

# THE STATE PORT PILOT OUR TOWN

## Southport

### Manager search nearing decision

City aldermen are awaiting results of background checks on two finalists for the post of city manager, mayor Sandy Spencer said this week.

Spencer said she expected to have the final results in hand as soon as late this week. The mayor might call for a special meeting early next week and said she believed the issue would be taken up no later than the regular April 10 board meeting.

Interim manager and city planner Chad Hicks was a finalist but withdrew his name and has taken the job of Oak Island planner, effective May 1.

Aldermen began looking for a manager in January. Rob Gandy left the post after nearly 15 years of service.

## Oak Island

### Rock-pickings planned for April

Want to make sure tourists have a great beach vacation this summer? Want at least not to hear them complaining about the beach while they're here? Two rock-picking parties this month should help clear the way for a cleaner beach for tourists and locals alike.

Volunteers are asked to meet at the cabana, SE 46th Street at Beach Drive, at noon on both April 5 and April 19. Rock-picking parties will be from noon to 3 p.m. both dates.

Organizers with the Oak Island Beach Preservation Society will spread volunteers out among the worst spots.

Anyone picking rocks should come prepared with gloves, buckets, something to drink while working, and digging tools. No experience is necessary. Volunteers of all ages, scouts and civic groups are welcome to participate.

Beach preservation folks will happily serve hamburgers, hot dogs and beverages after a hard day's work.

## Caswell Beach

### FOIL looks at parking concepts

The Oak Island Lighthouse at Caswell Beach attracts several dozen tourists daily in the on-season, according to caretaker Friends of Oak Island Lighthouse (FOIL). Options for parking, however, do not accommodate the crowd, they say.

Hoping to taper the personal initiatives of tourists parking on the roadside or, worse yet, in residents' driveways, FOIL is calling on town leaders to work toward more parking townwide.

FOIL member Tom Kitchings at the group's monthly meeting last Wednesday floated ideas for a ten-space lot on Caswell Beach Road, just a short distance eastward on the opposite side from the lighthouse. While the concept is barely into its infancy, Kitchings and fellow board members admire the idea of a boardwalk from the proposed lot, affording its users a scenic stroll and a beach view, before letting them off across the street from the lighthouse.

The concept would take shape over future discussions, said Kitchings, adding that plenty is subject to change.

## Boiling Spring Lakes

### Rabies clinics to be held April 19

Brunswick County Animal Services is sponsoring rabies clinics on April 19 at selected veterinary clinics throughout Brunswick County.

Dogs and cats can receive a rabies vaccination for \$6. Clinics close to Boiling Spring Lakes are River Road Animal Hospital, 8593 River Road SE; Four Paws Animal Hospital, 4320 Southport-Supply Road SE No. 500; and Southport Animal Hospital, 4955 Southport-Supply Road SE.

Clinic hours are 8 a.m. to noon. For additional information, persons may contact Brunswick County Animal Services at 754-8204.

## St. James

### Flea market scheduled Saturday

It's that time again — time to get in line for a good deal at the St. James Service Club's annual flea market. This year's sale is scheduled Saturday, April 5, from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m.

Service club members have been working for months taking donations of furniture, decorative items, collectibles, housewares, seasonal items, tools, artwork, sports equipment, books and other items for the flea market.

The St. James Service Club is a non-profit organization dedicated to identifying and supporting the needs of the community through volunteer participation and fundraising.

Proceeds from the club's successful sale benefit local charities and in the past, proceeds have helped fund nursing scholarships at the community college.

All unsold items will be donated to also benefit Brunswick County charitable agencies.

Coffee, water, soft drinks, snacks, hot dogs and baked goods will be available for purchase.

The terms of sale are cash only; no credit cards and no checks. Buyers must have their own transportation for purchased merchandise and nothing will be held beyond 2 p.m. Saturday.

## Bald Head Island

### Hearing for sewer assessment roll

The Village of Bald Head Island has released a preliminary assessment roll for the Middle Island sewer extension project, and set a public hearing for 3 p.m., April 11, at the Bald Head Association Center.

There are 117 properties included in the draft roll that would hook onto to the village's sewer extension, work for which includes construction of 10,000 feet of force main.

Council plans to spread the project's \$496,550 total equally among the benefiting lots, resulting in a \$4,244 assessment for each.

Village staff has published the preliminary sewer assessment roll, along with background information on the project and methods of payment, at <http://villagebhi.org>.

## Leland

### Free bicycle fest, tree giveaway

The second annual Bicycle Fest and Tree Giveaway, presented by the Leland Parks and Recreation Department, is set for this Saturday, April 5, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The free events, to observe bicycle system connectivity, route conditions, safety and education, will take place at the recreation field and building at Town Hall. Activities include bike tune-ups, safety tips for children, helmet fittings, prizes and the tree giveaway, featuring 20 species of trees available free for the public. Participants at least 12 years of age with a helmet can take the "Leland Cruise," a six-mile and 12-mile route through parts of town escorted by the Leland Police Department.

For more information, persons may contact Landon Barker, executive assistant, at [lbarker@townofleland.com](mailto:lbarker@townofleland.com).



Officer Grady Sillings and Taz, Boiling Spring Lakes' first K-9 officer, have joined the department full-time with help from community donations. Where We Live's Eleanor Erickson and Jen Ipalucci, (right) pictured with sons Jack and Max, are continuing to raise money to outfit a vehicle for Taz.

