

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

No. 11 Vol. 93

50 cents

Wednesday, June 14, 2000

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This week



200 march for Jesus
page 4A

Sheriff seeks half a
million dollar
increase in budget
page 5A

Moratorium on
new cemeteries
lifted
page 4A

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Around Town



BY SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

The rain stopped and the hot weather has come. The temperatures for the past several days have been in the 90s and the lows at night have been around 70. With the hot weather it didn't take long for the rain we had last week to dry up. According to the forecast we could have rain about every day for the remainder of the week. The rainfall so far this year is way behind normal.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs to be in the 90s and the lows in the 70s. Let's hope that we get the rain that is in the forecast.

I have been getting calls over the past week about the house on N. Stewart St. Most of the information was from people who had heard something about the house from other people. I am still trying to run down this information and I hope that I can get the correct information to pass on to the present owner.

One person who called was Mrs. Roger Dixon and she stated that they lived there in the early 1940s. McLaughlin Company owned the house and they paid \$25 per month rent. Kathleen said that it was hard to pay that much rent at that time.

If anyone else has information about the house, please let me know.

(See *AROUND*, page 10A)

City offers County gift of old hotel

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The City of Raeford is offering Hoke County a downtown solution for a new office complex: the old Raeford Hotel.

"Due to our rapport with county officials and our desire to see Hoke County grow and downtown Raeford revitalized, we are offering to donate the Raeford Hotel to the county," said Raeford City Manager Mike McNeill yesterday. "We

believe if they accept our proposal to use this historic hotel, or rebuild to use it for county offices, they will find a lot of community support and spirit behind them," he said.

The offer comes after more than 700

citizens signed a petition to protest building a new county administrative facility on West Palmer Road on June 5. Hoke County Commissioners permanently shelved plans to move forward with the

(See *HOTEL*, page 10A)



The budget book stretched to five inches in depth (left), when Hoke Commissioners met for a budget workshop on Monday night, says Commissioner Charles V. Daniels. Above, new Hoke School Superintendent Mitch Tyler hunches down to crunch some budget numbers together.

Debate over budget continues

Commissioner says tax increase is inevitable if requests honored

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke Commissioners listened to requests and complaints from department heads and county employees on Monday night, delaying any commitment on a budget during the two hour meeting. However, the majority of supervisors thanked County Manager Bernice McPhatter for a sound budget, asking only if a cost of living adjustment could be

considered for employees.

Commissioners directed McPhatter to advise what a three percent COLA of salaries would represent in terms of total expense for next year. At the next budget session (June 19, at 6 p.m.) commissioners will discuss final requests prior to a public hearing that will held at 7:30 p.m. to pass the budget.

With the recommended budget weighing in at \$19.6 million, Commissioner Charles V. Daniels said

after the budget session the numbers won't accommodate all the extras sought by department supervisors without a tax increase.

Daniels said commissioners won't be "rubber-stamping" the budget this year.

"We're taking a serious look at everything," Daniels said. "I can add two plus two and the numbers won't add up for this budget," he said. Daniels said the public and news

(See *BUDGET*, page 9A)

Officers target drug dealers in pre-dawn raid

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Operation "Blue Thunder" started this morning at sunrise across Hoke County to arrest 13 alleged drug dealers — those accused of selling crack cocaine and marijuana on the streets of

local neighborhoods. A drug task force combined the resources of the Hoke Sheriff's Department, Raeford Police Department and the State Bureau of Investigation to serve warrants in early morning raids. It was the first drug bust of 2000 to apprehend people reported pushing drugs on the streets, says Sheriff Jim Davis.

Davis said Blue Thunder took a lot of planning and execution in order to minimize the risk of danger, when arresting drug suspects.

"We've developed a solid working relationship with other law enforcement agencies," Davis said. "This operation will definitely make an impact, because we need to get these types of individuals off the streets," he said.

"We also want to let our community know law enforcement is serious about eradicating drugs, be-

(See *BUST*, page 10A)



One of the accused brought in this morning

Shopping center will be Hoke's largest retailer ever

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hampton Development of Greenville, South Carolina is planning a major shopping center in northeast Hoke County at the corner of Wayside Drive and U.S. 401 approximately one-half

mile from the Cumberland County border and eight miles from Raeford. Based on a recommendation from The Planning Board, Hoke commissioners unanimously granted a conditional use permit last week to Hampton to develop the land, which was already zoned high-

way commercial.

"Let it come, let it come to Hoke County," said Hoke Commission Chairman James Leach regarding the mall.

Situated on a 39-acre tract in a pie-shaped configuration, the proposed multi-million dollar shopping mall will be located

next to an existing BP service-convenience store. The future shopping area is nearby to a number of subdivisions and recreational facilities, including the upscale Bayonet at Puppy Creek, Farrington at Lake Williams, Woodberry, Carolina Place and McDougald Downs.

According to Hoke Planner Linda Revels, the design concept for the commercial enterprise includes a total of 300,000 square feet of space, with 205,000 square feet being utilized for the largest retail store, which will be reportedly leased by a national

(See *SHOPPING*, page 6A)

Former deputy's allegations unfounded, SBI says

Staff writer

District Attorney Jean Powell announced on Tuesday the SBI will no longer pursue separate accusations of assault by former Hoke County Sheriff's Deputy Cindy Byrd. Byrd said she resigned on April 4, but Sheriff Jim Davis said she was fired,

unable to meet the standards required by his deputies.

"The outcome is as we expected and it was without merit," Davis said. "We were able to support the SBI in their investigation," he said.

"Our staff continued performing admirably and I think the public now sees it was all created

by Mrs. Byrd as a way to try and stain our department," Davis said.

Byrd who resides in Fayetteville, previously alleged a deputy assaulted her while she was on duty in retaliation for allegations she made against another deputy. Byrd accused the other deputy of sexual harassment, claiming he communicated

threats when she notified her supervisor of his alleged actions.

In a separate, confidential allegation, Powell said Byrd raised an issue that alleged Hoke deputies were improperly handling weapons placed in inventory at the Sheriff's Department, after the guns were seized during arrests. According to Byrd, she al-

leged the weapons were being removed for personal use by the deputies.

"None of the sexual harassment allegations or the allegations about seized weapons were substantiated," Powell said. "Cindy Byrd refused to cooperate with the SBI in pursuing the

(See *UNFOUNDED*, page 6A)



Adults graduate high school

Dr. John Dempsey, president of Sandhills Community College addresses a crowd at the Hoke Library stage during a commencement exercise Monday for adults who graduated high school through the college. Twenty-five people formed the Class of 2000.

Hoke's oldest resident dies at 111

BY PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

daughter of 12 children — six girls, that many boys.

(See *RAY*, page 5A)

Nancy Ray, whose life was marked by hard work and devotion to family and church, passed away peacefully at age 111 in Autumn Care Rest Home at about 5 p.m. Tuesday, June 6.

Ray's family members learned shortly before her birthday last year that the lifetime resident of Rockfish had cancer. Ray would have been 112 on September 11.

"She lived a good, long life," Grace Kelton says about her great aunt.

Born in 1888 to parents who had once been slaves, Ray was the next-to-last



Nancy Ray at a recent birthday.