

Viewpoints

New mobile home law deserves speedy OK

This week members of the Hoke County Commission will begin looking at an ordinance which will govern mobile home parks in the county.

The proposed ordinance is fair and is designed to help improve the quality of housing in Hoke County. Passage of the law should not be delayed.

Under the ordinance, which was approved last week by members of the Hoke County Planning Board, mobile home parks were defined as two dwellings or more and would be required to meet tougher health and safety regulations.

New mobile home parks would be under stricter standards than parks that are in existence at the time the law is passed.

However, the new law would require an owner with a substandard existing park who wanted to expand, to bring all of his units up to the level required for a new park.

Hoke County is pockmarked with poorly managed and unhealthy mobile home parks. This proposed law would put an end to their growth.

Trailers would no longer be allowed to be stacked on lots that are too small to allow adequate sewage disposal or the proper spacing needed to prevent the spread of fire.

Now before the commissioners is a modified version of an ordinance the elected officials considered but did not pass in 1976.

Had the commissioners not knuckled under to a small amount of public pressure in 1976, Hoke County might be a better place for many residents to live today.

After the proper public hearings, it is hoped that the Hoke County Commissioners will pass the ordinance.

Once the law is on the books then the planning board and the commissioners can get on with the tougher job of restricting mobile home parks to limited areas of the county.

Party has big job

The Hoke County Democratic Party took on a fresh look last Saturday, when about 70 delegates elected a new slate of officers.

Harold Gillis, who has served well as the party's chairman for the past two terms, turned over the gavel to Rockfish resident Norma Campbell.

It will now be Campbell's task to rebuild the local branch of the party which was weakened during last year's state and national elections.

We congratulate Campbell on her election and wish all the party officers well in their job of providing a new leadership in Hoke County.

School revamp sound

The plan approved last week by members of the Hoke County Board of Education appears to be a good one and will give the county a solid footing on which to revamp overcrowded and deteriorating school facilities.

Under the approved plan, the county's current junior high school system would be scrapped in favor of a middle school plan.

At present, students must attend classes in four different facilities before graduating from high school. The new plan would cut that number to three.

Students are now going to one of the county's four elementary schools from kindergarten through the fourth grade. Then they must attend Turlington School for two years, before going to Upchurch School where they go to class through the eighth grade. In the ninth grade, local students attend Hoke High.

As the result of last week's board action, in the future Hoke County students will attend elementary school from kindergarten through the fifth grade, a middle school for the sixth to eighth grades and then go to high school.

Not only is the plan designed to help improve the county's educational system by eliminating such things as the need for some younger students to change classes during the day, but it also clears up the picture for rebuilding the county's facilities and ensures a good racial balance in each school.

The final decision on how to distribute students and which schools to expand or eliminate has not been made. The process is expected to be a gradual one and to take at least another year.

The board of education gave the school administration guidance last week, which is what the elected officials are expected to do.

We commend the board for airing the question before the public, discussing all sides and voting on the matter without retreating into an executive session.

The decision was a good one, and the manner in which it was reached, was refreshing.

"The Dogwood Festival is having Ronnie Milsap, the Azalea Festival is going to be visited by Crystal Gayle, Rich Little, Donnie Osmond and others.

I wonder if Big Bird would consider a token appearance for our Turkey Festival..."

Madilyn



Letters To The Editor

Russian 'doctor' had farming problem

To the editor:

Russia is having one dictator after another so fast the experts on that country are sometimes one or two dictators behind with their estimates of what the new one is like.

In some ways this is an advantage to the experts — a dictator up and dies before their estimates of him have a chance to be proven wrong.

Now this new one they've got, Gorbachev, was elected unanimously. He got all 10 votes. That's all it takes from the 10-member ruling committee. Nobody is sure how the ruling committee got elected. Been there so long everybody's forgotten.

Anyway, I was interested to learn that Gorbachev, before he won his mandate, was in charge of Russian agricultural production.

During the eight years he held that job, grain production steadily declined. It fell far below what it takes to feed the Russian people, no matter how long they stand in line.

Gorbachev had a ready explanation. Said the weather was bad. Blamed eight years of crop failures on the weather.

I'll tell you, if I was farming in an area where the weather was bad for eight years running, I don't believe it'd take me eight years to figure out I was farming in the wrong area.

Yours faithfully,
J.A.

State facing hikes in vocational ed

A federal spending cut for high school vocational education is forcing the General Assembly to consider a large new state appropriation to keep the program going. At the same time, some members of the assembly are using the debate over funding to raise basic questions about North Carolina's approach to vocational education.



Watching
By Paul T. O'Connor

It appears that almost \$5.7 million in federal vocational education funds will be cut in fiscal year 1986, according to Rep. Paul Tyndall, D-Onslow. Tyndall, a former school superintendent, has sponsored a bill to replace that loss with state funds. Unless the state assumes this cost, he says, 308 teaching positions will be eliminated and the education plans of more than 20,000 vocational education students will be interrupted.

But Tyndall doesn't want the state to stop with the \$5.7 million. He's also asking the state to begin assuming the "local match" for these programs. The federal government pays about three

quarters of the program's costs. Local governments pay the rest. Tyndall wants the state to assume the local government share over a period of three years.

