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'Mathletes'

Waccamaw Elementary students prepare to compete in Math Counts. Page 4-B.

Getting An Earful

South Brunswick Islands Chamber members speak with the honorables at the annual legislative forum. Page 11-A.

Winning Streak

The Lady Trojans take their 4th consecutive Waccamaw 2-A conference win. Page 7-B.



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Soles Will Proceed With Bill To Split Calabash; Vote Likely

BY LYNN CARLSON

Although only three of 200 persons attending a public meeting Friday indicated they favor dividing Calabash, State Sen. R.C. Soles says he will stand by his vow to introduce legislation to split the town, calling such a measure "the best way to get their attention."

Soles said Tuesday he is now "refining" his bill, which probably will call for a referendum authorizing the division of Districts I (old Calabash) and II (Carolina Shores) into separate incorporated municipalities. District I, the original Calabash prior to the 1989 addition of Carolina Shores, is comprised primarily of business people and Brunswick County natives who say their lifestyles and livelihoods are being unfairly controlled by the retirees and newcomers who dominate the District II population.

"We are deliberately going slow to give the people down there a chance to get together and solve their own problems," the senator added.

Under the plan Soles outlined on Tuesday, the town of Calabash would revert to its earlier municipal borders, and the new town of Carolina Shores would be incorporated. Each would have its own governing board and mayor, and old Calabash would get the town hall, since that facility is in the current District I.

Soles said there are otherwise no debts or major assets to divide, and that he anticipates few problems with details. He added that he expects easy passage in the Senate since it will be a locally sponsored bill. "Then it will be up to the House."

While residents of the two districts admit they have significant ideological and cultural differences, many speaking at the public meeting said a break-up now would be premature.

But those sentiments run contrary to the results of a poll by the Carolina Shores Property Owners Asso-

ciation, in which 60 percent of respondents said they favored a split. However, only 25 percent of eligible participants had responded by the Feb. 8 polling deadline.

Those attending the hearing spoke their minds not just to Soles but to Reps. David Redwine and Dewey Hill.

The two representatives, reached at their State House offices Monday, said their next course of action will be determined by the wording of the Soles bill.

"Senator Soles is going to introduce a bill to do away with the (town) charter. He's not going to back down," Hill said. "Hopefully that will put it on the table where people can make up their minds."

"I know R.C. is committed to a bill to split, but beyond that I don't know what," Redwine said. The reality of what I do will be determined by what (kind of bill) I get. A referendum might be appropriate to help us see where we are at the time."

Redwine and Soles introduced the 1989 legislation which joined Calabash and Carolina Shores and created the two districts. "When we consolidated, both sides had a chance to vote," Redwine said. "Both were positive, they wanted to be one town. I think it would be appropriate and logical to see how they feel about it now."

Soles and Redwine expressed hope that the two factions can make their shared government work for both sides; Hill, however, said, that "might be a hard thing to do, from what I saw."

"Old Calabash has its lifestyle, and Carolina Shores people seem mighty determined in their own way," he added. Hill said Friday's meeting provided his first opportunity to hear comments from Carolina Shores residents on the issue. "I had heard only from old Calabash, with little correspondence from the Carolina Shores area."

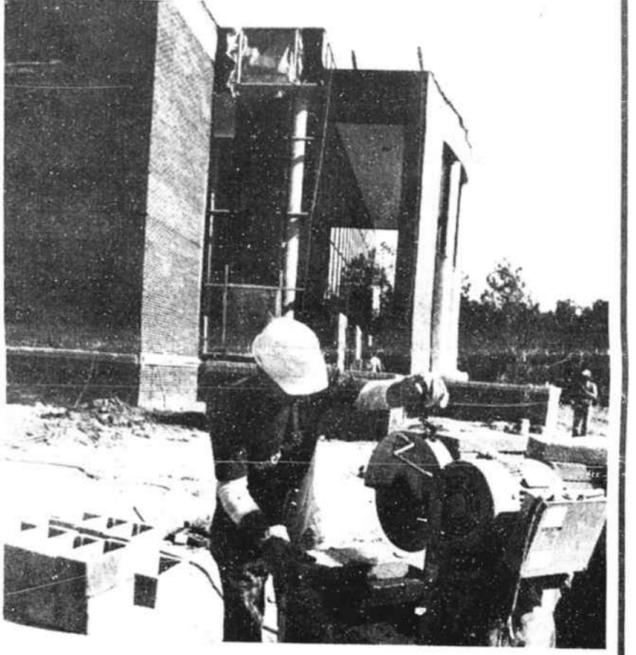
Hill, who lives in Columbus County, is beginning his (See CALABASH, Page 2-A)

"I'm just trying to give them the opportunity to see how they like living apart."

