

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

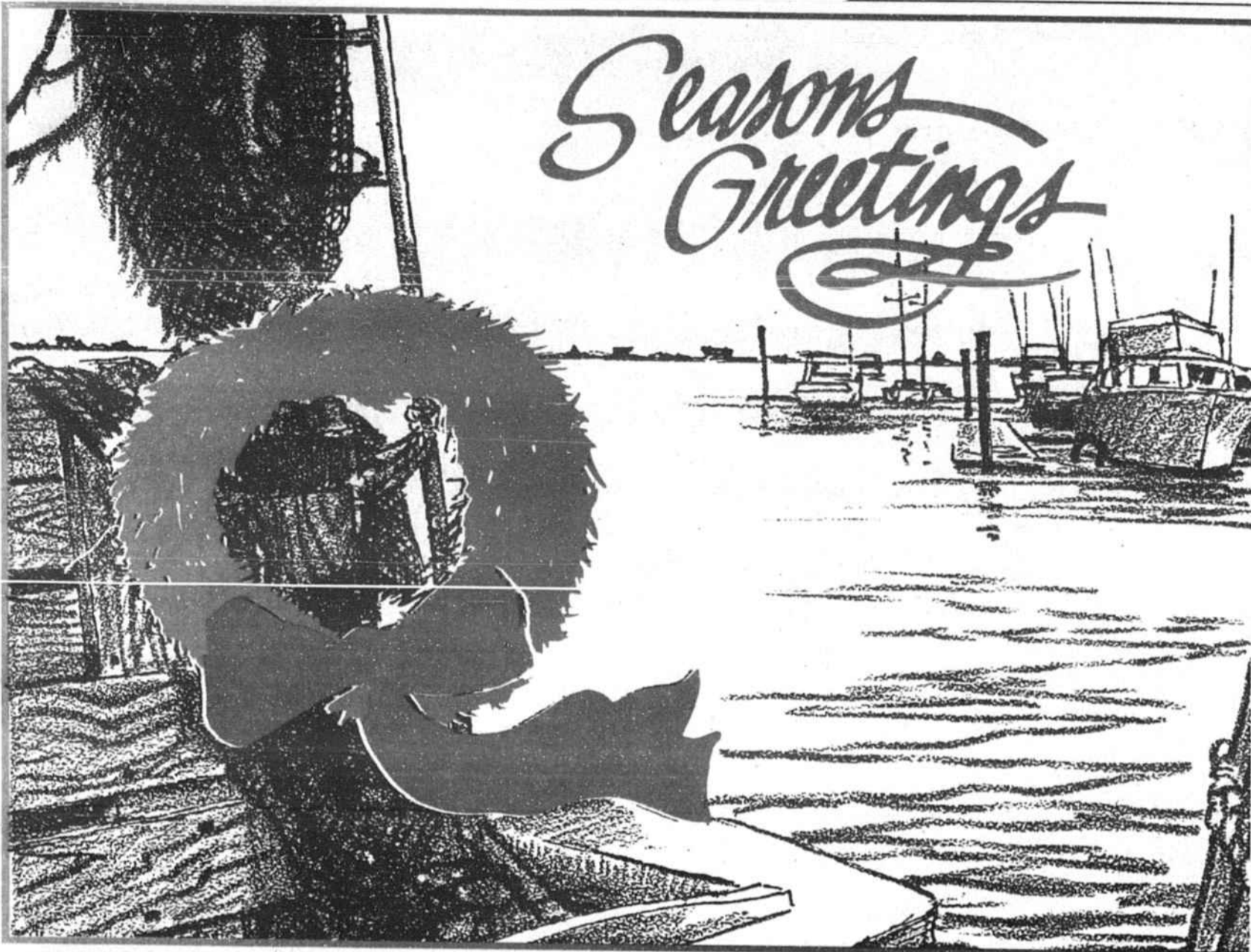
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Board OKs \$55 Million, 10-Year Plan For Schools

BY ERIC CARLSON
In one of several split decisions by the newly constituted board, the Brunswick County Commissioners voted Monday to approve a non-binding wish list of \$55 million worth of school improvements proposed for the next ten years.

