

The News-Journal

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50¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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Recreation Center county's new top priority Commissioners examine capital needs, move up center for youth, seniors

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Commissioner James Leach persuaded other board members at their annual retreat to study if it is feasible to build the first Hoke Parks and Recreation

center.

While the board was supportive of the proposed project as a priority, the future Parks and Recreation center and the Hoke Agriculture complex — also proposed — hinge on the board acquiring adequate funding.

"Where is my Parks and Recreation building?" Leach said as he examined a list of proposed and existing building projects for Hoke County. "We have a growing need for our youth to have a place for recreational needs."

A Parks and Recreation center is pro-

posed in the vicinity of Raeford for it to be central to the entire county. The board would either seek either a grant or borrow an estimated \$2 million to proceed with plans for a headquarters for youth and seniors' recreational needs.

In pursuit of a more customer- and

pet-friendly animal shelter --- and a need to comply with new U.S. Dept. of Agriculture regulations, the board also approved the construction of a new Hoke animal shelter. Hoke Building director Dennis Baxley and Hoke Animal
(See REC CENTER, page 5A)

DSS director Mercer resigns Reason not made public

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke's director of social services Bob Mercer abruptly quit last Thursday, announcing his resignation to the Hoke Board of Social Services.

Ending a 14-year career with the county, Mercer was earning almost \$75,000 as one of Hoke's most highly paid department heads.

His resignation comes at a time when Hoke's DSS is challenged with the highest number of food stamp requests in its history because of local layoffs and other economic hardships.

A baffled DSS board had

previously pondered why Mercer allegedly allowed the state to revert \$179,416 this fiscal year that was earmarked for local working parents and needy families to pay for child care.

However, that situation was not cited as a reason by some DSS board members for Mercer's leaving the county's employ.

Mercer submitted his letter of resignation to the Hoke DSS board after it re-convened from a closed, executive session during their meeting.

His departure from DSS also followed a two-day commissioners' retreat where he discussed the status of DSS activities.

Mercer did not return telephone inquiries for comments on Monday. His last day on the job was apparently on Thursday.

When asked if the Hoke DSS board gave an ultimatum to Mercer to resign or be fired, William Fields, chairman of the DSS board, declined to comment. The DSS board carries the sole discretionary authority to hire or terminate a director's services.
(See MERCER, page 6A)



Champions
Right: West Hoke Middle School's Jeremy Shaw skies high above the Hamlet defender for two of his 15 points. Above: Brittany Oxendine is airborne as the West Hoke cheerleaders perform at halftime of the championship game. West Hoke Middle captured the Southeastern Junior High championship. See the story on page 5A.



This Week



Prospect water tower dismantled
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West Hoke wins Southeastern Jr.
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Rep. Hayes meets with Hoke leaders
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Asbestos disposal causes delay in hotel demolition

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Raeford City Manager Richard Douglas has requested the state tell the city exactly what its requirements are regarding disposal of the asbestos in the former Raeford Hotel.

The deserted hotel, located at the corner of Main Street and Central Avenue, is to be demolished. Douglas had hoped demolition would have begun last week, but, he said, "The state has had some issues regarding the disposal of the asbestos material."

"They are not going to tell us

how to dispose of the material but reserve the right to test any landfill we take the material to," Douglas added. "There is a concern we could be liable for cleanup if asbestos is not disposed of properly."

The city had accepted a bid of \$178,726 from T-Rex Construc-

tion of Durham to take down the building, but, Douglas told city council members Monday night, "We could be looking in the neighborhood of \$230 - 280,000."

Douglas said he is working with four contractors, including T-Rex, to discuss their proposed method

of disposal and is "very close" to reaching an agreement.

The original plan was for a contractor to take out all identified asbestos material and dispose of it at a hazardous waste landfill. The remainder of the building would be torn down, and that
(See HOTEL, page 5A)

Deputy overtime, sheriff's salary tackled at commission retreat

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Deputy overtime increases, the rising costs of Hoke Jail's medical treatment and supplies

for inmates — even Sheriff Hubert Peterkin's salary — were discussed at the board of commissioners' annual retreat last Wednesday. Meanwhile, Hoke finance director Scott Edwards uncovered an

almost \$1 million windfall in county revenue that was collected by several county departments, but misclassified over the last several years. While the county's finances appear to be improved,

the Sheriff's Office is faced with some financial dilemmas.

The Hoke Sheriff's Office is straining to accommodate growth in the county while experiencing a positive increase in solving cases,

but still attempting to balance out its budget for the year, according to Edwards.

The only person missing to participate in the discussion
(See RETREAT, page 7A)

The News-Journal

News Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

Sunday afternoon I again took to the woods — along the trail where Sweetie and I used to walk. The 10 miles or so of dirt road on which we so often trekked is where I hunted as a youngster, it's where I learned to drive, and it just happens to be the central portion of a recreational trail that has been proposed to run from Fayetteville to Southern Pines.

The "All American Trail" would extend from Bill Hefner Elementary School in Fayetteville to Weymouth Woods Preserve in Southern Pines and would be a "fun thing," the regional land use advisory commission says, about planning the use of land around Fort Bragg to protect the post from encroachment.

All of the hoopla we've heard for the last 15 years about the land that borders Fort Bragg is about encroachment — from people
(See OTHER STUFF, page 8A)

Three subdivisions approved

Facility Investment Fees established to offset future growth

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

In spite of repeated "no's" from Commission Vice Chairman Charles V. Daniels, Hoke commissioners approved three new subdivisions with more than 200 homes.

However, the board later unanimously voted to establish Facility Investment Fees for the Hoke Utilities department, satisfying Daniel's concerns. The fees would offset growth in the county and help pay for the future phase 5 of the regional water

system, which is estimated to cost \$9.9 million. The county averages 600 new homes each year, according to County Manager Mike Wood.

Daniels expressed concerns over current overcrowding in Hoke schools and the uncertainty of expanding Hoke's regional water system. Without another phase, it might limit water supply and improvements to new projects, Daniels added.

"Due to the fact of our school system like it is and the water situation, I would like you to take this into consideration," Daniels
(See SUBDIVISIONS, page 7A)