

Viewpoints

First Responder should be billed to districts

After a month of battling the First Responder issue around, members of the Hoke County Commission seem to have lost their sense of direction.

In discussions during their last meeting, the commissioners expressed concern about the high cost of insuring every volunteer fireman in the county who would take part in the program.

The start-up costs and the insurance would be paid out of the county's general funds, and the commissioners are concerned about keeping the price tag as low as possible.

In order to shave the expense, the commissioners also suggested that perhaps the program should go back to the drawing board, and that fire districts could be eliminated which were close to existing emergency services.

We believe the move would be a further waste

Editorial

of time. A more expedient plan would be to bill the costs of the service to those fire districts who wish to participate.

The commissioners are now reasoning that by cutting out fire districts like Tylertown and North Raeford and developing the service for only the rural districts, insurance bills for all of the county taxpayers would be lowered.

Under the plan, the First Responder program is designed to put a trained volunteer fireman at an emergency scene quickly. The fireman would be able to aid victims before emergency medical services arrived. It is a good program, and it could save lives in rural areas.

In areas where emergency medical services are

only minutes away, like Raeford, North Raeford and Tylertown, the responder program would not be as necessary. Persons living in those areas already have and pay for, not only EMS, but also part of the costs of the Hoke County Rescue Squad.

In fact, taxpayers living in Raeford pay twice for the Hoke County Rescue Squad, and pay the same as any rural county resident for EMS. Raeford residents also pay county tax dollars for a number of other services which they do not receive, such as: rural police protection, rural forest fire protection, rural fire communications, animal control, garbage pickup and the landfill.

If the responder program is passed as proposed, North Raeford and Tylertown taxpayers can add themselves to the growing list of county

residents who pay for services which are not provided.

When the First Responder program is finally funded, the costs will probably not be overwhelming and could be absorbed easily in the county budget.

The costs are not the question, nor do we doubt that the program will be a bargain in terms of the lives which are saved.

Our objection is purely to using general county tax dollars to pay for special district services.

We believe the commissioners should put the burden of the First Responder program on those who receive the service.

If the costs are added to the tax bills in the same manner as rural fire protection, perhaps the program could get started and the commissioners could move on to other business.

Letters To The Editor

Board's attitude not 'cavalier'

To the Editor: I had always assumed that newspaper editors had accumulated the necessary facts and investigated those facts for a proper understanding of them before writing any particular editorial. Sad to say, I have assumed wrong and particularly so with respect to last week's News-Journal editorial castigating the members of the Hoke County Board of Education.

I have wanted to write letters to the editors of various newspapers many times in the past. But I always waited a few days to let my blood pressure subside in order that a calmer atmosphere might be present to analyze the viewpoint. Well, I have waited a few days and have decided to write a letter in response to last week's editorial.

Terms such as "haste to complete the task," "bureaucratic attitude," "wish list," "cavalier attitude," "hide and seek" are strong descriptions you have applied to the members of the Hoke County Board of Education as a corporate body. I, as an individual member, reject these terms in their application to the current board.

I am personally disappointed that you would choose such adjective phrases to further your own opinion of a most serious matter. We could argue for months over what you meant by these expressions. But unlike your editorial, I will just stick to the facts of the situation.

To begin, the members of the board of education (BOE) were furnished with a copy of the 1984-85 budget approximately two weeks prior to our budget meeting. In this period of time, we could study it, make notes, ask questions of Dr. Nelson, Mr. Steed, or any member of the administration. Therefore, why should it take longer than two hours to review, analyze and adopt a budget proposal for submission to the county commission? (You used the term "hste to complete the task")

In preparing the 1983-84 school budget, Dr. Nelson was barely on the scene, having arrived officially 4-1-83. However, I can assure you that he has been very thorough and thoughtful in the preparation of the 1984-85 budget proposal. Your terminology of "bureaucratic attitude" with reference to the

board's and Dr. Nelson's preparation is, therefore, just that - your own terminology.

As for the term "spending someone else's money," are not the members of the board of education taxpayers also?

