

THE STATE PORT PILOT

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North vs. South

Two county rivals to meet for a third time this season in the Seashore Holiday Classic -- 10

December 29 1999 99 cents



Filing starts

Three seats open for commission, schools

By Terry Calhoun
Staff Writer

The books will open at noon on Monday, January 3, at the Brunswick County Board of Elections for residents who plan to seek a ballot spot in the local May primary elections.

The deadline for filing is noon February 7, according to Lynda Britt, supervisor of the county elections board.

Board of commissioners

Three seats will be up for grabs on the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners this election cycle. The District 3 seat currently occupied by Leslie Collier of Oak Island, the District 4 seat of JoAnn Bellamy Simmons of Ash and the District 5 spot now filled by board chairman William "Bill" Sue of Leland will be open. Simmons, past chairman of the commissioners, now serves as the vice-chair. The filing fee for the four-year terms on the county board is \$100.

Board of education

Three seats are also at stake in the contest for the Brunswick County Board of Education. The District 1 seat now held by Olaf "Bud" Thorsen of Shallotte, the District 2 seat held by chairman Joyce Parker Hewett of Supply and the District 4 seat held by Pat Purvis Brown of Ash are to open for filers. The filing fee for the four-year school board terms is \$5.

State House, Senate

Brunswick County voters will be asked to choose candidates in the May 2 primary to face off in the November general elections for the North Carolina 18th Senatorial District.

R. C. Soles, Jr., of Tabor City, is serving the current two-year Senate term.

Three State House ballot spots will also be determined. David Redwine of Ocean Isle Beach and Lake Waccamaw's Dewey Hill now represent Brunswick County in the State House from the 14th District while Thomas Wright of Wilmington holds the 98th District seat. The 98th District includes a portion of northern Brunswick County.

Filing fees for the state positions are \$207.

Register of deeds

The four-year term of the Brunswick County Register of Deeds will be filled again. The incumbent is Robert J. Robinson. Filing fee is \$395. The coroner's job, now held by Greg White, will also be open. Filing fee is \$20.

ROOFTOP RESCUE



House call

Oak Island rescue workers rushed to Caswell Dunes Monday morning where Frank Cuthbert had fallen through a building floor on Foxfire Trace. The painter was secured in a stretcher, bound to the end of an aerial ladder and lowered to ground for transportation to Doshier Hospital for examination.

Photos by Jim Harper

St. James Plantation

Deal struck on wetlands

Developers agree to pay \$213,000 fine

By Terry Pope
Staff Writer

St. James Plantation developers have reached an agreement with the N.C. Division of Water Quality to fill or plug nearly 20 miles of ditches to restore 1,500 acres of wetlands improperly drained from summer 1998 until February 1999.

St. James developers will also pay substantial fines of \$213,000.

The landowners have further agreed to stabilize another 13 acres of ditches to prevent erosion and off-site sedimentation in return for retaining them.

The agreement was reached Tuesday with officials in the N. C. Division of Land Resources of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources over ditching on two tracts owned by developers of St. James Plantation.

"We are pleased that a settlement agreement has been reached," said St. James Plantation president John

Atkinson. "An important part of our community is the beauty of our landscape and we pride ourselves on building quality neighborhoods that blend in with the natural surroundings."

Tommy Stevens, director of the state Division of Water Quality, said the tract owners -- St. James Development Inc., Tri-

City Inc. and Brunswick Land and Timber LLC -- will pay \$131,200, or 80 percent, of the original \$164,000 fine the agency assessed in April, plus \$12,500 to address any water quality violations that may have occurred since April. The owners will also pay the \$3,454 in enforcement costs.

"It's a good agreement that achieves a no-net-loss of wetlands," said Stevens.

Charles Gardner, director of the Division of Land Resources, said the settlement also calls for the owners to pay \$53,600, or 80 percent, of the original fine DLR assessed for erosion and

See St. James, page 9A

'We are working hard to correct the problems that arose and to be responsible stewards of the environment.'