Chairman Don Warren and Commissioner Wayland Vereen voted against the package, saying the \$1.6 million earmarked for the 1993 construction of a new school administrative office building in Bolivia would be better spent on additional classroom space.

Vereen also joined Commissioner Jerry Jones in a minority vote against a request for \$153,622 the school board says was lost when the state cut off funding for local school energy costs.

Warren and commissioners Tom Rabon and Donald Shaw voted to approve the appropriation.

Jones said the school board was given enough to cover energy expenses in the 5-percent budget increase allocated for 1992-93 by the former board of commissioners.

The proposed county leash law passed a second and final reading

with Vereen casting the only dissenting vote. (See related story, Page 6-A.)

In asking approval of the school board's 10-year plan, Assistant Superintendent William Turner said it "is not something that's carved in stone" and would not commit the commissioners to allocating funds as scheduled. He said the plan was requested by the state to help long-range planning and to assess the need for a statewide school bond referendum.

Brunswick County schools can expect a 33-percent increase in enrollment in the next ten years, Turner said. That means the total school population would jump from its current level of just under 9,000 students in 1992 to an estimated 12,300 by 2002.

Among the improvements planned for the next 10 years are:

■1993: A new central office building in Bolivia, additions to the Southport Primary cafeteria, new floors and lights in the three high-school gyms and a new roof on the Lincoln Primary School.

(See SCHOOLS, Page 2-A)

Local Fishermen Find, Leave Behind, Lots Of Tiny Oysters

BY DOUG RUTTER

The old saying about good things coming in small packages doesn't apply to oysters. Small oysters are off limits to fishermen.

Brunswick County shellfishermen say they've been finding lots of undersized oysters since the season started Oct. 15.

In North Carolina, it's illegal to harvest oysters that are less than three inches long. Local fishermen say this season has been characterized by an abundance of the tiny oysters.

"We have a lot of little oysters around under three inches," said Rich Carpenter, southern district manager with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries.

As a result, Carpenter said oyster season

has been "just fair" to this point. "It hasn't been a great year and it hasn't been a disastrous year. It's kind of in between."

Toni Chadwick of Chadwick Seafood at Shallotte Point said fishermen that work Shallotte River have found bushels and bushels of small oysters. All they can do is leave them behind and look for bigger ones.

"There ain't much to it right now. The big ones are getting pretty scarce," she said. "The first of the season they looked pretty good, but the little ones haven't grown much."

Among other things, Chadwick said oysters need cold weather and rain to grow. There's been plenty of rain this season, but the weather hasn't been cold enough.

"It hasn't been a great year and it hasn't been a disastrous year. It's kind of in between."

—Rich Carpenter,
Division of Marine Fisheries

Chadwick said she's hoping there will be more oyster growth in January and February than there's been so far this season.

"Usually in the cooler months they grow better."

Another factor stunting oyster growth in Shallotte River, she said, is the blockage in Shallotte Inlet. The inlet needs to be dredged so more food can come up the river for the oysters to feed on.

"That's our biggest problem," Chadwick said. "The old inlet needs to be dredged so the oysters can get some food. That's another thing that's keeping them from growing."

Although oysters have been undersized, fishermen are thankful they haven't found many dead oysters this season in Brunswick County.

In 1989 and 1990, oyster-killing parasites known Dermo and MSX were blamed for

widespread shellfish mortality in area rivers and streams.

Carpenter said there's been "very little" mortality so far this season. State officials don't expect the parasites to cause problems this winter.

"We're kind of into the colder season so Dermo slows its growth a little bit," Carpenter said. "We've seen some patches of it but nothing like two or three years ago."

Chadwick said fishermen haven't found many dead oysters in Shallotte River this season. "A couple of years ago I mean they really died, but there ain't many dead ones this year."

Soles Tapped For No. 2 Senate Leadership Post

BY SUSAN USHER

Sen. R.C. Soles Jr. (D-Columbus) has been nominated as deputy president pro tem of the North Carolina Senate for the term that begins next month and marks his 25th year in the state legislature.

Soles, 58, is expected to succeed Kenneth C. Royall Jr. of Durham in the post, which is considered one of the most powerful in the Senate. He was nominated by the Senate's Democratic Caucus, and will be voted on and sworn by the entire Senate and sworn into office shortly after the Senate convenes at 12 noon Wednesday, Jan. 27.