—Sen. R.C. Soles



STAFF PHOTOS BY ERIC CARLSON
COMPLETION IS MONTHS AWAY ON the Odell Williamson Auditorium (pictured above) at Brunswick Community College, according to the college's Board of Trustees, who have said they will find the contractor in default and have its insurance company finish the project unless "substantial progress" is shown by the second week in March. William Baylor (in photo at right), a brickmason working for one of the subcontractors, was among workers on the job Monday morning. Auditorium manager Michael Sapp says that although the North Carolina Symphony is booked at the auditorium for May 10, "I don't see it happening."



CLEGG MAY ALLOW HIRING

Director Says Human Services Hurt By Unfilled Staff Positions

BY ERIC CARLSON

Brunswick County may face fines, lawsuits, application delays and reduced services for endangered children, shut-ins and Medicare programs unless vacant positions can be filled in the Department of Social Services, Director Jamie Orrock said Monday.

Faced with 20 percent of county residents collecting food stamps, 15 percent unemployed and steady in-

creases in applications for public assistance, Orrock told the DSS board that his inability to fill 15 approved vacancies is putting "an extreme hardship" on his staff and causing DSS to "lose credibility" with its clients.

County Manager David Clegg has not approved any hiring since Jan. 19, when he was told by the Board of Commissioners to "refrain from filling any non-essential positions." However, Clegg said Tuesday that he has been meeting with department heads this week to discuss personnel needs.

Asked if he had determined that some of the requested positions are essential, Clegg said, "Probably so, if we are going to retain service provision at the level of the past 24 months."

Clegg would not say what positions might be filled, but added, "My first priority will be those that directly effect human services."

At the DSS Board's regular meeting Monday night, Orrock called Clegg's enforcement of the commissioners' policy "frustrating as heck." He said the department does not have enough workers to properly render many of the services it is required by law to provide.

The county's in-home care program, with six of 35 caseworker positions vacant, is probably the hardest hit, Orrock said. Funded through Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements, the program provides up to 36 hours a week of assistance to allow 49 disabled clients to stay at home with their families.

The county pays nothing for the program, but staffing levels are set by the board of commissioners.

Orrock told the board about a 92-year-old female client who is bedridden and incontinent. The 36 hours of weekly help she used to receive from DSS allowed her to live at home with her husband, who is elderly and unable to care for her by himself.

Her DSS assistance has been cut to 20 hours a week because there are not enough caseworkers to provide all clients with the services they need, Orrock said. He expanded on his remarks in an interview Tuesday.

"This is not a good scenario, because with our influx of retirees we need to expand this program, not cut back," Orrock said. "These are elderly people who have contributed to society. Now they need some help to maintain their dignity and self-re-

(See SERVICES, Page 2-A)

Shape Up Or Be Found In Default, BCC Tells Auditorium Contractor

BY SUSAN USHER

If Hatcher Construction Co. fails to show "substantial progress" on the Odell Williamson Auditorium by the second week of March, Brunswick Community College Trustees and the State Department of Construction intend to find the company in default and have Hatcher's insurance company finish the project.

During a 40-minute closed door session with board attorney Jim Prevatte last Wednesday night, trustees reviewed a draft copy of the letter it directed to be sent to the contractor by registered mail from project architects Boney & Associates of Wilmington.

BCC first expected the 1,500-seat facility to be finished by Oct. 24. After allowing one extension, a new deadline of Dec. 10 was set.

However, as of mid-February, according to the letter, "completion of the project is still months away" and "the delay in construction has repeatedly been brought to your attention without satisfactory response."

