



On A Roll
 Marcus Smith and the South Brunswick boys' basketball team trounce Hoggard 73-58 last Friday to improve to 8-1. For this and other sports news, see Pages 6B-9B.



Navigating Roads
 Heavy rains drenched waterfront streets, but there's little evidence of beach erosion following last weekend's nor'easter. The story's on Page 8-A.

Trapping Beaver
 Trapper Charles Eddins of Leland battles a growing beaver population in Brunswick County. Check out the story on Page 12-A.



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FOUR PEOPLE WERE KILLED Tuesday when a dump truck (center) and a Dodge Diplomat sedan collided at Grissetown. Part of the Dodge is shown in the foreground; the rest was pinned under the front of the truck.

Four Killed In Grissetown Wreck

BY DOUG RUTTER
 Four Albemarle residents were killed Tuesday afternoon when the car they were riding in entered a Grissetown intersection in the path of a dump truck. The 3:30 p.m. accident occurred when a 1985 Dodge Diplomat traveling east on N.C. 904 attempted to cross U.S. 17, said Trooper C.E. Ward of the N.C. Highway Patrol. A 1988 Ford dump truck northbound on U.S. 17 collided with the car, pushing it several hundred feet north of the intersection, killing the driver and all three passengers. Authorities had not released the names of the two male and two female victims as of 9:30 p.m. Tuesday, pending notification of next of kin. Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan said he didn't know the ages of the victims, but "they appeared rather elderly". Truck driver John Curtis Fuller, 59, of Council, received neck and back injuries in the wreck. He was treated at The Brunswick Hospital in Supply and released, said Ward. Logan said it looked like the Dodge "pulled right out in front of the truck." Ward said the dump truck driver "didn't even have

time to hit his brakes before he hit the car." The collision left part of the car near the intersection, but most of it was pinned under the front end of the truck. Fire and rescue workers from four area departments, using the "jaws of life" extrication tool, worked more than two hours to free the victims from the crumpled remains of the vehicle. Logan said the truck driver, Fuller, didn't look like he was seriously injured. "He was up walking around when we got there." BMCO Construction Inc. of Lumberton owns the tri-axle dump truck that was involved in the accident. The company was hired in November 1990 to build the welcome center/rest area on the U.S. 17 Shallotte bypass and had earlier done grading and drainage work on a section of the bypass. Logan said Brunswick County E.M.S. workers and volunteers with Calabash and Shallotte rescue squads and Sunset Beach and Grissetown-Longwood fire departments responded to the scene. The traffic-related fatalities were the first of 1992 on state roads in Brunswick County. Ward said Tuesday night he didn't expect to file any charges relating to the accident.

Former Drug Defendant Charged In Theft Ring

BY TERRY POPE
 Convicted drug trafficker Dale Olaf Varnam of Supply was back in jail Monday, accused of leading a Holden Beach area theft ring that allegedly involves thousands of dollars in stolen goods. Varnam, 40, of Supply was charged Monday with six counts of second-degree burglary and six counts of larceny after breaking and entering, said Brunswick County Sheriff's Detective Gene Allen Caison. He was being held in the Brunswick County Jail Tuesday under \$130,000 bond, Caison said. A first appearance in Brunswick County District Court has not been set. Varnam is the key subject in a three-month investigation into an organized theft ring in the Holden Beach area, said Detective Kevin Holden. Mostly mainland homes were involved in the break-ins with one located on the island, said Holden. "We received tips, and one thing led to another," said Holden. "We expect this to lead to other arrests." Officers seized approximately \$50,000 in stolen items from Varnam's home on Stone Chimney Road (S.R. 1115) Monday afternoon. Caison said detectives loaded up a U-Haul and four smaller trucks with the items seized. The stolen goods had been "set up for use in his home," said Caison. The break-ins date back to March 1991.

Confiscated were refrigerators, a dishwasher, video recorders, televisions, coffee pots and other items, said Caison. In a plea bargain agreement, Varnam pleaded guilty in Brunswick County Superior Court in 1988 to 18 counts of trafficking in cocaine and 18 counts of conspiracy to traffic in cocaine. He was one of 80 defendants indicted on drug trafficking charges by a special investigative grand jury under former District Attorney Michael Easley. He received a 15-year suspended sentence in September 1988, was placed on five years' supervised probation and fined \$2,000 for his drug involvement. He was also ordered to serve 200 hours of community service work. A probationary sentence was handed down at the time because of Varnam's cooperation with the state and personal danger he would face if imprisoned with individuals he implicated in various drug investigations, Judge Lynn Johnson noted. Indictments accused him of distributing more than eight pounds of cocaine in Brunswick County between February 1985 and May 1986. The goods seized from Varnam's home Monday will be returned to the owners or to insurance companies, said Holden. "We expect more charges to come out of this," said Caison.