"Because the Senate is controlled by Democrats, obviously he's as good as in," said Mike Ballance, a public information assistant in the lieutenant governor's office.

At 3 p.m. that day, he will co-host a reception at the Brownstone Hotel for constituents with 14th District Reps. David Redwine (D-Brunswick) and Dewey Hill (D-Columbus).

As deputy president pro tem, Soles' responsibilities will include

"When you're in a leadership position, you are able to influence things.... We'll want to help direct things toward southeastern North Carolina, whether it's jobs or something else."

—Sen. R.C. Soles

surveys legislators, lobbyists and the media representatives covering the legislators.

A partner in a law firm in Tabor City, Soles previously represented Columbus County for four terms in the N.C. House of Representatives. In the Senate he represents the 18th District, which includes Brunswick County.

During the coming term Soles said he expects his leadership position to benefit the area, at least indirectly.

"When you're in a leadership position, you are able to influence things. When decisions are made certainly I'll have a lot of input. We'll want to help direct things toward southeastern North Carolina, whether it's jobs or something else."

Reflecting some of the emphases of the Clinton administration at the federal level, Soles said he anticipates much emphasis at the state level on infrastructure such as highways, mass transit, sewer and water systems, and on innovative approaches to education. Currently Soles said he is "leaning toward" support of a bond issue for the community colleges, state university system and public schools.

He sees southeastern North Carolina as ready to "open up" to economic growth with the near-completion of the four-laning of U.S. 17, the speeding up of work on U.S. 74-76, which will open up a four-lane route to Charlotte and incentives that have increased use of the State Ports Authority, which is also in his district.

Soles has served as co-chairman of a study committee on docketing criminal cases that, along with the new sentencing commission study, will make recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency of the court system and ensuring that those sentenced to prison serve "some reasonable time" in prison.



HEALTH DIRECTOR Michael Rhodes and Department of Social Services board member Brenda Grissett admire the Christmas baskets assembled for Brunswick County families.

Christmas Basket Program Helps 600 Families In Need

BY LYNN CARLSON

They were lined up early in the chilly morning outside the Schaeffer Buick building in Southport. There were children and parents and grandparents and great-grandparents, some well-dressed and others tattered, some cheerful and smiling and others uncomfortable with having to avail themselves of the community's charity.

They were the A's through the L's, the first half of 600 families who qualified for Christmas baskets distributed by the Brunswick County Volunteer & Information Center beginning Monday.

When Monday's food and gifts were all with their designated recipients, the task would begin of assembling goods for the M's through Z's

in time for Tuesday morning's continuation of the program.

Inside, VIC Director Pete Barnette and assistant Angie Fisher coordinated a small army of volunteers, shepherded clients and cross-checked to make sure baskets went to the right families. Volunteers' tasks varied from checking in clients to holding doors open. Two volunteer "Santas" from Carolina Shores and "Mrs. Claus," a former VIC employee, added to the merriment.

Fisher's husband Mike and an energetic group of high-school and college-age volunteers did most of the running and retrieving—locating each family's gifts in a sea of red-and-green wrapping paper, cardboard cartons, bicycles and tricycles and grocery sacks, and delivering

the goods to their grateful beneficiaries.

"Isn't this great?" said Barnette, beaming as he greeted clients at the door. "People love helping with this. I wish it was as easy to get volunteers the rest of the year."

The Christmas baskets program is truly a community-wide effort. From mid-October until mid-November, VIC sought applications from low-income families in need of help with Christmas gifts and food. Fisher made tags for the "Trees of Hope," throughout the county, an opportunity for people to buy specific gifts for people under 18 and over 65. In addition to the gifts acquired that way, there are "generic gifts,"

(See GIFTS, Page 2-A)

Inside...

- Birthdays.....2B
- Business News.....6-7C
- Calendar of Events.....7A
- Church News.....4-5B
- Classified.....1-6C
- Court Docket.....8C
- Crime Report.....9C
- Golf.....10B
- Obituaries.....5B
- Opinion.....4-5A
- People In The News.....3B
- Plant Doctor.....2B
- Sports.....8-11B
- Television Listings.....6-7B