beach Road intersection to N. C. 87-133. That route would alleviate congestion at Doshier Cutoff and the Wal-Mart Superstore under construction near Southport.

An organizational meeting will be held this Saturday, August 7, 10:30 a.m., at Oak Island Recreation Center. Those willing to assist in the September program are urged to attend.

"We need volunteers to help with flyers, banners, signs, parking, set-up, food, drink, club and community outreach" in preparation for the September gathering, said organizer B. J. Schaagaard. Her committee is known as People for Better Traffic Control.

"Please help us fill Hatch Auditorium," she urged this week. "We need representatives from St. James, Southport, Caswell Beach and Oak Island. Now is the time to be proactive and get something done."

HOT, HOT, HOT...



Photo by Jim Harper

Everybody who suffered through our heat of the last two weeks will understand this feeling. These young footballers were taking a break from South Brunswick's first day of practice on Saturday, when skill-building quickly became a matter of survival training.

\$97.5 million total School, BCC referendums date not firm

By Terry Pope
Staff Writer

The push for a quick September 25 public referendum on \$97.5 million in school and community college bonds appears to have hit a snag before Brunswick County commissioners, who may slow the process down a bit.

A public hearing on the bond referendum will be held Monday, August 16, at 5:30 p.m. in commission chambers at the county government center near Bolivia. Anytime following the hearing, commissioners can set a date for the public vote, but the recommended Saturday voting date that the Brunswick County Board of Education has pursued may be changed or delayed.

Some commissioners have indicated they'd like to hold more than one public hearing on the matter before heading to the polls to better inform residents of the issue before them. District 1 commissioner Don Warren of Ocean Isle Beach asked county attorney Huey Marshall at Monday's commission meeting if the board had to set an actual voting date in two weeks, after it holds the first public hearing.

"At the bond order hearing, you elicit com-
See Referendums, page 6

Brunswick County is in sound financial shape and should have no problem gaining LGC's approval of bond sales

Bridges hearing Tuesday

Better flow of water past two islands in its middle will create better water quality in Davis Canal.

That is the rationale for building two bridges over "Little Davis Canal" at an estimated cost of \$750,000.

Oak Island Town Council Tuesday will conduct a public hearing on a finance plan for construction of bridges at SW 15th Street and SW 28th Street. The public hearing will begin at 7:30 p.m. at Oak Island Recreation Center. Council's regular monthly business session will follow.

Long Beach Town Council, prior to consolidation this spring, approved the Davis Canal bridge project and it has been inherited by Oak Island Town Council. The bridges to be constructed — to Pine Island at SW 15th Street and to Island Drive at SW 28th Street — are to replace earthen dams and culverts that do not allow adequate tidal exchange.

Officials have said a better exchange of water through the smaller northern portion of Davis Canal also will eliminate silting
See Davis Canal, page 16

St. James Plantation Federal EPA takes look at drainage allegations

By Richard Nubel
Staff Writer

When St. James Plantation developers drained nearly 2,400 acres of wetlands north and west of that development, state regulators stepped in to levy fines of just under \$170,000.

Now St. James developers' drainage practices and the activities of others in the area apparently have attracted the attention of a new enforcer to make its presence felt locally — the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency.

EPA and U. S. Justice Department officials traveled to Brunswick County and viewed drained wetlands in eastern Brunswick County the week of July 19, said Rick Shiver, supervisor of the N. C. Division of Water Quality (DWQ) Wilmington regional office.

"EPA has expressed an interest in St. James," Shiver said. "The last time they went out there, they did see another turbidity violation."

St. James developers did as dozens of other wetlands owners did in the months between October, 1998, and March, 1999: They reclaimed wetlands for potential development. It was during that time the Gov. Jim Hunt administration had suspended its enforcement of state regulations regarding wetlands destruction.

Though St. James completed digging an intricate labyrinth of meandering drainage ditches through the wetlands before the March 1 date for state enforcement, state inspectors with DWQ and the Division of Land Quality (DLQ) found the drainage project did not comply with North Carolina erosion
See Developers, page 14

State attention is urged Outer Loop 'lifeflood' of county

By Terry Pope
Staff Writer

County officials have won approval to beef up language in the Wilmington Urban Area Transportation Plan that relates to construction of the Outer Loop project, a U. S. 17 bypass of Wilmington through northern Brunswick County.

"That bypass will be the lifeflood of Brunswick County," said District 5

commissioner Bill Sue of Leland, "because it will give us a connector to an interstate highway. We need it, and we need it badly."

Sue serves on the Wilmington Urban Area Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) with the mayors of Leland, Belville and Navassa. Together, along with City of Wilmington and Wrightsville Beach officials and planners from the N. C. Department of Transportation, they have updated the

25-year roads improvement plan that affects all of New Hanover County and the northern portion of Brunswick County.

The update, two years in the making, plans for highway needs well into the next century to ensure better traffic flow throughout the region. It is predicted the 660,000 daily trips handled by the highway network today will grow to over 4 million daily trips by the year 2025. A wide range of traffic alternatives is

called for in the plan, including another bridge crossing the Cape Fear River into Brunswick County south of Belville. Plans also call for an improved Village Road through the Town of Leland.

"We want to put it on the front burner, for anybody that will listen," said Sue, "especially the need for that (U. S.) 17 bypass. At one time, it was moving right along. Instead of going forward, it
See Bypass, page 16

Tuesday first day School day dawns early for children

By Diana D'Abruzzo
Staff Writer

Five-year-old Madison Ruff was ready for school. Seated at her tiny table at Williamson Elementary, she had already drawn three pictures with her crayons and made friends with her tablemates.

Madison wasn't fazed by the newness of the first day of kindergarten. But her mom — well, she was a wreck.

One final hug goodbye became two hugs. And another. And a wave.

"Bye, mom," Madison said.
"Bye," said Jennifer Ruff, walking out of room 223 with tears in her eyes.
"I've been with her since the day she was born, and now I have the day to myself, and I don't know what I'm going to do," she said, describing the moment of leaving.
See First day, page 3



Photo by Jim Harper

Assistant principal Deanne Meadows and teacher assistants met buses at the rear of the new Williamson Elementary School on Tuesday to direct students to their classrooms.