The price tag for assuming the local match would be \$12.8 million the first year, more than \$25 million the second and almost \$40 million by fiscal 1988.

"There are plenty of small, poor counties in North Carolina where, sure, the federal government may be providing (the bulk of the program's costs). But if (local government) can't raise the local match, they can't have a program."

Tyndall argues that in these small counties, where fewer children go on to college, vocational education is very important.

"If we don't train these children

with marketable skills, we'll spend millions more in the future putting them on the welfare rolls."

Not everyone agrees with Tyndall on the wisdom of vocational education. During the Senate's debate of the Basic Education Program, several senators criticized vocational education as a poor alternative to reading, writing and arithmetic.

"I'm not opposed to vocational education," says Sen. Chip Wright, R-New Hanover, the most vocal of these critics. "I am opposed to letting them take it in lieu of the three Rs."

Wright says that vocational education in North Carolina is an easy way out for students unwilling to challenge themselves with a more demanding curriculum. "If you get the students to be honest with you, they'll admit that it's a crib course they want to take to avoid taking something harder."

In Texas, businessman Ross Perot's schools study and "called vocational education a total waste

of time," Wright said. "In North Carolina, we're saying that it is an alternative form of education, if we can't teach them to read and write and make change for a dollar. But let me tell you, you can't teach a kid to be a carpenter if he can't read and write."

Wright says that instead of gearing vocational education to those who have "demonstrated a minimum competency. Before he could get into the program, he would have to show that he was a good student."

In other states, entrance to vocational education high schools is by competitive exam and Wright said he thinks the assembly should consider such an approach before pumping vast new sums of money into the program.

Tyndall argues that the schools need to identify children who have an interest in vocational education in the seventh and eighth grades and get them started early.

Tax Day hassle worth trouble

Like most years, this one was no exception. I had seen the tax man coming in early January. I was determined to get the jump on him.

I got up early in the morning. I worked late at night. I rolled my sleeves up and squinted over the files. In fact, I did all the things one is supposed to do to get the jump on the tax man.

"You're not trying to get the jump on the tax man again, are you?" my wife kibitzed, as I ruffled through our mound of saved "deductions."

Every year, I follow the same routine. It is a pattern I copied from the 1942 training film entitled, *Jumping the Tax Man*.

The film had been the highlight of a weekend I spent with some CPA friends at the beach back when I was 21 and did not know better. We watched it four times. It made an indelible impression; however, it has never helped me get ahead of the April 15 deadline.

My wife always offers to help. I refuse, and dig into the previous year's records.

After about an hour and along about the check statement for February, I get bored. I quit.

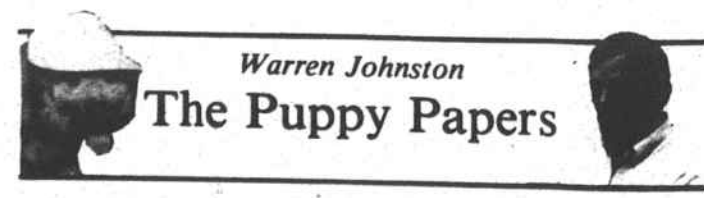
In March, my wife starts on the records again. I am too engrossed in the current year to worry about the past. She does the work, and if we are lucky, we don't have to file for an extension.

"Boy, it's a good thing I did all that work back in January, we'd never have gotten this thing in on time," I told my wife as we sealed up the envelope this April 15.

One year, I began to worry about not getting the jump on the tax man and wondered if I was suffering from a psychological disorder, like the other 10 million Americans who file on April 15.

At my CPA's suggestion, I spent a weekend at a tax preparation camp outside of Biscoe. We watched films, including my 1942 favorite.

I felt better after the weekend. I was awarded a green eyeshade



Warren Johnston
The Puppy Papers

visor for having the best worried expression in camp.

We learned little songs, which are designed to carry us over the rough periods. When it gets tough, and I think I going to throw up if I look at another W-2, I am supposed to sing things to myself like: "I'm no tax sluggard, no sir-ree. Next year, I'll file taxes quarter-lee."

The camp was sponsored by the IRS, and the \$26.95 enrollment fee was tax deductible.

After some thought, I have decided the entire problem is that I like being part of the tax day rush. It is a lot like shopping on Christmas Eve. There is activity and wonderfully long lines.

It is a social experience to go to the post office on April 15 around 11 p.m. Everybody who is anybody in the realm of late filers is there.

Besides, the image of my tax return being lumped in with 10 million others, gives me great pleasure.

All of those returns turn up at the IRS office on the same day. It must be a beautiful scene.

Mail bags arrive by the truckload and are dumped. IRA workers get grouchy and snap at each other. Some may even sweat. The new computer probably flips out, while all the time, the trucks keep rolling in.

It almost makes me think I am getting my money's worth from my federal tax dollar.

The News-Journal

Published Every Thursday by
Dickson Press, Inc., Paul Dickson, Pres.
119 W. Elmwood Avenue, P.O. Box 500
Sanford, N.C. 28776

Subscription Rates in Advance
In County Per Year—\$10.00 6 Months—\$5.00
Out of County Per Year—\$12.00 6 Months—\$6.00

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Second Class Postage at Sanford, N.C.
(USPS 268-260)