

THE STATE PORT PILOT OPINION

EDITORIALS

You can't have both

Some believe drilling for oil off the North Carolina coast would be a boost to the economy, a magnet for jobs. Others predict it could lead to a disaster like the oil spill that occurred along the Gulf Coast.

There is no way of knowing for sure today who is right.

Some say seismic testing to find oil and gas deposits offshore won't be harmful to marine life. Others say blasting the ocean with such intense sound waves will surely kill dolphins, sea turtles and fish.

There is no way of knowing for sure today who is right.

However, there is one sure way to keep an oil disaster from happening off our coast and to keep our beautiful beaches safe and clean, no matter what the scientists and statistics claim: Keep the oil rigs away.

And there is one sure way of protecting our sea mammals and fish from an early death: Don't allow seismic testing in our waters.

Because we strongly support protecting our beaches and our thriving tourism industry, we stand firmly opposed to any type of offshore oil drilling along the North Carolina coast.

There is also no need to risk what might happen if seismic testing is allowed. Mankind has an obligation to protect sea life. A mistake that would devastate our marine life can't be easily erased.

Therefore, just don't do it.

Our Brunswick County Board of Commissioners hastily voted July 6 to adopt a resolution in support of seismic testing to look for offshore oil and natural gas deposits, claiming there is no evidence such tests would harm marine life and that oil rigs would create up to 280,000 jobs and give the state an economic boost.

It was a quick decision, one that involved no public hearings or an opportunity for residents to be heard.

Opponents did have their say before commissioners last week, outlining their fears about seismic testing and expressing disbelief that their elected officials would take such a position without calling for public input and giving it more careful thought.

It is promising to see that our commissioners are willing to take a closer look at the controversial issue and to consider changing their position. A resolution from the board of commissioners in support of seismic testing gives state and federal agencies the impression our community is united in favor of offshore drilling.

In fact, it is not.

Commissioners say they want the jobs the oil industry would bring, but they don't want to do anything to harm our beaches and tourism. It's kind of difficult to stand for both. You cannot wholeheartedly protect the environment Brunswick County is fortunate to enjoy, yet be willing to risk it for the unknown.

Seismic testing and oil drilling pose unknown threats to our coast that could include devastating damage to our beach communities and the water quality we enjoy. Oil and water should not mix.

This should not be a liberal versus conservative, red state or blue state or a Democrat against Republican debate. It's about protecting our beaches.

Now that the entire community is watching more closely, it'll be interesting to see which stance our county leaders take.

Let your choice be heard

The 2015 municipal elections are under way. Candidates have stepped forward to offer themselves for public service, and already they are asking for your support at the polls come November.

Whether or not you give your support is up to you, but it would be a shame if you wanted to help yet found yourself unable to do so because you weren't qualified.

Short and simple, NOW is a really good time to register to vote. RIGHT NOW ... before you have time to forget.

The qualifications are simple: U.S. citizen, 18 years or older by Election Day, a resident of where you intend to vote for 30 days prior to Election Day (November 3).

Obtaining a voter registration application is just as easy. Applications are available locally at all municipal town halls, the Harper and Barbee libraries, South Brunswick High School (if you procrastinate until school starts), and a number of offices at the Brunswick County Government Center if you're out that way, including the board of elections itself.

And once qualified and with application in hand, registering is an equally simple task: Submit the completed application form, either by mail or in person, to the Brunswick County Board of Elections, P.O. Box 2, Bolivia, NC 28422.

You've heard the cliché "If you don't vote, you have no right to complain (about who gets elected or what they do when they get in office)." Of course saying that won't stop the griping and second-guessing, but the best way to cut back on the criticism and chagrin is to assure that the best people are elected in the first place. Even 100-percent voter turnout won't guarantee that, but we've always strongly believed that the closer we get to full participation, the better our chances for a truly representative government.

The deadline for receipt of voter registrations is 25 days prior to Election Day. But if you do it now, that really won't be an issue, will it?



Your letters

Southport Misinformation

To the Editor:

I read your article concerning chief of police Jerry Dove and tourism director Cindy Brochure having to take leaves of absence because they are running for elected offices—Dove as mayor of the City of Southport and Brochure as mayor of the Town of Oak Island.

Some things were stated in the article that are untrue and were not verified. I was the interim city manager when the current personnel policy was adopted, and knew the policy.

I was interim city manager when Melissa Hinnant came to the office of the city clerk stating that she planned to run for the hospital board. The deputy city clerk and I both looked at the personnel policy and quoted verbatim Section 10(e), and recommended that Ms. Hinnant defer to her director because she did not work under the city manager and I was not her "superior."

Any department director who worked for me during my time as interim city manager will tell you that I did not believe in breaking the chain of command, and under no circumstance would I usurp their authority and give an employee permission to seek an elected position. Often times, if there was a "gray area," I would defer to the city attorney or the UNC School of Government and advised our department directors to do the same. Policies are a matter of interpretation if not clearly defined.

I trust that this will clarify matters where I am concerned, particularly during my tenure as interim city manager with over 40 years of government experience.

Regina W. Alexander
Southport

(Editor's note: Ms. Hinnant was quoted in last week's edition saying Ms. Alexander told her she "was fine to run for the hospital board because it did not conflict" with her role as a city police officer. Ms. Alexander denies she made that statement.)

Golden rules?

To the Editor:

Oh, my! Southport's mischievous personnel policy is in the news again! ("City policy snags staff," July 22, 2015.) This has certainly been a busy year for it.