Photos by Jonathan Spiers

## BOILING SPRING LAKES

# Picking up the tab for Taz

Community donations needed to help outfit vehicle for K-9 officer

By Jonathan Spiers  
Staff Writer

With donations from the community, the Boiling Spring Lakes Police Department is now fighting crime with a four-legged friend full-time. More help is needed, however, to outfit a patrol vehicle for Taz, the department's first K-9 officer.

With \$1,200 donated last year by the Coastal Carolina K-9 Officers Association, the department purchased a cage for transporting Taz safely. But more features are needed, such as a temperature control system and a remote-controlled "door popper," which would allow his partner and owner, officer Grady Sillings, to release Taz from the vehicle from a distance.

Sillings, who has served as an auxiliary officer for Boiling Spring Lakes, Southport and the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department for 21 years, recently signed on full-time with Boiling Spring Lakes upon retiring from the Sunny Point Fire Department.

"The dog belongs to me, so the city gets a bonus, but there's no budget for a K-9," Sillings said. "We're trying to put requests through the city, but some initial parts of a dog program are expensive for a small department."

Local nonprofit Where We Live, which is celebrating its one-year anniversary, has joined the fundraising effort, starting a campaign toward about \$1,000 to purchase the equipment. Coordinators Jennifer Ipalucci and

'Having a tool like Taz, it's immeasurable the value it brings to a department.'

Emmett Ballree  
Police chief

Eleanor Erickson are planning several events to help raise money, including a dog show-themed kids' mystery event on Saturday, April 19, at noon at Spring Lake Park, where Taz is slated to make an appearance. Tickets are \$5 per participant.

"There are a lot of fundraisers they've planned over the next few months," Sillings said. "This is a community police department. For the community to step in like this, it's great. I'm the owner, but it's the community's police K-9."

Without Taz, Boiling Spring Lakes previously had to call the sheriff's department for K-9 services such as tracking suspects, sniffing for narcotics or locating lost persons.

"This is a quick, local resource," said Sillings, who resides in Boiling Spring Lakes and also

lends his services to Southport police.

A four-year-old Belgian Malinois, Taz is certified nationally as a detector dog and a working dog, meaning he is trained not only in narcotics detection but also general police work such as assault prevention and tracking. Sillings paid for the training out of his own pocket.

Recently, Taz helped police track a man with Alzheimer's who had wandered from home, and he uncovered narcotics located throughout a house, leading to four arrests.

"Having a tool like Taz, it's immeasurable the value it brings to a department," chief Emmett Ballree said. "There are so many things he can do that a human can't do. We can use him in the fight against drugs, to apprehend suspects, to locate lost children or Alzheimer's patients. The town was very lucky officer Sillings had the dog and had done the training."

Ballree said day-to-day expenses for Taz are taken out of the department's annual budget, but that start-up costs such as outfitting a vehicle are challenging.

"It's a very expensive endeavor," the chief said. "We're definitely grateful there's people in our community willing to raise money."

Those interested in contributing to Taz can do so by visiting the Where We Live website, [www.wherewelivenc.com](http://www.wherewelivenc.com), where information on upcoming events and fundraisers is also available. For more information about Taz, one can visit [www.policedogtaz.com](http://www.policedogtaz.com).

## CASWELL BEACH

# Town's flood ordinance blocks simple home repairs

By Ben Brown  
Staff Writer

Some Caswell Beach residents are learning that, under the current set of floodplain development rules, enclosing a porch or adding a new deck might be more complicated than a simple weekend project.

Recently, the Town of Caswell Beach eyed a problem with its flood damage prevention ordinance, which is based on a state-generated model, and hopes to rework its language to allow simple, yet potentially non-conforming, home improvements.

As written, the ordinance holds that all house additions, improvements, replacements and renovations to current building rules, rather than rules that existed when the house was initially built.

Problematic, town leaders say, because the ordinance could block a homeowner from a project as light as screening-in a porch. Building onto an older house by today's standards would, as the town sees it, be unreasonably difficult, inconsistent and pricey, if not legally impossible.

That screened-in porch, considered to be the house's "improved" area, would have to clear the required "base flood elevation" (BFE) level, which is

the height that flood waters could potentially reach in that given area, according to facilitator the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

FEMA instated the BFE rule, reasoning that a properly elevated house would be free from harm during a severe flood. The interplay between the BFE and the actual structure's elevation is a factor in the area's flood insurance premium in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

The BFE varies with topography, but of the essence here, it can vary over time.

That entire to-be-screened-in porch area would have to be raised a few feet higher if the house, as built, sits lower than the current BFE, which is denoted on updated flood hazard maps that the town adopted. That, said Caswell Beach town administrator Jim Carter, is why the ordinance needs changing.

"Our concern is if the house was built to code at the time, it doesn't seem fair to have to elevate the addition while the rest of the structure stays at its current elevation," Carter explained.

This would perhaps only apply to homes built after March, 1976, when the town entered into the NFIP, through which it acquired its first flood

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## COUNTY

# State ban is lifted

Due to recent rainfall across the state, a recently imposed ban on outdoor burning has been suspended for now, but county controls are still in place.

On March 31 at noon, N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources secretary Bill Ross lifted the statewide ban, which prohibited burning at locations more than 100 feet away from occupied dwellings.

Brunswick County fire marshal Scott Garner said the county's burn ban, which prohibited open fires within 100 feet of occupied dwellings, will remain in place.

Gov. Mike Easley said that while drought conditions continue to plague most of the state, Ross lifted the ban to allow persons to burn dry, fire-fueling vegetation, which when eliminated would reduce the risk of natural wildfires as the spring season rolls in.

For burns outside the 100-foot zone of county jurisdiction, persons must acquire permits from the N.C. Forestry Service by calling 755-7772.