



Cape Fear Firebird

The Light of Save the Cape

June 24, 2012

Laws are like sausages. It is better not to see them being made..
–Otto von Bismarck

A Little Good News Today

We did see a little bit of the sausage called H950 being made. Seemed to involve pigs and secret recipes.

H950 is the fiscal year 2012-2013 State budget bill. Basically a revision of the fiscal year 2011-2012 budget passed a year ago. The Senate and the House passed different versions, and the differences were reconciled by a conference committee, which reported a proposed substitute on Tuesday last. On Thursday, both the Senate and the House ratified the bill reported by the conference committee, and that ratified bill is now headed to the Governor for signature.

Or not. But both the Senate and House have enough votes to override a veto.

The ratified budget bill has good news and bad news, depending on your interest. But for the Cape Fear, there is good news. That's this language is way down at the end, on page 151:

PROHIBIT EXPENDITURES OF STATE FUNDS FOR THE NORTH CAROLINA INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL

SECTION 26.3.(a) Notwithstanding G.S. 136-253 and any other provision of law, State funds, as that term is defined in G.S. 143C-1-1, shall not be used to fund the North Carolina International Terminal of the North Carolina State Ports Authority.

SECTION 26.3.(b) This section shall expire on June 30, 2013.

This section and similar language in section 26.2(c) had been fed into the General Assembly grinder by our Representative Frank Iler. He had worked with the House leadership to include both provisions in the original draft of H950. The House passed it that way and sent it to the Senate.

With the Senate's hands in the mix, that language disappeared, leaving not a trace. We exposed the surreptitious way that was done in the last two newsletters and on the 'net. We took the story to Raleigh, but the Senate did not want us or anyone else to see what went into their sausage. The Senate passed its version of H950 without language preventing State spending on the megaport.

Then the House rejected the Senate version, a conference committee was appointed, they met behind closed doors, and a compromise emerged. One sentence, not both. But a strong statement.

The result is a tasty bratwurst. But we can't savor it with any confidence. There will be another budget bill next year. Until the megaport property in Southport is devoted to a use suitable for our special Cape Fear, we have to keep working. We could use some help here, folks.