

Awards Presented

West and North Brunswick high schools held their annual spring athletic awards banquets Monday. The story and pictures are on pages 12-B and 14-B.

Island Living
Supplement included in this issue

Fishing's Fine

Surf and pier fishermen pulled in 14-pound bluefish, continuing what local experts are calling a good spring fishing season. The report is on page 11-C.

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Brunswick Nuclear Plant Shuts Down For Retraining

BY SUSAN USHER

Carolina Power & Light Co. voluntarily shut down both units of its Brunswick nuclear plant Sunday and Monday, after a second group of operators there failed mandatory relicensing examinations conducted by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The plant will remain out of production for at least several weeks, according to CP&L spokesman Elizabeth Bean, while those operators and their fellow crew members undergo retraining and, where applicable, retesting. In the two rounds of testing, the NRC indicated that 23 of 47 operators tested failed at least one portion of the three-part exam. The site has 80 licensed operators, some of whom are assigned to non-operator positions but are subject to being placed on licensed duty.

CP&L and the NRC agreed that the testing area that gave the operators problems was a simulated control room exercise that required them to respond as teams to a specific situation. Where individuals failed to perform adequately, their entire team will participate in retraining.

While CP&L is not commenting on the failure rate pending a report from the NRC, Ms. Bean said the shutdown resulted because the company was "concerned about the fact that we didn't perform as well on the group test as we should have."

Ms. Bean said CP&L does not expect any fines or violations by the NRC stemming from the situation at the plant that led to the voluntary shutdown.

Meanwhile, CP&L is increasing production at its other nuclear and coal power plants to offset the loss of production at the Brunswick site, which is responsible for 15 percent of the utility's power capability. If demand warrants it, the company could also purchase power from another utility, she said.

"We will not have any difficulty meeting electrical demand," Ms. Bean said. "Today, for example, all our coal-fired units are operating that are available." CP&L operates nuclear power plants at Hartsville, S.C., and in Wake County. It also operates eight coal-fired plants and three hydroelectric plants, including Sution at Wilmington.

Ms. Bean said it would be impossible to estimate the cost of the

shut-down, a figure based in part on the cost of production. The company's coal-fired plants are more costly to operate.

Employees at the Brunswick plant will continue to report to work. Those in non-operator slots will continue with their regular work, while operators whose licenses are valid will continue to operate the dual control room while the others retrain. Those who are not now due for relicensing won't undergo additional training at the present time, Ms. Bean said, but will "at the appropriate time."

Those who failed the test have been removed from their license-related duties until they pass the test.

While the NRC requires five-operator crew teams, Ms. Bean said CP&L chooses to operate the plant with teams of seven—five operators and two senior operators, one of whom serves as supervisor.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the federal agency that licenses and oversees operation of nuclear power plants, decided last week to test additional operators at the CP&L facility after an unusually high number of the plant's 80 li-

(See NUCLEAR, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Keeping His Cool

Jody Cook of Albemarle kept his cool on the Holden Beach strand Saturday afternoon by digging a hole in the moist sand. The crowd around him and his two American flags may have been a preview of things to come. Thousands of property owners and visitors are expected to flock to the local beaches this weekend to celebrate Memorial Day.

Holden Beach Board Is Pondering Possible Tax Increases

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach property owners could be faced with higher tax bills next fiscal year than they received this year, thanks in part to Hurricane Hugo.

Town officials are considering a two-cent increase in the property tax rate in next year's budget, as well as a one-time tax rate hike to replenish reserves depleted following last September's hurricane and a special tax for the canal subdivisions to pay for dredging.

Commissioners started reviewing the proposed budget for fiscal year 1990-91 at a workshop Tuesday morning. The board plans to resume budget deliberations Tuesday, May 29, at 9 a.m. in town hall.

In the meantime, Mayor John Tandy urged board members to study the budget and concentrate on the "elephants," the big appropriations that could possibly be lowered to minimize any tax rate increase.

