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LOCAL & STATE

Index
Business9B
Obituaries.....4B
Weather.....14B

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Section B

Nonprofit under fire over ads

Ethics board says political group missed financial disclosure deadline

BY JOHN FRANK
The Post and Courier

COLUMBIA — A nonprofit political group that promotes private school vouchers failed to file financial disclosure forms Thursday as required by state law, State Ethics Commission officials said. A spokesman for the group in question,

South Carolinians for Responsible Government, said it was no mistake.

"We have not heard anything from the Ethics Commission and we have not filed anything," Denver Merrill said. "Nobody told us anything, so we are doing what we always have."

Missing the deadline means the controversial group could face an investigation

by the Ethics Commission and potentially faces a lawsuit.

The group, which advocates school choice and limited growth, is coming under fire this election season for airing radio advertisements and mailing campaign literature targeting a dozen House Republicans seeking re-election in the June 13 primary.

State ethics laws require an organization to file records detailing contributions and expenditures if it spends more than \$500 in an attempt to influence the outcome of the election within 45 days

of the primary.

Cathy Hazelwood, assistant director of the Ethics Commission, said the group meets the criteria after it spent \$3,400 last week on radio ads that asked listeners to call certain lawmakers about school choice legislation.

Merrill said the radio spots fit within the group's mission to educate voters. He said he thinks state ethics laws don't apply to the ads because they aren't an attempt to influence the election and don't include words such as "vote for" or "vote against."

He said the ads purchased May 1 were timed for the House debate about a plan to give parents tax breaks if they send their children to private schools.

"I don't know how anyone could have a legitimate issue on that," Merrill said. "That ad had absolutely nothing to do with the election. That was a pure issue-advocacy ad."

The group says information about its financial backers should be protected, but critics want light shed on what they say is

Please see ADS, Page 6B



GRACE BEAHM/STAFF

John Tysor shows a photo from the 1985 reunion of the USS Ancon to Garland Sehlke (from left), Ed Horn and Thomas Kostopoulos, who gathered Thursday in Charleston for the 59th consecutive reunion of "The Miracle Ship" of World War II.

CARTA says cuts loom

County Council agrees to give bus system \$6.8M

BY ROBERT BEHRE
The Post and Courier

CARTA almost certainly will consider reducing service along some bus routes, but it's unclear how painful those cuts will be.

The agency depends on Charleston County Council for a crucial part of its budget, a multimillion-dollar contribution from the county's half-percent sales tax.

The Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority asked the county for \$9.2 million in the upcoming budget year. Council members agreed Thursday to give it \$6.8 million.

But they also agreed to look at helping the agency in other ways, possibly by buying its bus maintenance shed, which would free an extra \$1 million over each of the next five years.

And council members also may sweeten the county's contribution by using accommodations taxes because CARTA's system includes DASH trolleys that primarily serve Charleston's historic district.

Council members also voted to give the Rural Transportation Management Association \$258,275 to provide service in the county's rural areas beyond CARTA's routes.

After the council vote, CARTA Director Howard Chapman said he was glad council members recognized the issue of the agency's debt, which originated after it struggled to keep some buses on the street two years ago, after its funding ran out and before voters approved the sales tax.

Chapman said the agency still would need to consider service cuts if the county provides \$8 million next year, but he was vague on possible changes. Part of the



"We all want to find a way to keep CARTA moving forward, but I don't want to hurt our road projects."

Colleen Condon, Charleston County Council

Please see CARTA, Page 6B

Ancon: The ship too lucky to sink

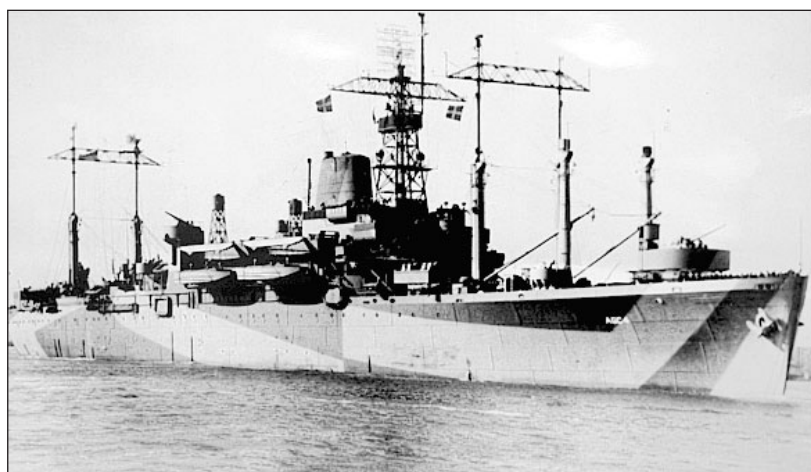
BY CHRIS DIXON
The Post and Courier

On Sept. 11, 1943, John Tysor spent one of the most harrowing nights of his life aboard one of the luckiest ships in the Navy. "We intercepted a message that the ship with two high masts was to be sunk at all costs," he said.

