#### The State Port Pilot

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### Challenge ahead

The focus of local governments in southeastern Brunswick County in the next decade must be on regional infrastructure

In our towns and cities, December in every other year is more than just a holiday month — it is a time for municipal change and renewal.

It is a time when new community leaders are ushered into the service of their neighbors and it is a time when those who have served well either renew their commitments to our work or retire to other roles in our communities

This week and next, most of our towns and cities will see new leaders take up their tasks. Bald Head Island jumped the gun last month, initiating the service of a new mayor and two commissioners. This week new community leaders took the reigns of the Southeast Brunswick Sanitary District, St. James and Boiling Spring Lakes. Before the week is over, Southport and Caswell Beach will have new mayors and two new governing board members each. Oak Island will have renewed the service commitment of one councilor and welcome a new leader to the municipal fold early next week

December is an exciting time for towns and cities.

It is also a time that might invite community introspection. Change in government leadership sometimes signals change in direction, sometimes just a change of hand at the helm of a ship on a steady course.

As we enter a new decade, a new century and a new millennium, at least one goal seems obvious from the newspaper's perspective: The focus of local governments in the next decade must be on regional infrastructure. Even the tasks like building roads and bridges - that we gladly assigned other levels of government in the past must now become the concerns of the towns and cities, or we will become lost in a sea of competing needs.

In the 1980s, the chief concerns of our communities were development of land use practices by which our communities would grow. By the 1990s, we were secure in land use practices. We turned our attention in only a limited way to the facilities we would need to support the growth to be experienced within the confines of our land use practices.

But, we ran out of time in this decade. Even with the relatively responsible growth we have realized as a benefit of our land use practices, we still need more roads and bridges to service our communities and we can't wait for the state to come lately to that realization. We need more and bigger wastewater treatment facilities and more lines to feed them for our public health. We still need alternative drinking water supplies. We must plan for the changes in our communities that may come as a result of electricity industry deregulation.

We absolutely must deal with beach erosion if quality of life in our region is to

Our communities face a number of challenges as the new decade dawns. This week and next, the men and women who will lead us in these challenging times begin their service. We wish them well.

### Change of command

Ms. Simmons' leadership will be missed, but she relinquishes control to someone very capable of keeping the ship on course

Under the leadership of JoAnn Bellamy Simmons, the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners has worked smoothly and as a united board despite facing some tough issues with a bipartisan mix of Republican and Democratic

With Simmons as chairman, the board has tackled regional sewer, improved fire department funding through district fees, braced for enormous growth and lobbied for improved roads and stronger zoning laws. Her concern and passion for her home county, and a desire to see the Brunswick progress the right way, has often led to her aggressive prompting of fellow board members to vote as

Her favorite expression, "We are all in this together," reminds her board to forget politics and set aside personal agendas when digging deep into a touchy issue. When she swapped seats Monday with vice-chairman Bill Sue, she passed the gavel to someone who literally has stood by her side along the way.

As a five-year veteran on the board, Sue's best attribute has been his unique ability to bring people to the table, set aside differences and work out solutions for the good of this county. His work led to settling the lawsuit between school board members and the commission over improved educational funding and the establishment of a northern regional sewer project that at one time appeared doomed for failure because of personality conflicts among parties involved.

County government will remain in good hands with Sue as chairman. He has been an advocate for a stronger sheriff's department, supported fire district fees, led the effort to build a new school central office, pushed for expanded 911 emergency medical services, established countywide door-to-door garbage collection, rejected support for an environmentally questionable industry that tried to relocate to the county and is in the midst of constructing a new mental health center, parks and recreation offices and county courthouse.

That's quite a job in five years, but there is still a lot that needs to be done. Stormwater control, growth issues, \$83.5 million in school improvements — the ever-growing list goes on and on. Ms. Simmons' leadership will be missed, but she relinquishes control to someone very capable of keeping the ship on course.