Your term "wish list" as applied to the school budget is rather mystifying. I had always associated the term "wish" with things "wanted" as opposed to things "needed." If items such as chalk boards (old ones no longer usable), typewriters, repairing doors, and replacing old and outdated school buses are "want" items rather than "needs" then you and I have read different dictionaries.

As conscientious as I know all the members of the board of education are concerning finances, budgets and education in general, I can not accept your application to this board as having a "cavalier attitude." If we had such an attitude, we would not bother with presenting a budget of any kind. Instead, we would just ask the commissioners to give us a little money for the schools, and we would try to do the best we could with what was provided.

Concerning your figures and percentages, the following is a list of corrections:

-You listed a 33% pay increase for ROTC instructors. Actually, they are being employed an extra month (10 to 11 months) and given the 15% pay increase of all other employees.

-You listed a 33% increase in coaches supplements at the high school. Actually, only a small portion of this amount is an increase paid to the coaches. What is actually occurring is that the board of education is picking up the expense for supplements that are currently being paid by gate receipts. This past year, gate receipts were fiscally inadequate to cover these supplements. Upchurch School has long been below the average or equable supplement schedule that is used at the high school. Thus, this year's increase is an attempt to bring them up to average.

-You differentiated coaches as separate from classroom teachers. It is my understanding that every coach in the Hoke County system is also a classroom teacher in addition to being a coach.

-You listed a 139% or \$16699 increase in the cultural arts program.

The budget that I have in my possession, which differs from the one provided to the newspaper, lists last year's budget figure as \$16795 and this year's request as \$28694, a difference of \$11899 (not \$16,699 or 169% increase as you listed). This program has been cut back each year from original requests and much of this year's increase is allocated for uniforms, instruments and the creation of a stage band.

-The exceptional children's program has an increase of approximately 16% of which 15% is accounted for by the salary increase for teachers. You listed a 25.7% increase for this program.

-You listed correctly a \$36,658 increase in the vocational program. However, \$25,658 of this amount is taken up by the 15% teachers salary increase, leaving \$11,000 as an increase for materials and supplies.

-You stated that a 15% increase for teachers "seemed like a good figure" but questioned the need to raise administrators, principals, and other non-classroom personnel by the same percentage. The local budget includes only 10 full-time salaried positions. Of this 10 positions, seven are classroom teachers, and one is a nurse's position. This leaves only two administrative positions paid locally.

Can you justify not paying these two positions on an equable basis with all other personnel, when everyone else in the system is getting a 15% raise? One can only imagine the morale problem that would be created, if so.

Finally, I am not writing this letter to "get back" at anyone. But I honestly felt that some misconceptions rendered by last week's editorial needed to be corrected. Otherwise, the label "cavalier attitude" might properly be applied, if no response was forthcoming from the board of education's viewpoint.

Most Sincerely,
Walter Coley
Member of Board of Education

Non-classroom school workers deserve pay raise

To the Editor: In response to the section of your editorial in the May 23 issue concerning the salary increase for

"This Tom Phillips sounds like a nice guy..."



Madilyn

I wonder if he knows what he's getting himself into?"

school employees, I have to strongly disagree with your thoughts and ideas.

Yes, it is true the teachers do deserve and NEED a 15% increase in salary. But the other employees of the school system need that raise also.

Teachers cannot survive in a school system without the administrators, teacher's aides, janitors, cafeteria staff, maintenance men, school bus mechanics, secretaries and anyone else employed by the system just as we cannot function without teachers.

I have to speak out for what I feel is right concerning the secretaries since I am one myself. The Hoke County secretaries are some of the lowest paid in the state. We are expected to be capable to perform any task that is given to us. We all go beyond our secretarial duties and hours to give total support to the teachers, bosses and more importantly, the students.

It infuriates me that you feel we are not deserving of a raise. You should know better than anyone that you have need for secretaries.

Your newspaper could not be edited or printed (or probably written) without secretaries there to help you. Ask any employee of the school system if they can function without a secretary and see what they say.

All employees are just as vital to

the school system as the teachers are. We all have to suffer when the teachers do not receive a salary increase, raise in step or have to take a cut in pay.

Therefore, we should also "reap the reward" of a salary increase when they do.

