



Cape Fear Firebird

The Light of Save the Cape

June 19, 2015

No man's life, liberty, or property are safe while the Legislature is in session.
~ Gideon Tucker, Judge of New York Surrogate Court

Budget Badness

There is much not to like in the Senate version of the budget bill, H97, adopted yesterday. We didn't like the House version much either. They now go to Conference Committee, back-room negotiations between the two houses that will produce the budget for fiscal year 2016 and be the model for subsequent years. Here are the issues related to the Cape Fear we have focused on:

Senate version, section 14.6(h).

This section adopts Senator Michael Lee's scheme in his bill S160 to remove the rock wall along the east side of the Cape Fear River that prevents the reopening of inlets from the ocean in the area between Fort Fisher and Bald Head Island, just across the river from the northern parts of Southport. We looked at that with disapproval in our newsletters on April 30 and May 11. Find them here: http://savethecape.org/stcwp1/?page_id=64

The Village of Bald Head Island, quite rightly, is having an official tantrum about that. They have asked their coastal engineer, Erik Olsen, to take a brief look. Here's his take:

<http://files.ctctcdn.com/8a62cb1c001/49baa7fe-1b38-49c6-8a83-bb689930ed19.pdf>

Pay attention the last part—where he tells us about the increase in flood risk at Southport and resulting changes in building requirements and flood insurance rates.

Senator Bill Rabon's \$35 million annual subsidy for the ports.

The language of S217, Senator Rabon's astonishing departure from conservative principles to subsidize the State Ports in an amount about equal to their annual revenues, is not in the budget bill, but the subsidy is in the Senate Committee Report ("money report") Highway Fund budget (page K-4, item 30). We took a crack at that issue on May 20 and June 1. Find them on the first link above.

House gift of \$41 million to the ports

The House version of H97 (but not the Senate version), in section 29.17B, provides \$41 million from the Highway Fund over two years for the State Ports. The use is not specified. There is not any requirement of a showing of need or economic analysis.

We attend the Ports Authority Board of Directors' meetings and pay attention to spending plans. The Ports Authority is proud of its ability to fund regular capital projects for repairs and improvements out of earnings. But they are hatching plans for new berths and cranes to accommodate ships that cannot reach the port and could not unless the State and Federal government spent \$700 million to deepen the channel. See our newsletters of June 1 and June 11 at the first link above.