Town Manager Gus Ulrich said last week major projects in next year's budget include town hall expansion, sidewalks, underground wiring and the paving of Brunswick Avenue West and three shorter streets that link Brunswick Avenue and Ocean Boulevard. Those four projects account for \$245,000 in the \$1.2 million budget.

The two-cent tax rate hike proposed would raise the rate from 14 cents to 16 cents per \$100 of valuation

and would mean an additional \$40 in taxes for the owner of a \$200,000 piece of property.

Over and above that, the town board talked this week about increasing the tax rate a few more pennies next year to help rebuild the fund balance that was raided when the town was recovering from Hugo. Among other things, the town spent more than \$300,000 to reconstruct the oceanfront dune that was flattened in the storm.

Commissioner Bob Buck suggested the board consider a 5-cent tax rate increase to help rebuild the reserves, which he said the town would need in the event of another hurricane or emergency.

The town started the fiscal year with \$426,017 in its fund balance. After using \$151,946 to balance next year's budget, Holden Beach would be left with approximately \$274,071 in its reserves.

A one-year tax rate increase of five cents would bring in about \$110,000 in revenue, based on the town's property valuation of \$221 million.

Buck said the proposed 5-cent tax rate hike could be written into the budget ordinance as a one-time increase and be dropped next fiscal year. "I'm not sure it's a good idea to let the fund balance take a licking for last fall and not put anything back," Buck said.

(See HOLDEN, Page 2-A)

Rose Wants State To Consider A Vote On Sunset Bridge

BY SUSAN USHER

Congressman Charlie Rose wants the state "to give serious consideration" to holding a referendum to determine the fate of the pontoon bridge at Sunset Beach.

In his second letter to the N.C. Department of Transportation in a seven-month period, Rose wrote on May 10, "I kindly suggest that the state give serious consideration to a public referendum and allow every interested homeowner at Sunset Beach the opportunity to settle this matter in an open and democratic process."

Approximately 10 years and two public hearings after the controversial project was first proposed, the N.C. Department of Transportation anticipates letting bids in September for construction of a 65-foot, fixed-span high-rise bridge across the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway that is expected to cost at least \$8 million when completed.

In late 1989, both Rose and Congressman Terry Sanford wrote to then N.C. Department of Transportation Secretary Jim Harrington asking him to reconsider the project and look at other alternatives. Rose's second letter, with his first attached, went to Harrington's successor, Tommy Harrelson.

Unlike Rose and Sanford, Sen. Jesse Helms has chosen not to get involved in the debate over the bridge project.

Legislative assistant Wayne Boyles said Helms' office is directing all correspondence regarding the bridge to the N.C. Department of Transportation. "The decision-making authority in that matter is

with the state, not the federal government," he said. "Secretary Harrelson has been so kind as to respond with a letter to each and every constituent who has written us."

Like Rose and Sanford, Helms has received a large volume of letters regarding the bridge, most of them in opposition to the high-rise, Boyles said. Asked if the senator had received letters favoring the project, Boyles said, "I don't think so, not that I can recall."

In his letter to Harrelson, Rose said his concern about the bridge project has been heightened not only because of the "overwhelming" correspondence received from property owners, but also by his increased awareness of the stress that coastal development has placed on marine resources and traditional industries in southeastern North Carolina.

He said the proposed bridge would be one of the bigger bridges along the coast and "would put substantial development pressures on this tiny community."

Rose refers to his work to rectify the continuing pollution problem in Lockwood's Folly River and the resulting impact on the shellfishing industry. "Although the state has not yet identified the point source for the pollution, all information indicates a strong correlation to coastal development," he said.

"I feel very strongly that state and local officials must be willing to anticipate and address the many problems and needs associated with increased coastal development be-

(See ROSE, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Tubing In The Surf

Jamie and Wayne Jennings of Ocean Isle Beach play with an inner tube in the surf next to the Ocean Isle Beach Fishing Pier Sunday afternoon.