Marvin Lynne Maxwell

Junior Woman's Club helps improve county

To The Editor: As Raeford Junior Woman's Club brings to a close its 1983-84 year, the members and officers would like to extend thanks to Raeford and Hoke County citizens for their support of our projects this year.

Because of this support, we were able to donate \$1,055 to our community in the form of scholarships, camperships and special contributions to some local organizations.

Our Christmas Home Tour and the March bingo games gave us most of our needed revenue and we especially thank the patrons of those two events.

The Hoke County Children's Center asked for our help, and we recently made a contribution to help them purchase their new home. The Literacy Council and the Hoke Heritage Hobnob also received donations from our club.

Only through continued community support can we, as a club,

work to better Raeford and Hoke County. Please remember next year when we begin our work in the fall, that everything you donate to our projects stays here in our own community. We may not be as big as some of our other local clubs, or as well-known, but we work just as hard to serve this area.

We enjoy serving our community and are already looking for ways to begin next fall positively. Together, we will build a better Raeford and Hoke County.

Respectfully,
Sonya A. Falls
Publicity, RJWC

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Dog is put off mark by visiting politicians

By Warren Johnston

Calhoun has not been himself lately. For the last two weeks he has been staying up late and boasting about his new friends who are "big with the government."

For example, the other night he wouldn't come in until around 3 a.m. By then, he must have told half the world about how he would soon be heading to Raleigh to work as a canine political consultant. "They'll call me. I'm sure," he told the neighbors.

Long about 2:30 a.m., I didn't know how the neighbors felt, but I was sure my wife and I were tired of listening to him.

This wasn't the first time the dog had gotten into his "king-maker" mood. In recent months, Calhoun has been taking a more active part in the election process, and each time a politician pays him a visit, he gets his ego wound up.

"You know we have a great deal of influence on the attitude of the voter," he told me one day after I tried to take him down a notch or two.

Earlier this year, the candidate for Attorney General dropped in to see him. After that, he went on about his pal Lacy Thornburg for almost two weeks.

"I supported him and he won the primary, didn't he?" Calhoun asked rhetorically one day during a discussion of politics in the yard.

When I suggested that Thornburg had no opposition in the

The Puppy Papers

primary, Calhoun was quick to point out that his challenger had not dropped out of the race until after the former judge's visit to Raeford.

"If he had not come here, there's no telling what might have happened," he said.

This latest episode started after the Republican gubernatorial hopeful stopped by the house.

Jim Martin, who had been shaking hands in Raeford, had apparently heard about Thornburg's success and decided it would be a good idea to let Calhoun know where he stood.

"There's no sense wasting time out here in the yard, Congressman," I interrupted, whisking Martin into the house and away from Calhoun's inflated sense of self-importance.

"He's very discerning, but he'll talk your ear off, and then he'll be insufferable after you've gone," I warned Martin as we sipped our iced teas.

"I'll just speak to him on the way out. It can't hurt," the candidate said.

The next day, Calhoun admonished me for my poor interviewing technique, and my "apparent inability to get to the hard facts."

"I'll bet you didn't know he played the tuba with the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra for five years, and you probably didn't know he got his Ph.D from Princeton, did you?" Calhoun asked.

"He wants to eliminate intangible and inventory taxes, and he's pushing stronger open meeting laws. Did you find that out?" he drilled.

"If you had left him out here in the yard to talk to me, which you didn't, you would have found out who the real Jim Martin is."

"I did discover that he taught chemistry for 12 years at Davidson, and that he has the same birthday as my brother," I said, hoping to restore my image as a competent interviewer.

But Calhoun was right. I had missed a few things. I had gone easy on him, hoping to pick up more answers when the November election grew closer.

"He said he was coming back before the election. I'll ask him then how he feels about improving education and the four-laning of U.S. 401," I told Calhoun.

"Well, I may have missed Martin, but in the future if you want a real interview, you better let me talk to the next fellow," he said.

"Don't worry. There will be other politicians coming to town, and the way things are going in a few of the campaigns, some of them would do well to spend an afternoon out here in the yard with you," I said.