# **ALL I KNOW ABOUT THIS** THE "MON" WHO'S GETTING "POKED"...





## Not exactly news

Holiday festivities move to Southport this weekend, beginning with the Sea Notes Choral Society concert Friday, 8 p.m., at Southport Baptist Church. Then on Saturday, the Southport Home Tour, featuring historic homes decorated for Christmas, will be held from 5 to 9 p.m.; Tickets are \$8 in advance or \$10 the day of the tour, and refreshments will be served at Franklin Square Gallery... Those strolling along the waterfront at the time can join hundreds of other spectators for the annual Waterfront Sit-stilla and Lighted Flotilla. The event is scheduled for 7:30 p.m., and judging from participation in fall sailing events we can expect one of the largest fleets of holiday revelers ever. The "sit-stilla" means that decorated boats also will be adorned at dockside - before and after the Cape Fear River parade... On Sunday, the Sea Notes will travel to Seaside Methodist Church at Sunset Beach for another concert at 3 p.m., and Oak Island Senior Citizens will hold their annual Christmas party from 2 to 5 p.m. Quite a full weekend is in store. Chris Gore, a 1999 South Brunswick High

School graduate, is fulfilling his dream of serving as team manager for the UNC-Chapel Hill basketball team. Chris, of Winnabow, is a freshman at UNC. Proud dad Tommy Gore watches each and every game - especially the timeouts - to catch a glimpse of his son on TV... And Pilot staff writer Diana D'Abruzzo tried pretty dam hard to catch a glimpse of her sister, Stephanie, on television Monday night. Stephanie, a muppeteer for "Sesame Street," played the queen and a mouse (the pink one) on Fox's "Cinderelmo." Alas, since it's only her hand and voice doing the performing, Stephanie couldn't be seen, only heard... Southport residents should not be alarmed Saturday to hear the booming of cannons during the afternoon. In celebration of Christmas-by-the-Sea festivities, artillery demonstrations will occur tentatively at noon, 3 p.m., 5 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on the Garrison. And, though the turn of the century is still a few weeks away, signal guns are scheduled to go off at midnight near the Southport Community Center. So don't be alarmed when Y2K arrives and you hear shots

outside — the world is not coming to an end. We were delighted to be in the audience at

Hatch Auditorium on Sunday so the Brunswick Concert Band could get our holiday juices flowing. Other than the Sea Notes (of whom more elsewhere), no group can capture our imagination faster than this gathering of neighbors and friends who enjoy so much providing what the community, since 1986, has so much enjoyed listening to. An unfortunate coincidence in scheduling set the Brunswick band head to head with the 2nd Marine Division band at Odell Williamson Auditorium. We wish we could have heard them both. We're glad we showed up where we did ... We appreciated a call from a reader who found an icy wonderland in Oak Island during last week's freeze. A sprinkler had been left on, perhaps not inadvertently. We missed the display but have the uneasy feeling that somewhere in this winter we're going to have plenty of chance to see icy display. Recent easy winters have been gnawing away at our luck.

# Public opinion

### Sifting sand

To the Editor:

How does greed sift into the sand?

We have heard of agreements written in stone, but never in sand. We would like for Bald Head Island to show us each grain of sand that has "Property of Bald Head Island" written on it. Enclosed please find a bag of Ohio sand to be given to Bald Head Island for sand management.

Dr. Bob and Sammy Woodgeard Bryan, Ohio/Caswell Beach

#### Out the door

To the Editor:

Editor

Staff Writer

Staff Writer

Staff Writer

Staff Writer

Staff Writer

Photographer

Graphic Arts

Graphic Arts

I have spent many years enjoying the view from the sands of Caswell Beach, which included a wonderful view of Bald Head Island directly across the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Sadly, I will never look over to Bald Head again without wondering why the good-neighbor policy flew out the door.

In the past two years I have lost 20 percent of the sand that separates my oceanfront home from the Atlantic. I have been thrilled at the prospect of receiving any amount of sand that will delay the inevitable erosion from Mother Nature. When the Corps of Engineers announced there would only be a bit more than half the originally anticipated sand available, I was certainly disappointed, but was still thrilled at the prospect of additional sand on our beaches. I was equally thrilled to hear that the elected officials at Caswell Beach were still being considerate of our

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#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR...

The State Port Pilot invites its readers to share opinions on matters of local public interest. Lengthy letters may be edited for space, or may be returned to the writer if editing would significantly alter the content. The writer's address and/or telephone number must be included in case verification is required. No letters will be published without the name of the writer.

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