

# Balfour Replies To Water System, Finance Statements

An editorial in *The News-Journal* and statements made by a *News-Journal* column written by Hoke County Schools Supt. Raz Autry drew the following replies in writing this week from John Balfour, chairman of the Board of Hoke County Commissioners.

As suggested in an editorial in the February 25, 1982 edition of *The News-Journal*, the Hoke County Board of Commissioners would like to provide the following information for publication in an effort to inform the citizens of Hoke County about the proposed county water system and the 1974 bond issue for school improvements.

## PROPOSED COUNTY WATER SYSTEM:

The Commissioners believe the

need for the proposed water system is two-fold, as was correctly suggested in the editorial:

1. To provide a readily available source and adequate supply of water for future industrial growth in the county. Industrial growth is needed not only for the additional jobs that would be available to the unemployed, but it also would increase the taxable value of property (tax base) as well. An increase in the tax base would generate additional tax revenues which could be used to make improvements to the schools, provide other county services, or to decrease the tax rate.

2. To allow those property owners near the proposed water distribution lines to replace their dependence on private wells with a

more reliable and safe source of water.

It should be pointed out that the Board of Commissioners has taken only a few of the preliminary steps which will be necessary to get this matter to the point of allowing the citizens of the county to decide whether or not there is, in fact, a public need for a water system. In order to reach that point, the Board of Commissioners must call a bond referendum. On the date of the bond referendum the citizens will have an opportunity to vote "for" or "against" authorizing the sale of approximately \$800,000 of General Obligation Bonds including the authority to levy a tax, if necessary, to pay the principal and interest on those bonds. If the referendum is approved, the funds

raised from the sale of these bonds would be used to pay for the non-state and non-federal share of the cost of the proposed water system.

It should be further pointed out that in North Carolina there are no known cases of a county having to levy a tax in order to pay the principal and interest on a county water bond issue, because the water user charges have been sufficient to pay the operating and debt retirement costs. We believe that a water system should also be self-supporting in Hoke County and that the charges to water users would generate enough revenue to pay the operating and debt retirement costs. However, this will depend upon the number of water users who are interested in tapping

on to the proposed system and the amount of water used.

## 1974 BOND ISSUE FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS:

A majority of the votes cast in the November 5, 1974 school bond referendum did "authorize" the sale of \$1.25 million in bonds for county school improvements.

On January 6, 1975, Mr. Autry, County School Superintendent, met with the Board of Commissioners and proposed that plans be made to sell only \$550,000 of the \$1,250,000 authorized.

On February 3, 1975, Mr. Autry again met with the Board of Commissioners and requested that \$250,000 of Revenue Sharing Funds be allocated for school buildings in order to reduce the

amount of bond money needed.

On February 10, 1975, Mr. Autry met with the Board of Commissioners and the Board unanimously approved the sale of \$500,000 school bonds and allocated \$250,000 of Revenue Sharing Funds, when available, to the school building program.

On October 6, 1975, the Board of Commissioners approved a Resolution Providing For the Issuance of \$325,000 School Bonds and these bonds were sold on November 1, 1975. In the 1975-76 county budget, the Board of Commissioners appropriated the \$250,000 of Revenue Sharing Funds which had been authorized on February 10, 1975.

Although some members of the (See BALFOUR, page 13)

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# The News - Journal

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## Around Town

BY SAM C. MORRIS

The weather last week went from one extreme to the other. It was over 80 degrees last Wednesday afternoon while I was playing golf. Then on Saturday it didn't get much above freezing all day.

E.C. Duncan, who was in the barber shop on Monday while I was getting a haircut, asked me if Robert Gatlin had gotten any rest keeping up with the weather during the past week. I couldn't give him an answer because I haven't discussed the weather with Gatlin this week. Maybe his report for the month of February will be in the paper this week.

The snow on Friday really came as a surprise to me. I had been to a funeral in Louisburg that day and was on the way back to Raeford when I ran into it in Vass. By the time we arrived in Raeford the ground was covered. It was not sticking on the highway and this made me very happy.

The forecast is for 60-degree weather for the remainder of the week, but after the change last week anything can happen.

Ken Witherspoon called me Monday and said that the Girl Scouts were going to be putting up signs about the United Fund later in the day and wanted to know if someone at the office would take a picture.

Now I don't know what the signs are about, but I hope it means that the United Fund drive is to be started. I still get calls every once in awhile from people wanting to know if the United Fund is going to have a drive.

The Hoke County United Fund over the more than 25 years of being in existence has met its goal most of these years. It has done a lot for different organizations in the community and state and to many individuals that were never publicized.