John Atkinson
St. James president

Schools 2000

An \$83.5-million building plan

By Diana D'Abruzzo
Staff Writer

With the confidence of voters in their pocket -- coupled with the \$83.5 million those voters approved for new school facilities -- officials with Brunswick County Schools will be busy in 2000 preparing for new buildings, new programs and all the teaching and learning that comes with the job.

"We made a promise to the public, and we're fulfilling that promise," said Katie McGee, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction.

Prior to the new year, the school system had already selected architects for all the projects in phase one of its facilities plan. In 2000, construction of the \$10 million elementary school will begin, along with the \$39 million in renovations and additions at the three

high schools.

The new facilities will do wonders for instructional needs, McGee said. The new west-end elementary school will relieve overcrowding at Union Elementary and Shallotte Middle schools. And the renovations and additions at the three high schools -- built in the 1970s with little upgrade since -- will provide much-needed classroom space, including improved science labs.

"It will have a great impact on instruction because, with new facilities, there will be more opportunities for learning," McGee said.

McGee said the school system is already in the planning stages for how it will handle instruction at the high schools during the renovation.

"We'll have to be productive during renovation," she said. "So there will

See School, page 6A

THE MILLENNIUM

Awaiting the stroke of midnight

Southport's guard still up as 2000 draws near

Y 2K

By Terry Calhoun
Staff Writer

Diesel and propane tanks are being topped off this week, contingency plans are complete, standby personnel schedules are set, and more than a few fingers are crossed.

All the preparation by Southport city staff is done. Now the wait begins for perhaps the most significant stroke of midnight since Cinderella fled the palace.

City manager Rob Gandy says he is confident that all that can be done has been done, but Southport's guard is still up as the days are marked off the calendar ending the year. And Gandy, for once, is happy that the city is in a hurricane-prone location. His happiness owes to the fact that most of the city's utility services are backed-up by diesel generators. The security provided by those generators in the aftermath of storms is magnified in this once-in-a-thousand-year calendar rollover from 999 to 000.

Unless someone has awakened of late from a nap of Rip Van Winkle magnitude, the reason for the concern is at least familiar, if not clear. Computer programmers either ignored reality or were so concerned by the need for field space in computer programs that they short-cut the date from a four-digit number (like 2000) to a two-digit one (like 00). In 1975 the problem was not nearly as evident as it is in 1999 as one realizes that even the fastest cutting-edge computer cannot discern the difference between 00 as in 1900 and 00 as in 2000, unless software programs have been adequately updated.

While most systems have been updated to avoid the problem with as much confidence as possible, certain technology systems using embedded chip devices might not function properly, or at all, when the change comes. Where are these embedded chips? What will their function (or malfunction) mean to critical systems? Those questions will be much easier

See Southport, page 11A

Battling back from Floyd

Oak Island to grow despite hurricane setback

By Richard Nubel
Staff Writer

Although the work of fully consolidating the two communities that formed Oak Island in July will continue into the coming year, it is still recovery from the September passage of Hurricane Floyd that will dominate the scope of work before town council, staff and citizens in the beginning months of the new millennium.

"The challenge for the town is obvious in terms of the storm," mayor Joan Altman said. "That is, to come back as quickly and completely as we can. We need to have these homes repaired and rentals back in business if the town is to recover fully from the storm."

When Hurricane Floyd cut its path through Oak Island September 15-16, it drastically altered the economic well-being of Brunswick County's largest municipal corporation. Since September, work crews have cleared tons of debris that littered the strand area. The effort has cost the town nearly \$2 million to date and that cost could double.

While only a small portion of that cost has been reim-

See Oak Island, page 3A



'The challenge for the town is obvious in terms of the storm. That is, to come back as quickly and completely as we can.'

Oak Island mayor Joan Altman

Electric department personnel will begin monitoring all systems at 11 p.m.