

The News-Journal

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No. 52 Vol. 100

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, March 15, 2006

Board opts for middle, elementary schools

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke's Board of Education unanimously approved dual construction projects last evening, planning to build a new elementary school near Scurlock followed by a middle school project in Arabia.

With staggering growth predicted by the influx of students in military families and the normal growth pattern climbing in northeast Hoke by 500 students per year, the school board will recommend to the county commissioners this month to invest \$35 million in building the future schools. An approval must be ob-

tained from the board of commissioners prior to proceeding with the proposals.

"This is a giant step for the youngsters in Hoke County," Hoke interim school superintendent Don Steed told the board. "It will also alleviate a lot of problems for us in the future."

The school board approved hiring Fayetteville architect Robbie Ferris of Schuller, Lindstrom & Ferris to supervise the architectural design on both projects.

The new elementary school is proposed for construction on Philippi Church Road near the current Scurlock Elementary School on

Rockfish Road. Located on 50 acres, the land is already cleared. James "Jim" Hendrix, a prominent Hoke farmer, donated the tract of land for school construction last month, estimating the contribution to Hoke County school topped almost \$1 million.

(See **NEW SCHOOLS**, page 4A)

Feds indict school board vice chair

Allege income tax fraud



Hollingsworth

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A federal grand jury in Greensboro handed down criminal indictments on February 1 against Raeford accountant William Earvett Hollingsworth on allegations he deliberately filed fake Internal Revenue Service income tax returns for nine clients, according to the U.S. Attorney's announcement on Friday.

Hollingsworth, current vice chairman of the Hoke Board of Education, subsequently pleaded guilty on March 10 in federal court to two of the nine counts. He has closed his Raeford accounting firm, Hollingsworth Tax Service. Wagoner said Hollingsworth was serving as the "tax return preparer" at his tax firm when the violations were committed in 2000 and 2001.

"I would ask my family, my church family, the public and voters to please forgive me," Hollingsworth said to *The News-Journal* yesterday. "My head is up, and I will continue to im-
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This Week



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City OK's 300-lot subdivision
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Because flaming power poles presented an electrical hazard, firemen could only protect nearby mobile homes as this vacant house burned Monday afternoon on Little Mexico Drive. See story, page 5A.

Palmer Street Extension back on track

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Plans for the planned Palmer Street Extension will not be delayed again, according to the latest information from the N.C. Dept. of Transportation.

"This is the first really encouraging news we have had," said Robert Nelson, who was appointed by the Raeford City Council to serve on the Transportation Coordinating Committee. The committee is a part of the Division 8 Lumber River Rural Transportation Planning Organization, which encompasses Hoke, Robeson, Scotland and Richmond counties and their municipalities.

The project would create a bypass that extends from Highway 211 West (Aberdeen Road) to Highway 20 (St. Pauls Road) at the Oakdale Gin Road intersection. A two-lane roadway currently extends from Aberdeen Road, across U.S. Highway 401 Bypass (Laurinburg Road), to 211 East (Red Springs Road). City and county leaders are relying on the completed bypass to comple-
(See **ROAD**, page 7A)

City, House of Raeford go to court over waste

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

House of Raeford owner Marvin Johnson, founder of one of the nation's largest poultry empires, defended the company in court yesterday after City of Raeford officials cried fowl and accused his firm of illegal construction. However, Superior Court Judge B. Craig Ellis amicably solved the legal dispute between Johnson and Raeford

City Manager Richard Douglas without ruffling any feathers.

At one point, Ellis rose from the bench to informally question Johnson on his version of what had transpired. Executives of the multi-million dollar company were not represented by legal counsel at the court hearing.

At the request of the city, Ellis converted a temporary restraining order already in place to a temporary injunction. Ellis ordered the local industry

to halt construction of pretreatment wastewater tanks at its plant until it submitted mandatory engineering plans to Douglas.

House of Raeford officials contribute close to \$60,000 per month in sewer bills to the city, according to Johnson. The city has previously fined the local plant for noncompliance of wastewater regulations. In turn, the city has also been fined by the state in the past for almost \$28,000 because

of the House of Raeford's noncompliance, according to Douglas.

Yet, Douglas said, in recent months, House of Raeford's compliance record has improved.

Ellis's verdict transpired after the city asked the court to prevent further construction by House of Raeford in its pretreatment wastewater division. The poultry plant officials never said why they had not
(See **COURT CASE**, page 4A)

'Circuit rider' tells leaders Raeford water rates are too low

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Raeford residents are getting "a deal" in paying \$5.50 a month for the use of 5,000 gallons of water, according to the North Carolina Rural Water Association.

There is, however, a down side to those cheap rates, according to Dean Byrd, a "circuit rider" for the state water association. He proposes the city bill customers \$15 for 5,000 gallons of water.

The state average for the use of 5,000 gallons per month is \$29, ac-

ording to the rural water association.

If the city adopts the new rates proposed by Byrd, the city would see a revenue increase of \$391,316, according to City Manager Richard Douglas.

"Please note," Douglas stated in a

memo to councilmen, "that \$316,540 was appropriated from water/sewer reserves to balance the 2005-06 water and sewer budget."

When the 2005-06 budget was passed in mid-2005, it was noted that users of city water would prob-
(See **WATER RATES**, page 5A)

Raeford senior earns Morehead

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Jessica Rae Hanson said she was ecstatic when she learned that she had been awarded the coveted Morehead Scholarship to attend The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Hanson, daughter of Mat and Kerstin Hanson of Raeford, is a senior at The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, where three students were awarded the scholarship.

Hanson, who is a cross country

runner, said she had just gotten to her dorm hall from a long run with her friend Chris. "He knew I was anxious because we were told we would find out at 5 p.m. He made me go to the computer lab adjacent to the main lobby and check my e-

(See **MOREHEAD**, page 7A)



Jessica Hanson



By KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

At the risk of incurring the inevitable bald jokes, I went for a haircut the other day. Somehow life has gone full circle, and Mitchell Sports is again cutting hair. He last cut mine probably 35 years ago, when I still had a full set of follicles and worshipped them to the point I was afraid of being caught by Raz Autry. In those days, if you recall,

Raz, who then was principal at Hoke High, was a hair nazi (and short skirt nazi too), and walked around with a ruler ensuring the former wasn't too long and the latter too short. All of us Hoke High alumni will tell you to this day those arbitrary measurements somehow helped maintain order and discipline at the school, and when a student prevailed in a lawsuit and took away Raz's ruler, it was the
(See **OTHER STUFF**, page 7A)