



POLL QUESTION

To VOTE, go online to carolinacoastonline.com

Now that more is known about the covid-19 vaccine, are you planning to be vaccinated?

To see more on this question, pick up Sunday's edition of the *Carteret County News-Times*.

BEAUFORT

Smith resigns from County Board of Commissioners, cites health reasons

BY ELISE CLOUSER
NEWS-TIMES

Citing health reasons, Bill Smith announced Monday night he is resigning from the Carteret County Board of Commissioners effective at the end of this month.

Mr. Smith made the announcement during the board's regular monthly meeting Monday at the administration complex in Beaufort.

"Tonight will be my last commissioners' meeting as a commissioner," he said during the board comments portion of the meeting. "Due to health problems, I'm resigning my position as Carteret County commissioner for District 2, Newport, effective (Monday) Feb. 1."

According to a release sent by the county Monday, Mr. Smith has served on the board since Dec. 6, 2010.

"In my comments shared with Commissioners this evening announcing my intent to resign, I thanked a lot of people who have been instrumental in my success over the last ten years," Mr. Smith said in the release. "With their help, support and guidance, I have done my job as a Commissioner with what I felt was best for Carteret County and not for Bill Smith."

After Mr. Smith announced his resignation, Commissioner Robin Comer presented him a plaque in recognition of his service, and his fellow commissioners wished him well and expressed their gratitude for his years of service to the county.

CARTERET COUNTY

County confirms 38 more COVID-19 cases Monday

STAFF REPORT

Active COVID-19 cases are on the rise in Carteret County again as health officials reported 38 additional cases Monday, bringing the overall total to 3,666 cases confirmed since last March.

Of those, 309 cases are currently considered active, up from 271 active cases reported Friday. Meanwhile, 3,322 people have recovered from COVID-19 in Carteret County, and 35 residents have died.

Carteret Health Care reported 10 COVID-19 hospitalizations at the Morehead City facility Monday, up slightly from nine reported Friday. The hospital experienced an all-time high of 20 COVID patients earlier this month, but the numbers have been steadily falling since then.

MOREHEAD CITY

Construction rolls on at new city hall building

BY ELISE CLOUSER
NEWS-TIMES

Construction is continuing on schedule at the new city hall building on Bridges Street as officials say it's on track to be fully operational by September at the latest.

The city broke ground on the approximately \$7.6 million building project in February 2020, with Daniels & Daniels Construction Co. of Goldsboro taking the lead on construction. Morehead City Public Services Director Daniel Williams gave the News-Times and members of the Morehead City Council a tour of the unfinished building Friday morning, though Diane Warrender was the only council member to attend.

Once complete, the new city hall will consolidate all government functions under one roof for the first time in decades, with the exception of the fire/EMS and police departments, which have their own dedicated buildings. The city's offices are currently split between the old city hall building on Arendell Street and the municipal building on S. 8th Street.

The first floor of the new



Construction is continuing on schedule at the new city hall building on Bridges Street as officials say it's on track to be fully operational by September at the latest. (Elise Clouser)

building will house the city's water and sewer, planning and inspections, public services and finance departments. Mr. Williams said most people who visit city hall do so to either pay a bill

or apply for a building permit, so those functions will be easily accessible to visitors.

"They can just come right up to the window and do their business without having to go

upstairs or anything," he said.

Administration, including the mayor and council, city manager and city clerk's offices are on the second floor, along with the

See HALL Page 4A

CARTERET COUNTY

Different strokes

Carteret County towns take varied approaches to public meetings as pandemic stretches on

MIKE SHUTAK
NEWS-TIMES

As the coronavirus pandemic continues with no signs of letting up any time soon, municipal officials throughout Carteret County have learned to adjust to virtual meetings and other changes designed to limit in-person contact with the public.

Local governments have had to make adjustments to how they conduct public meetings, including incorporating online broadcast and limited in-person attendance.

For the Pine Knoll Shores Board of Commissioners, online meeting broadcasting is nothing new, the board has been doing so for several years. However, due to the pandemic, officials have limited public access to the town hall to appointments, and public attendance of meetings is only allowed online.

Mayor John Brodman said in a Jan. 15 email to the *News-Times* they're installing new cameras and audio visual equipment to the boardroom to improve the quality of webinars.

"It's now clear that a surge of new cases is underway after the holidays," the mayor said. "Town staff has returned to a remote schedule, but there will be one or two staff members in town hall every day. All others are available by telephone or email."

Emerald Isle has been conducting all its meetings online with mixed results. There were complaints about poor sound and visual quality, so the town installed new audio visual equipment in the meeting room using federal money. Town Manager Matt Zapp said he is happy with the improvements, which enable residents to participate more fully in discus-



A new camera sits on a platform in the Pine Knoll Shores town hall boardroom. Several Carteret County towns have upgraded virtual meeting equipment in light of the coronavirus pandemic. (Mike Shutak photo)

sions online. All Emerald Isle's town facilities are closed to the public.

Not all towns in Carteret County are set up for virtual meetings, however. Indian Beach Town Manager Tim

White said in an email Jan. 14 they've had to postpone or cancel three board of commissioners' meetings.

"Day-to-day operations continue, but at town hall we're working remotely and with limited time in the office with more than one employee," he said. "Our public safety employees continue to work their normal schedules. Council meetings are open to the public with masks being required and social distancing in place."

Mr. White said officials are looking into ways to broadcast their meetings online, but town hall has limited bandwidth, making that difficult.

Some towns have taken up broadcasting meetings where they didn't before and seem to be adapting well to the change. In Atlantic Beach, Town Manager David Walker said it appears the limits on in-person attendance and change to online meetings hasn't affected the town council's decisions or rulemaking.

"We seem to have the same level of interested people log in and make a

See MEETINGS Page 4A



Workmen put new online broadcasting equipment in place in the Pine Knoll Shores boardroom recently. (Mike Shutak photo)

INSIDE

Editorials..... 6-7A
Sports..... 3-5B
Coastal Living..... 1-2B
Puzzles 6B
Church 7B
Classifieds/Legals 8B

TIDES

	Wednesday Jan. 27	Thursday Jan. 28	Friday Jan. 29	Saturday Jan. 30	Sunday Jan. 31
Low	1:03 a.m.	12:38 a.m.	1:22 a.m.	2:07 a.m.	2:54 p.m.
	—	1:41 p.m.	2:20 p.m.	2:59 p.m.	3:38 p.m.
High	6:31 a.m.	7:12 a.m.	7:53 a.m.	8:34 a.m.	9:16 a.m.
	6:44 p.m.	7:26 p.m.	8:09 p.m.	8:53 p.m.	9:39 p.m.

DEATHS

Jean Eller-Lloyd, Beaufort	Ronald Courtright, Hubert
Margaret Bell, Wildwood	Berlene Smith, Swansboro
Myron Buckhalter, Jacksonville	Valerie Hernandez, Beaufort
Mary Houghton, Straits	Rosemary Norris, Carteret County
Horace Loffin Jr., Greenville	Dena Compton, Newport
Greta Emory, Harkers Island	John Russell, Huntersville
Shelby Freeman, Colerain	
William Agans, Swansboro	