

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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unaffiliated voters
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Drama serves
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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

As I write this column Monday morning and after listening to the weather report on television, maybe we have dodged some severe weather. It seems that the heavy snow fell well to the north of us. It does say in the reporting that we will have rain and strong winds. At least this will save the Department of Transportation money, since they won't have to put out salt on the roads and clear snow from the highways. Since the news from Raleigh states that the state is in financial problems, this is good news. I will be glad to see warmer weather!

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the high during this period to be in the 50's and the lows in the 30's. We could see some rain on Friday.

Last Wednesday night the Democratic Executive Committee of Hoke County met at the Hoke County Library to pick a person to replace L.E. McLaughlin Jr. on the Board of Hoke County Commissioners. I did not attend this meeting, but I was informed that Clyde Thomas was to be recommended to the board. According to my source, who attended the meeting, there were some questions raised about the way the meeting was conducted. I don't know all the details, but later the head

(See AROUND, page 8A)

Democrats' first meeting didn't take

Confusion reigns about protocol as commissioners select McLaughlin's replacement

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

After a Hoke County Democratic Party debated voting protocol at a recent meeting, the vacant seat of the late Commission Chairman L.E. McLaughlin Jr. is still up for grabs. A second

voting session must be held for all nominees competing for the Party's recommendation to replace McLaughlin because of "irregularities and complaints" generated by the February 28 meeting, said Morgan Jackson, affairs director for the N.C. Democratic Party.

"The previous meeting was determined to be invalid because some Democrats complained about the way the last meeting was conducted by Charlotte Kelly, the party chairman," Jackson said. "It is like the first one is erased, and the entire process has to be repeated. We believe it

is the only fair thing to do because of inaccuracies that occurred.

"It is a good resolution to the problem that has come up in Hoke."

Kelly initially announced former Raeford city councilman Clyde Thomas as "the winner."

After repeated requests, she was unable to provide the official vote count. Unofficially, Thomas garnered 13.75 votes in order for

(See DEMOCRATS, page 7A)

Nine get second chance, others can be nominated

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke County Democratic Party election results from nine nominees vying for the recommendation to fill the vacant seat of Commission Chairman L.E. McLaughlin Jr. are a "moot point," said party chairman Charlotte Kelly on Monday. In spite of the February 28 election being voided and a new one slated for March 15, the nine nominees — all experienced community leaders — are still in the running, and nominations from registered Democrats are still open until March 14, she added.

"We appreciated the interest candidates have shown," Kelly said. "I always thought it was our Christian duty to vote."

"It is a very important office they seek in order to fill the shoes of Commissioner L.E. McLaughlin Jr."

The three top candidates voted upon in the last election that was cancelled including first-place choice, Clyde Thomas, former Raeford city councilman; second-place winner, John McAllister, retired Hoke school superintendent; and third-place recipient, Jean Powell, retired district attorney.

(See CANDIDATES, page 7A)



Thomas



McAllister



Powell

City puts brakes on expansion

Sewer costs too high

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

At a time when Hoke County is considered the 18th fastest growing county in the state and one of the top five in terms of lower income levels, Raeford city councilmen reluctantly applied the brakes to expanding sewer lines outside the eastern city limits across Rockfish Creek. The council postponed approval of annexation requests from three county landholders to extend sewer infrastructure that would have accommodated "multiple" businesses and increased jobs on the U.S. 401 Business Bypass.

After Raeford's City Manager Mike McNeill said The Wooten Company's engineer estimated the project would cost \$219,000, the councilmen could not agree on a short-term financial remedy to "offset" the cost.

"I recommend to table the annexation as far as a financial commitment until further developments can be secured," McNeill said. "Because of Rockfish Bridge, the Department of Transportation would not allow us to suspend a line on that bridge"

Two local businessmen, John T. Manning and Frankie J. Gilbert, each own more than 200 acres of land on U.S. 401 Business Bypass near Rockfish Creek. They discussed the importance of running sewer lines to encourage "red carpet" development.

(See EXPANSION, page 6A)



City Manager Mike McNeill at the site the city is buying for a future city park.

Bypass may exit at planned city park

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

The N.C. Department of Transportation was receptive to Raeford's request to take the planned Raeford-Palmer Road Extension nearer to a 52-acre tract earmarked for a recreation area.