That ship was the Ancon, a merchant vessel that became the combined headquarters and communications command center for the Atlantic fleet.

Twelve of the Ancon's original 1,000 crew members were well enough to attend the ship's 59th annual reunion this week at the Holiday Inn Riverview. Tysor, then a signalman 2nd class and now the ship's historian, said at least 10 more of his shipmates are still alive, but he has lost 19 others in the past year.

That week in 1943, the Ancon's crew, which included 5th Army Cmdr. Mark Clark, had been under constant attack by German aircraft off the coast of Salerno, Italy. After receiving the message, the Ancon



JOHN TYSOR

After D-Day, the Ancon was repaired and refitted in Charleston before being sent to the South Pacific.

Inside Learn more of the vital statistics and history of the USS Ancon. 6B

moved far enough offshore for Tysor to see the moonlit sky over the Ancon's former position further illuminated by flares from German fighters.

Led by prayers from Father Francis Ballinger, a chaplain who had

been rescued after his own ship, the Joseph Hewes, had been sunk, the crew listened as the planes grew closer. Ballinger reportedly called on divine help from Mary, and a mist rose to obscure the 492-foot vessel. After that the ship took on a pair of

nicknames, "The Lady of the Mist," or more simply, "The Miracle Ship."

Those still among the living sport faded tattoos of anchors and half-century-old bathing beauties. Age and long-ago gunfire have taken their toll on hearing and health, but eyes and memories are still clear. All have stories of the ship's adventures from North Africa to Normandy to the South Pacific. Many are harrowing.

In addition to carrying some of the most sophisticated communications equipment of the era, along with war correspondents John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway, the Ancon carried around 20 Landing Craft Personnel. These 36-foot boats, known as LCPs, ferried troops into battle and were manned by men such as gunner's mate Robert Duncan.

At 17, Duncan signed up for what he hoped would be submarine duty, but he ended up with one of the most dangerous jobs in the Navy. "It wasn't volunteer work," he said. "Getting onto the beach during

Please see ANCON, Page 6B

Deal: If terminal gets OK, North Charleston gets \$4M

Funds would go to affected base area

BY WARREN WISE
The Post and Courier

If the State Ports Authority wins permitting to build a \$600 million container terminal on the old Naval Base, North Charleston will get \$4 million for social programs to help neighborhoods affected by the development.

City Council voted 9-2 for an agreement with port officials Thursday to direct the money toward affordable housing, edu-

cational opportunities, health care and landscaping between the proposed port project at the old base's southern end and nearby communities.

Council members Gussie Greene and Steve Ayer voted against the pact. Greene said there should have been more council involvement from the beginning. Ayer said he doesn't want the port in North Charleston. He called the \$4 million "a payoff."

As part of the agreement, the State Ports Authority also agreed to place job-related announcements in regional media targeting black readers, in community centers and at churches. The Ports Authority also will support programs for job training

More ports news

House Speaker Bobby Harrell, R-Charleston, has called on the State Ports Authority and Jasper County to end their legal fight over building a shipping terminal on the Savannah River. 9B

and assist qualified local vendors with bidding procedures.

The Ports Authority already is a business partner of Chicora Elementary School on the city's southern end and its employees assist in fundraising efforts for needs throughout North Charleston, port spokesman Byron Miller said.

An Army Corps of Engineers study concluded the port would create jobs, reduce poverty and boost real estate values in low-income neighborhoods near the proposed shipping terminal; and North Charleston's leaders want to make sure existing

Please see PORTS, Page 6B

Dorchester District 4 losing top official again

Exit to bring 9th superintendent since '92

BY MINDY B. HAGEN
The Post and Courier

ST. GEORGE — The superintendent carousel soon will start spinning again for the rural school district in upper Dorchester County.

Renee Mathews, hired less than two years ago, was released from her contract Thursday night by the Dorchester District 4 School Board. That means another superintendent search is under way in a school system that's become accustomed to change in the top job.

The district, which stretches from Ridgeway to St. George and enrolls fewer than 2,500 students, has struggled to retain its top administrators. Since 1992 the superintendent position has changed hands eight times.

Mathews, 44, will stay on the job until June 30, when she will



Mathews

Please see SUPERINTENDENT, Page 6B