

Raeford opinions being sought on downtown area revitalization

During the next 30 days, downtown merchants will be asked to make suggestions for rejuvenating the Raeford central business district, members of the Downtown Revitalization Commission decided Monday.

Commission members will also work with the Raeford-Hoke County Chamber of Commerce to develop a kick-off community Christmas program on Main Street.

"I don't see this group as a negative organization. I see us as a way to enforce the positive aspects of living in Raeford," Commission Chairman Kay Thomas said.

"Brainstorming" from planting trees on sidewalks to repairing broken windows, was the order of business for the newly formed commission during their second monthly meeting.

Main Street is still alive with business activity, and most of the county's merchants are still operating in the downtown area.

However, businesses are declining in appearance and many sales dollars are slipping away to other counties because of inconvenient store hours and non-competitive prices, commission members said.

"Before things get out of hand, we need to get started," Commission member Eloise Carter said.

One area of improvement might be to encourage merchants to keep longer store hours.

"I like to be able to shop at least one night a week when I get home from work in Fayetteville at 6 o'clock," Thomas said.

Past efforts to keep stores open past 6 p.m. were not successful, commission member Larry Calloway said.

Because of the early closings, many downtown merchants lose sales, which go to other stores out of the central business district.

"We're fortunate all of the banks have remained downtown," Carter said, noting the financial institutions have continued to generate shopping traffic for other merchants.

The banks might be encouraged to remain open longer one or two nights a week to prompt merchants to follow the example, Raeford City Councilman Joe Upchurch suggested.

In the one-on-one surveys of store and land owners, commission members hope to determine the most pressing needs of the business community and to find out to what extent merchants are willing to participate in a revitalization program.

"I think we should go to them and let them know we're interested in them. We're going to have to sell them on this," Commission member Rev. Frank Lloyd said.

The downtown is being targeted because of the area's past and present importance in the community.

Downtown is the heritage of the community, and it needs to be returned to what it was, Upchurch said.

The target area will include the Edenborough Shopping Center, the commission members said.

The Raeford group hopes to avoid mistakes made by other municipalities where main streets were closed to make shopping malls.

Main Street in Raeford should remain open and no parking meters should be installed, Upchurch said.

Efforts should also be made to entice new businesses to come to Main Street.

New stores which would draw additional shoppers to the area are needed, along with businesses to create night activities in downtown.

Movie theaters, bowling alleys and restaurants need to go into the downtown area, the commission members said.

Although the Chamber of Commerce is working on a community Christmas program, the commission members endorsed the idea and agreed to work to make the plans a reality.

Other programs could also be developed throughout the year to attract more shoppers to the downtown area, the commissioners said.



Suggestion winner
 Roger Murchison is the Safety Suggestion winner for the month of November at the Burlington Industries Raeford Plant. Roger will receive for his suggestion a \$25 gift certificate from the Burlington Employee Store, reserved parking for one month, and a certificate of appreciation. Roger's suggestion was to place a fire extinguisher in the main commissary.

Deaths & Funerals

Earl Dunn
 Earl Dunn, who was formerly from Raeford and who served as Chief Deputy for the Richmond County Sheriff's Department, died in October at age 61.

He is survived by his wife: Betty; three sons: Woody Dunn of Cherry Grove, Billy N. Dunn and Earl G. Dunn Jr., both of Hamlet; three daughters: Mrs. Betty Baldwin, Mrs. Linda D. Nunn, both of Rockingham and Miss Carol Dunn of the home; eight grandchildren; two brothers: Leonard Dunn of Fayetteville and Otis Dunn of Raeford and one sister: Mrs. Gladys Thames of Raeford.

15-year-old charged for brick throwing

A 15-year-old youth was arrested last week and charged with throwing bricks through windows of homes on Stewart Street in Raeford.

Five homes were damaged and at least one was broken into, Raeford Police Chief Leonard Wiggins said.

The local boy had run away from home and was apprehended outside of one of the houses he had allegedly broken into, Wiggins said.

The incident occurred on November 4, the chief said.

Juvenile authorities are now in charge of the case.

In an unrelated incident, Hoke County Commissioner Wyatt Upchurch was charged last week with hitting another man in the head with his fist.

Upchurch was charged on a warrant signed by Magistrate E.G. Inman with assault and simple battery after he allegedly hit Jerry Shaw last Monday.

The case is scheduled for Hoke County District Court on November 21.

Upchurch said he could not comment about the matter.

Raeford police officers are investigating another unrelated incident of vandalism on Bethel Road.

Charles Tucker of Bethel Road reported to investigating officers that someone shot two vehicles parked in his yard.

About \$750 in damage was done to a Chevette and to a Ford pickup truck, Wiggins said.

The weapon is believed to be a 12 gauge shotgun, the chief said.

In another county incident, a

Hoke County man was recovering this week from head wounds in Cape Fear Valley Hospital after being assaulted with a rake, Sheriff's Department records show.

Shon Deleon Berry, 19, was originally in critical condition after being hit on the head at a mobile home off of U.S. Highway 401.

William Ronald McNeill, 32, was arrested and charged with the offense last week.

McNeill told investigating deputy Mack High, the attack was in self-defense.

Wagon Wheel Restaurant owner Lester Baker told officers last Friday someone had broken into his residence and was hiding under the bed.

Deputy sheriffs arrived at the house and arrested John Bradley Moore, 21, and charged him with misdemeanor breaking and entering.

Moore, who had been "befriended" by Baker, is a former resident at the house, the investigation report shows.

The 21-year-old told officers he returned to ask Baker if he could move back to the house.

Moore said he hid under the bed and fell asleep, reports show.

Raeford police officers are investigating a break-in at the East Donaldson Avenue home of A.J. Lundy Jr.

Lundy reported someone entered his house through a window and removed \$810 in jewelry and \$3 in cash.

The matter is under investigation, Wiggins said.

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