The latest revelation, that it contained the magic words to save the city from the police chief and the tourism director ... well, there's no telling what other tricks it can do!

Who knew? Not staff, who relied on common sense to guide them. Not elected officials, who took a month to take the righteous clause out of context. Not the city manager, who came late to the game.

I call for a public reading of all 74 pages—enough with the suspense! Let us learn, once and for all, whether it is bound by the golden rule or just a cover.

Bonnie Bray
Southport

Caswell Beach Turtle hatchings

To the Editor:

I am compelled to answer (Julie Gilland-Hubbard's) letter on behalf of the 60-plus volunteers with Caswell Beach Turtle Watch. These dedicated people will show up each evening for the next two months to give thousands of visitors just the experience she so clearly envisioned. Many people tell us it was the most wonderful thing they have wit-

Letters policy

The State Port Pilot invites its readers to share opinions on matters of local public interest. Lengthy letters may be edited for space, or may be returned to the writer if editing would significantly alter the content. The writer's address and/or telephone number must be included in case verification is required. No letters will be published without the name of the writer; street addresses and telephone numbers will not be published.

Send submissions to Letters to the Editor, The State Port Pilot, 114 East Moore Street, Southport, NC 28461. Our e-mail: pilot@stateportpilot.com

ships come into ports (last year) than it did in 2006. I agree there are some areas of success, but overall the ports are not a good investment.

The large ports in the U.S. are large for a reason. They have massive populations within 200 miles and road systems to get to markets in that 200-mile radius. The shippers are not going to offload containers in Wilmington and have them driven to New York, Washington, D.C., or Atlanta.

If you take the total population of the top 10 ports in the U.S., they rank almost exactly to the population within that 200-mile radius. Newark has 49-million people, Savannah 19-million and Wilmington has 10-million and ranks 18th in TEU volume and 63rd in total trade.

If our North Carolina ports closed tomorrow, not one retailer would close its doors.

John Lauer
Southport

Bearing arms Enough is enough

To the Editor:

A newspaper editorial regarding the open-carry rights for gun owners reminded me of a recent close encounter with that American privilege "right here in River City."

Last week, a friend and I decided to have a leisurely ride from Southport to Fort Fisher on the state ferry. After an hour's wait for the next ferry, we drove aboard and parked behind a vehicle with what appeared to be a typical family of grandparents with elementary-age grandchildren. What we discovered as being atypical was that grandpa was toting a gun in a holster around his middle.

To say the least, we were a bit disconcerted at being virtually "trapped" in a crowded place with a lot of adults and children and at least one person with a gun. We commented that we hoped he didn't suffer from depression or have a mental illness as it seems some recent shooters in the news may be claiming.

Of course I know grandpa has his Second Amendment right to tote that gun, but I wondered what may have happened if I had exercised my First Amendment right to say to him that I was offended by his openly carrying it in this situation.

We further observed his irritation with the boys when it was time to return to the cars and how he snapped at them and pushed one into the back seat—another offense to grandmotherly sensibility. What started out as a pleasant outing on the ferry turned sour, and we were happy to get away from them.

Were we terrorized? No, not really. Tense? You bet!

If businesses can post signs that bar firearms, can the North Carolina state ferry system not do the same? Was this group on their way to the North Carolina Aquarium? Any signs posted there?

Where are we headed in America? Are we ready to "just get used to it" along with all the other demoralizing aspects of our society, or do we stand up and say "enough is enough"?

Pat Kirkman
Southport

nessed.

Volunteers are trained and become very knowledgeable on the subject of sea turtles. They are constantly updated on the latest research and findings and are glad to share this information.

Volunteers have to comply with the guidelines dictated by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. They have the responsibility to ensure that the turtles reach the ocean without any outside interference. This includes no flash cameras, cell-phone lights or flashlights of any color, and monitoring over-eager spectators. With between 100 and 200 people at the nests, this can become very stressful. Not everyone is cooperative and respectful of others. Volunteers do have authority, under the Endangered Species Act, to require compliance with the protocols in place at the nests.

Nest #5 was a unique situation in that it started to show signs of hatching at only 50 days of incubation. This was the first hatch of the season. Volunteers rushed to the nest and prepared the runway for the turtles to go down. We were also in the process of orienting new volunteers. Although only two turtles emerged that night, we did have a final count of 101 live hatchlings.

I apologize if (Julie Gilland-Hubbard's) experience was less than pleasant. Any of the volunteers there would have been happy to answer any questions she might have had.

We volunteers feel privileged to be able to work closely with the sea turtles. It is a big commitment throughout the season, and we hope people respect that.

I hope her next experience with a hatching will be as wonderful as she expects.

Lynda Smith
Caswell Beach Turtle Watch joint permit holder

North Carolina Bad investment

To the Editor:

A recent editorial stated the North Carolina ports have been neglected for investment. Since 2006, the federal and state governments have spent over \$400-million to deepen the river to 42 feet, \$143-million for a major expansion that included four new cranes, and \$270-million for operating costs and maintenance dredging. That's a 10-year total of \$813-million for ports with revenues around \$30-million per year.

As far as growth, Wilmington had two more

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A Good Newspaper in a Good Community

Dixie Youth Journey continues

To the Editor:

About 45 days ago, 12 boys were chosen from the Southport-Oak Island Dixie Youth Baseball teams to play on the 10-and-under all-star team. Practice began in early June. We generally practiced five nights per week.

See Your letters, next page