The workers are almost 100% volunteers and very little goes to the operation of the organization. Most of the money that is contributed goes to some worthy cause. In my estimation it is the best way to raise money for charity.

So if the drive is to get underway this month be sure to have your donation ready when the volunteer comes to see you.

Have you registered to vote in the upcoming primary? Have you moved from the precinct that you lived in since the last election? Then now is the time to go to the election office on Elwood Avenue and get ready for the primary. The books are now open and the office is open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. They open at 8 a.m. and close at 5 p.m. The clerk does take an hour for lunch from 12 to 1.

If you will be 18 years of age before the first Tuesday in November, then you can register and vote in the primary.

But remember if you don't register, you can not VOTE. It is important that everyone register and vote.

The signs on the bank buildings that were formerly The Bank of Raeford are now UCB. This occurred over the weekend and Monday many of the executives

(See AROUND TOWN, page 13)

## But County Not Obligated To Accept

# Water Grant Application To Be Filed

## United Way Drive Set

The United Way Campaign for Raeford and Hoke County will be conducted between March 11 and April 16. So stated Ken Witherspoon, campaign chairman, for 1982, Tuesday.

A \$20,281 goal will benefit the following agencies he said: Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Senior Citizens, 4-H, Children's Center, Home Health, White Cane, Hoke County Rescue Squad, and Hoke County Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Witherspoon indicated that he is quite anxious for people to feel good about contributing to the United Way. He said: "Often individuals contribute very little or unfortunately nothing at all because the agencies supported by the United Way do not directly benefit them."

"Individuals this year are being challenged to look beyond their own personal gain when contributing to the United Way. Each group brings its own special value to the quality of life for citizens of Raeford and Hoke County. Strong agencies make our area an attractive place in which to live."

The White Cane, Senior Citizens, The Children's Center and Home Health, Witherspoon added, provide services in particular to the blind and elderly, the retarded, the

disabled, and the infirmed. Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and 4-H are working with our young people upon whom the future rests. The Red Cross provides disaster relief as well as blood services on an ongoing basis. The Rescue Squad stands ready to respond when an emergency or crisis arises. All of Raeford and Hoke County should feel a little more comfortable about the future just knowing that these agencies are available.

Active agencies and services are going to become more important than ever, he said. Witherspoon encourages everyone to remember that funds provided to these agencies do not come close to meeting the value you receive from them.

"Most appropriately contributing to the United Way is your good faith effort to show your support for these agencies," he said.

"Expanded participation by all industries, businesses, and their personnel is another goal of the 1982 Campaign. Sharing in the future of Raeford and Hoke County is a responsibility that is shared by all."

"When someone asks you about contributing to the United Way, your careful consideration about your contribution is encouraged by Ken Witherspoon, Campaign Chairman for 1982."

## To Determine Need For Updating

# Zoning Ordinance, Maps To Be Studied

The Raeford City Council decided Monday night to have the city's zoning ordinances and maps and subdivision regulations studied to see whether they needed updating to meet future developments.

Consequently action on Julian Wright's request that Holly Park Subdivision Section Three be approved was delayed. City Manager Ron Matthews and Public Works Director Bill Sellars asked the council for the extra time so the present policy regarding who is to pay for water, sewer and drainage systems' installations and street paving on this and other subdivisions would be studied.

Matthews went to Fayetteville Tuesday afternoon to confer with the Fayetteville office of the State Division of Community Planning on the study.

The city's zoning ordinance and

maps and subdivision regulations haven't been reviewed since they were adopted eight years ago.

Matthews called the decision to review for needed changes a milestone for the city. He also said he would push for adding a new position of city planner in the city budget for fiscal 1982-83. The planner's job is being handled currently by Sellars in addition to his other duties.

In other business, the city manager notified Mayor John K. McNeill, Jr., and the council that the state has granted the city \$22,500 extra to help meet the overrun on the contract for construction of the waste-water treatment plant and accessory system. The council authorized Matthews to accept the grant.

The extra state grant will be added to the \$90,000 in State Clean Water Bonds money previously



APPRECIATION -- John Balfour, chairman of the Board of Hoke County Commissioners, presents Mrs. Lena Mae Shaw with the Resolution of Appreciation adopted by the county commissioners in recognition of her services to the county. She served as county jail cook from August 19, 1968, till she retired January 31, 1982. The presentation was made Monday morning at the commissioners' monthly meeting. [Staff photo].

The Hoke County commissioners Monday adopted a resolution authorizing County Manager James Martin to "execute and file an application on behalf of the County of Hoke with the State of North Carolina for a grant to aid in the construction" of Phase One of a countywide water system.

The county manager pointed out that the commissioners won't be obligated to accept the grant, consequently obligated to provide the county's share of the project's cost, till "the first dollar is spent."