"This seems to be the next logical step," said Dave Kelly, board chairman. "We hope this is what is needed to get construction moving forward."

BCC expected to hear from both Boney & Associates and Hatcher Construction at the regular construction progress meeting Wednesday, said President Michael Reaves.

Reaves said the college decided to send the formal notification after conferring with both the State Department of Community College and Prevette.

Saying that progress on the Odell Williamson Auditorium is "completely unsatisfactory," the letter to Hatcher Construction lists three responses it expects as evidence of "substantial progress."

BCC is asking Hatcher to prepare and submit a "realistic project progress schedule" that has been approved by other prime contractors, and continued "prosecution of the work according to schedule through completion of the project." This is to include maintaining adequate personnel, subcontractors and equipment on site.

The third item is a list of 16 items it expects finished within the 15-day timetable. These include completing: all remaining masonry work and cleaning exterior masonry; all remaining gypsum board walls; all work necessary for installation of the stage rigging; all (See CONTRACTOR, Page 2-A)

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Holden Targets 'Flagrant Violators' Of Overcrowding For Letters

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach officials will soon mail letters informing 71 homeowners that they are the most "flagrant violators" of the 500-plus who invite overcrowding of rental houses on the island.

Commissioners approved the action last week in light of a recent survey that found two-thirds of the island's rental homes are advertised as having more sleeping capacity than their septic systems are designed to handle.

At a meeting last Wednesday, town officials agreed to go after the most flagrant "violators," people who claim in rental brochures that their homes can sleep at least six more people than they were built to hold.

Town officials say those 71 homeowners need to be notified of the state health regulation that recommends no more than two people per bedroom in homes with conventional septic systems.

Commissioners voted unanimously on the letters after receiving the latest report from the community's wastewater management committee.

The group cross-referenced 1993 rental brochures with septic system permit records in an effort to find out how widespread the problem of rental house overcrowding is on Holden Beach.

Most of the survey findings were released Feb. 1, but the initial report didn't include figures on Craig Realty because that firm's brochure wasn't completed in time.

According to the latest report, 16 of the 21 units rented through Craig Realty were advertised as having more capacity than their septic systems are designed to handle.

In all, 517 of the 764 units (67.7 percent) included in rental brochures claimed to offer excessive sleeping quarters. The 517 homeowners claimed space for an extra 1,678 people.

"It seems to me this is getting close to what this board has wanted to do all along to deal with this problem."

—Mayor Wally Ausley

For now, town officials have agreed to go after only the most flagrant violators. Six or more extra people in a rental house are seen as a threat to the environment.

"When they're adding six more people to a house, which would really require another

three-bedroom system, I think they should be told," Commissioner Sid Swarts said.

The letters won't be of the "nasty" variety. The only purpose will be to inform homeowners of the health regulations they are disregarding.

"I think we should just notify them as to what the regulation is rather than tell them to do anything," said Swarts, chairman of the wastewater committee.

Once the letter is drafted and approved by the town board, copies will be mailed to the homeowners. Real estate companies also will receive a copy of the letter as well as a list of the "flagrant violators" they represent.

"It seems to me this is getting close to what this board has wanted to do all along to deal with this problem," Mayor Wally Ausley said last week.

Town officials have been debating the overcrowding issues for years. Last year, commissioners rejected an ordinance that

would have prohibited the type of "false advertising" revealed in the study.

Of the 71 rental units on Holden Beach that are advertised to sleep six or more people than permitted, Hobbs Realty handles 31 of them, according to the survey. Brunswickland Realty handles 19, Alan Holden Realty 14, Holden Beach Rental Services 3, Sand Peddler Realty 2, Craig Realty 1 and Coastal Realty 1.

Twenty-five percent of the 123 units handled by Hobbs are advertised to sleep at least six more people than the units were built to accommodate.

Of the seven firms surveyed, Hobbs also had the highest percentage of units that were advertised as having extra sleeping capacity (84 percent).

Craig Realty was second at 76 percent, followed by Brunswickland at 72, Sand Peddler at 66, Coastal at 64, Alan Holden at 62 and Holden Beach Rental Services at 59.