Commissioners Set June 7 Public Hearing On Budget

BY BOB HORNE

Although expressing concern that the 1990-91 county budget might not yet be streamlined and has actually grown since Interim County Manager David Clegg presented them with a "working" budget proposal, the Brunswick County commissioners Monday night scheduled a public hearing on the budget for June 7 at 7 p.m.

The recommended budget is available for public review beginning today. Residents desiring to see the budget may do so at the office of Regina Alexander, the clerk to the Board of County Commissioners, in the administration building at the county complex at Bolivia.

When he presented the budget to the commissioners on Tuesday, May 15, Clegg said that a final recom-

mended budget should be completed by May 22, so it could be available for public review by May 24 (today). Commissioners took their Monday action after discussing those time constraints and Clegg told them they could continue to work on budget changes until the public hearing, although no special meetings have yet been scheduled.

At their first budget workshop, commissioners added \$183,900 to the original \$35,667,194 budget. Monday night, they eliminated raises for themselves, which totaled \$1,024, leaving the recommended budget at \$35,850,070 and still calling for a 12-cent increase in the property tax rate, to 71.5 cents per \$100 valuation.

Commissioners agreed to recom-

(See PUBLIC HEARING, Page 2-A)

Small Tornado Hits Hickman's Crossroad, Causes No Injuries

A small tornado struck Hickman's Crossroad in southern Brunswick County Tuesday afternoon, ripping the roof from a former grocery store that is now used as a utility garage.

There were no deaths or injuries from the funnel cloud.

"A tornado just came over and sucked that roof right off of it," said Wallace Hickman, who owns the building. "My wife and grandchild were in there. They just got down on the floor, it scared them so bad."

Hickman, who said the tornado hit about 3 p.m., was inside and did not see the tornado, but he described it as making "a heavy, roaring sound." He said it tore eight plies of roofing felt off one corner of his roof.

Elrich Hickman, who lives down the road from Wallace Hickman's building, says he saw the funnel cloud.

"I looked out the window and it was right in my front yard," he said. The funnel was about three feet wide at the bottom and about 35 or 40 feet high, he said.

The tornado broke one of the rails in Hickman's split-rail fence, broke limbs from trees, knocked one shingle off his roof and left a destructive path through his garden.

"I could just hear sticks and stones hitting the house," he said. "It was frightening; it sounded like a jet taking off. We were lucky."

Hickman speculated that the tornado skipped by the corner of his house and then headed toward Wallace Hickman's garage.

A spokesman for the National Weather Service, who declined to

be identified, confirmed the tornado, saying the damage consisted of the roof torn off the former grocery, large tree limbs torn down and a garden patch destroyed.

"It only lasted a minute or so and then it lifted back up," he said.

The spokesman said there also were reports of two waterspouts sighted shortly after 4 p.m., both of them over the Atlantic Ocean, 4-6 miles east of Carolina Beach "and the last we heard, they were moving north." He said a special marine warning was issued because of the waterspouts.

Based on the description of the funnel cloud and the amount of damage, the spokesman said it would be rated an F-0 or F-1 on a tornado F scale. An F-0 is the weakest category of tornado and an F-5 the strongest.

Tornadoes rated 0-1 are described as weak, with wind speeds of 74 to 113 mph. This category accounts for 80.2 percent of all tornadoes, according to figures provided by the National Severe Storms Forecast Center in Kansas City, Mo.

The National Weather Service spokesman described such a tornado as "weak and short-lived." However, such tornadoes have caused deaths, according to the National Severe Storms Forecast Center.

Tornadoes rated 2-3 are described as strong, with winds 113-206 mph. They account for 18.1 percent of all tornadoes, according to the National Severe Storms Forecast. A storm rated 4-5 is described as violent, with winds of 207 to 318 mph and the National Severe Storms Forecast says they account for 1.7 percent of all tornadoes.