The commissioners have favored a system that would cost about \$3 million. Of that total, the state grant, from the 1977 State Clean Water Bonds funds, would amount to about \$250,000. The county would have to provide about \$800,000, which would be in bonds, which would be bought by the U.S. Farmers Home Administration; and the rest in an FMHA loan.

John Balfour, chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, said a county bond referendum would have to be held with the proposed \$800,000 bond issue subject to approval by the majority of the voters. He said that the plan is for the bond issue to be paid off by the users of the water provided by the system. If the payments weren't sufficient for the purpose, he said, then money would have to be drawn from county tax revenues. However, the bond election would include a proposal that the county be authorized to set a tax levy if necessary to pay off the bonds. Like the \$800,000 bond issue proposal which would be on the ballot, the tax proposal also would have to be approved by a majority of the voters.

Why does the county need a water system, people have asked.

Martin explained, on Balfour's request, the system is needed for: Industrial growth, which would enlarge the county's base for obtaining more revenue from its property tax, thus providing more money needed to provide county services to the people.

--To allow people to change to the system from their private wells as the source of their water.

The State Clean Water Bond money is available to Hoke County, Martin explained, but the application for it must be made by March 31, or the money would be returned to the pool for allocation as an additional grant to another applying county.

The plan calls for the county to buy water for the system and build an elevated tank near the Raeford Airport, instead of going to the additional expense of building and maintaining a county treatment plant.

## HIGHWAY PROJECT

Earlier, the commissioners heard Earl Fowler, executive vice president of the Raeford-Hoke County Chamber of Commerce, report no primary Hoke County project was included in the State Department of Transportation's Highway Improvement Program for the 10 fiscal years through 1991.

The commissioners adopted a motion authorizing the county manager to question the DOT about this. Four-laning of U.S. 401 north from north of Raeford to the beginning of the present four-laning near 71st High School in (See WATER, page 13)

## Les Simpson

# Hoke Tax Supervisor Resigns

Les Simpson gave the Hoke County commissioners Monday morning his resignation as county tax supervisor and assistant county manager.

He gave no reason for his action and said he had no other job in view at this time. Simpson turned in his resignation in writing near the end of the commissioners' monthly meeting.

The commissioners voted not to accept the resignation till they talked with Simpson, tabling action till the next meeting, which is sched-

uled for 7:30 p.m. March 15.

Simpson said that, in view of the fact that countywide property re-evaluation is not yet complete, he was not giving a two-weeks' notice but left the date for his leaving up to the commissioners.

Later Simpson told a reporter he had "no comment" to the reporter's asking him the reason or reasons he had resigned but he added that it was an "accumulation of things."

Simpson has been tax supervisor since November 1976. He has been

approved for the city to help with the project. The city has been granted \$720,000 by the federal Economic Development Administration and has set aside \$40,000 in the city budget. Last month the council authorized sale of \$58,000 in city bond anticipation notes to be deposited to accumulate interest, for use if needed to help pay the cost of the waste-water treatment system.

The additional state Clean Water Bond money was applied for after it was found that low bids on the general construction and electrical work totaled \$784,870. With engineering fees, legal and administrative charges and construction contingencies, the total cost will total \$945,000. The total cost originally had been estimated at about \$900,000. The bids on the project were opened last September.

The council also Monday night

heard a request from owners of the North Fulton Street site for construction of duplex houses and from owners of contiguous property that the area be annexed to the city. The council set a public hearing on the request for 7 p.m. April 5, the date of the next regular meeting of the council.

The council approved the city to contract for \$994 with the State Department of Administration Personnel Office to assist in updating and looking at the present classification and play plan for the city's employees. The plan hasn't been reviewed since it was adopted four (See COUNCIL, page 13)

## 19 Inches Fell In 3 Months

The shortage of rain which extended through last year in this area is over, thanks to the winter rains.

Robert Gatlin, local observer for the National Weather Service, said Tuesday the precipitation of the past three months did it.

He said the weather table is back to normal.

Gatlin said nearly 19 inches of rain (including the equivalent in snow) fell in December, January and February and the February precipitation alone measured 6.5 inches. He called this "the best" in February in four years.

The measurements for February 1980 and '81 were 2.6 inches each year, and in February 1979 a total of 4.9 inches was recorded.

working for the county since September 1975 when he joined the staff as county planner. Before coming to Hoke County Simpson worked with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and at the Camp Lejeune Marine Base as a management analyst. Simpson is 50 and a native of Jacksonville, N.C., which is near the base, and is a graduate of North Carolina State University at Raleigh.

He and his wife have three children, ages 7, 10, and 13.