Raeford Mayor Bob Gentry, City Manager Mike McNeill and Public Works Director Mike Lucas attended a roadway design conference last month with DOT engineers in which plans for the bypass/extension were discussed.

The city's leaders had been successful in getting the "scoping" meeting moved up two years, and would also like to see construction of the bypass moved up. Right-of-way acquisition for the project is on the DOT transportation improvement plan to

begin in April of 2005 with contract letting for July, 2006. Construction should begin one or two months after the contract is let, according to project development engineer Jennifer Safron.

Plans are for the bypass to begin at the N.C. 211 (Red Springs Road) and East Palmer Road intersection and extend to the N.C. Highway 20 (St. Pauls Road) and Oakdale Gin Road intersection.

At the design meeting, McNeill showed aerial photos of the "Joe Upchurch property" which consists of 52 acres of fields, wooded land and a small lake. Purchase of the property is being funded through grant money provided by the state to prevent flooding problems created by Peddlers Creek when rains are heavy. The money will also pay for design work and construction of an im-

(See CITY PARK, page 6A)

Sign heralds planned shopping center at prime North Raeford site

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Curious Raeford residents were wondering about a large sign recently erected on U.S. 401 for the "North Raeford Shopping Plaza." Another spacious building already under construction on the 401 corridor near the proposed mall caused further speculation. Both mysteries were solved after development plans were announced last Friday for two separate projects by J.A. Floyd, a prominent developer in Fayetteville and Moore County, and Kasey Kelly, co-manager of First Impressions printing firm owned

by House of Raeford.

Owner of J.A. Floyd Construction firm for the past 12 years, Floyd said he is convinced that developing commercial enterprises in Hoke County is a "wise" investment.

"A multi-million dollar shopping center is envisioned north of Raeford," Floyd said. "I have already secured financing. We are planning an attractive strip mall that will only include well-established clientele."

"I would like to put some nice stores in there."

According to Floyd, Dino's Pizza restaurant in Fayetteville is one of the busi-

nesses that has already expressed an interest in leasing space at the future Hoke plaza. Located beyond the Raeford city limits, the mall's retail spaces are offering a minimum of 1,220 square feet per store on up depending on the needs of the retail businesses, he added.

"I was interested in this particular location because highway 401 always seems to be busy," Floyd said. "Raeford is getting bigger, and there are more and more home subdivisions being developed in Hoke."

Situated on seven acres of road-frontage property on the west side of highway

(See SHOPPING CENTER, page 6A)



North Raeford Shopping Plaza opens on U.S. 401 near Raeford in the future.

Pinehurst, Raeford firemen put sprinklers in Habitat House here

About five years ago, Christer Shirmer, a retired fire protection engineer — nationally known in the field of fire safety — saw a "genuine need" for home fire sprinkler systems to be installed in dwellings built for Habitat for Humanity.

In general, Habitat homes have more people living in them, according to Glenn O'Ferrell, Village of Pinehurst Fire Department fire chief. He and other firefighters from his department joined with City of Raeford firefighters in installing a sprinkler system in the Habitat House currently under construction here.

Other socio-economic factors come into play with the higher incidence of fires in Habitat homes across the nation. Habitat House residents are generally more apt to utilize kerosene heaters to help heat the homes, O'Ferrell said.

(See HABITAT HOUSE, page 7A)



Pinehurst firefighter Cy Kirk installs a sprinkler in the Habitat House here.

Fayetteville woman kidnapped, raped

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A Fayetteville woman was abducted early last Thursday morning in front of the Pentagon Federal Credit Union on U.S. 401 South in Fayetteville after her car was high-jacked by a man, said Major Thomas Carlton of the Hoke Sheriff's Office. During a terrifying ordeal that followed, Carlton said the female victim was forced to accompany the man into Hoke County where she was raped and

later released.

"The incident happened about 2:50 a.m.," Carlton said. "She had just gotten off from work and drove alone to an ATM to withdraw some money. While she was in her vehicle, a black male approached her and jumped into the driver's window. He forced her to the passenger's side of the car."

Carlton said the victim was repeatedly threatened during the drive. He said the man reportedly used a gun to frighten the victim.

(See RAPE, page 7A)