NO LONGER NEEDED? Vote To Drop Advisory Board Angers Robinson

BY TERRY POPE
 Brunswick County Register of Deeds Robert J. Robinson was fuming when he left the commissioners' chambers Monday night. Instead of reappointing members to his Register of Deeds Advisory Board, Brunswick County Commissioners voted 4-0 to abolish it. Robinson said amendments or revisions to the resolution that formed

the board in November 1987 must be approved by both the commissioners and the register of deeds. "I'd like to go on record of taking exception to the fact," said Robinson. "I do not concur," he added before leaving the room. But the resolution also indicates that commissioners must appoint four of the five members to the board for it to remain active. Commissioners say the advisory board members set no policy for the Register of Deeds office and operated on a monthly \$55 per diem plus travel expenses. Its members are Jean Therpe, Janet Shires, Tom Morgan, Billy Carter and Earl Andrews. "I don't see where we still need a Register of Deeds Advisory Board," said Kelly Holden, chairman of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioners traded a few tart comments with Robinson before the 4-0 vote to axe the board. District 4 Commissioner Frankie Rabon was sick and did not attend. "Would the Register of Deeds office continue to operate without an advisory board?" District 2 Commissioner Jerry Jones asked Robinson. Robinson responded, "The same as the operations of the county would carry on without a board of commissioners." The advisory board was established under Chairman Grace Beasley of the previous board of commissioners. According to the charter, it was created to form "a system of citizens to serve in an advisory capacity" to the Register of Deeds. Its duty is to "bring to the attention of the Register of Deeds any inadequacies that may pose undue problems" and to "discuss other issues of relevance that the Register of Deeds deems necessary for office operation."



First Baby Of '92
 Robert and Phebe McLean of Shallotte show off their daughter, Kayla Denise McLean, the first baby born in 1992 at The Brunswick Hospital. Arriving Jan. 3 at 9:34 a.m., she weighed 8 pounds, 1 ounce, and was 20.75 inches long. The McLeans received gifts from local merchants and the hospital that include a free photo sitting, a baby ring, a stroller, free car seat rental and a \$25 savings bond, as well as a manufacturers' gift package of assorted baby products. Kayla's grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Smith and Eliza Hewitt, all of Shallotte. Great-grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Winfred Robinson of Shallotte. She has a brother, Corbit, 5.

Robinson said board members "obtained input from the public on the everyday operations" of the department. There are 13 such advisory boards in North Carolina's 100 counties, he said. Information supplied by Bill Campbell of the N.C. Institute of Government indicated Brunswick has the only such advisory board, said Holden. Ones were formed in Orange and Guilford counties to help select new computerized recording systems for the office, but have since become inactive. Deeds offices do not routinely report to the Institute of Government on their activities, which is why that agency did not have up-to-date information on advisory boards, said Robinson, who serves as the N.C. Register of Deeds Association's legislative chairman. A data sheet given to commissioners in their meeting packets Monday listed \$554.29 in expenses for the local advisory board members for the months of July, August, October and November. (See VOTE, Page 2-A)

TOWNS ASKED TO FUND PARTY DOT Board Will Meet At Sunset Beach

BY DORI COSGROVE GURGANUS AND DOUG RUTTER
 The N.C. Board of Transportation plans to hold its May meeting in the South Brunswick Islands, and the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce is asking local towns to help foot part of the tab. The towns are being asked to help pay for a cocktail party. The meeting, which will bring 24 board members and about 51 staff members to Sunset Beach, will be held at Sea Trail Plantation as a public relations effort by the chamber. "Hosting the DOT is a real privilege," said Annette Odom, immediate past president of the chamber. She said the state panel has been invited to meet here many times, but

declined previous offers due to budget limitations. In August, the chamber received an RSVP of sorts from the transportation board accepting the invitation for a spring meeting. The one catch for area officials is that the board requires about \$5,000 in local funds to help cover meeting-related expenses. Ms. Odom said local towns have been asked to donate \$750 each to help augment the chamber funds that will pay for a cocktail party during the visit. Sunset Beach Town Council approved the donation at its meeting Monday night on a 3-2 vote, and Ms. Odom said she has received verbal commitments from Ocean Isle Beach and Holden Beach officials. Governing boards in those two communities have not approved the expenditure. Shallotte Aldermen have postponed a decision on the donation until their Jan. 21 meeting, saying they need to review their budget and discuss the request. Ms. Odom also said she has received commitments of \$500 each from the South Brunswick Islands Committee of 100 and the Committee for Economic Development. The chamber official said she's not sure the chamber will need all of the \$5,000, as the state is reconsidering its share of the funding. (See DOT, Page 2-A)

AT FIRST LAND USE WORKSHOP Speakers Say Zoning's Top Concern

BY TERRY POPE
 About a dozen people attended the first of a five-part series of public workshops on the 1992 Brunswick County Land Use Plan Update Tuesday night at Sunset Beach. Residents there listed the need for county zoning, improved water distribution, recycling programs and waste management as top concerns relating to Brunswick County growth in the next five to 10 years. Glenn Harbeck, a consultant hired to develop the land use plan, said he was pleased with the comments made Tuesday. Ideas from the workshops will help draft the plan with an aim at making an impact on the county's future economic growth, development proposals, transportation planning and public improvements. "If we get this kind of result from our other four meetings," said Harbeck, "we'll be delighted." Other workshops will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the following locations: Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce building, Thursday, Jan. 9; at the

Town Creek Community Building, Tuesday, Jan. 14; at the Leland Community Building, old Leland School park, Wednesday, Jan. 15; and at the Lockwood Folly Community Building on Stanbury Road, Thursday, Jan. 16. County residents who met at Sea Trail Plantation Tuesday night were asked to vote for their top 10 concerns listed by the entire group. Votes were also cast for improved public education, industrial recruitment, improved fire and rescue service, cultural development, wildlife protection, unemployment reduction and controls on business growth through zoning. District 1 Commissioner Kelly Holden represented the county at the meeting, along with Brunswick County Planning Board member Troy Price of Calabash. Holden said the top concern, zoning, would be a topic commissioners will deal with in 1992. The Brunswick County Planning Department has been ordered to prepare a zoning ordinance for adoption. Commissioners appear in favor of an ordinance by a (See ZONING, Page 2-A)