

## To The County Commissioners

# 72° Tax Rate, Higher Budget Recommended

### Around Town

BY SAM C. MORRIS

How the weather has been in Hoke County for the past week I do not know. Of course the weatherman will bring me up to date as soon as I can get in touch with him. I did hear on the ship radio that a tropical storm or hurricane was going to hit Florida, but since that time I have come through Miami and everything looked normal.

Last week I stated that Mary Alice and I along with Harvey and Pearl Warlick were touring Florida. We toured the old city of St. Augustine last Saturday morning and drank from the "Fountain of Youth" and then proceeded that afternoon to Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center.

We took the guided tour and also saw the spaceship Columbia on the launch pad. I was amazed at the number of people that toured the Center each day. The guide said as high as 15,000 come some days. The tour lasted from two to three hours. It was worth the time.

We proceeded to West Palm Beach to spend Saturday night. A Bon Voyage party was given for the group at the Breakers Hotel in Palm Beach that night. This hotel was built for the millionaires of the horse and buggy days. About everything in it was brought over from Europe by the builder. In other words we saw how the rich lived and are still living.

Sunday morning it was on to Miami and we boarded a ship for a cruise in the Caribbean. The ship sailed at five o'clock and we arrived in Nassau on Monday. Most of the businesses were closed because of Memorial Day. We did take a tour of the island and then went to the straw market to bargain with the natives. I believe they wouldn't sell you anything if you didn't argue with them about the price. The sellers were from five years of age to 80.

We were at sea all day Tuesday and arrived at San Juan, PR, at 11 o'clock Wednesday morning. A tour of the city was put on our agenda. This is a larger place than I expected. The population is one million or more.

After the tour we shopped in old San Juan for the remainder of the day. The city is in two sections, the old and new. Many things have been restored in old San Juan and the Spanish look is there. The new section is high risers and condominiums. The overall appearance of the place was somewhat on the dirty side. Not like a lot of other islands in the Caribbean.

Thursday morning the ship docked at St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The tour of this place, with the views of the harbor and beaches, was worth the cost of the entire trip.

I have during my career in the Army and at other times been to many islands, but this is the most beautiful place I have ever seen. The light and dark blue water of the sea and the cleanliness of the place is a wonder to behold. I wish we could have stayed at St. Thomas for the entire voyage.

Of course the duty free liquors and liquors kept everyone shopping and hoping they wouldn't miss the ship.

We were at sea Friday and on Saturday landed at an uninhabited island called Little San Salvador for the day. The crew sat up umbrellas and cooked hamburgers and hot dogs for lunch. It so happened they opened a bar on the island too.

On docking in Miami Sunday morning we had to await the arrival of the Immigration and Customs people before we could leave the ship. This took approximately two hours.

Our bus arrived soon after we cleared customs and we proceeded to Orlando and Disney World. Disney World is an amazing place but not for a 64 year old man at five o'clock in the afternoon and with the temperature around 95 degrees. My advice is to take your

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## Expected To Be Ready In Mid-November

# Shopping Center Work Starts

Construction of the Raeford-Hoke Village shopping center on the west side of U.S. 401 south bypass at Cole Avenue Extension in Raeford is under way.

An earth-moving machine initiated the work the afternoon of June 2.

The buildings are expected to be ready for occupancy by stores sometime in mid-November.

The start of construction was confirmed Tuesday morning by Pat Devaney, construction coordinator in the Development Department of Edens & McTeer, Inc., of Columbia, S.C., the developer, in a long-distance telephone conversation.

"The News-Journal" called the company to get the confirmation that the earth-moving was the start of construction and was not being done for some other purpose.

Devaney said the store area, in one continuous building which will be divided for individual tenants,

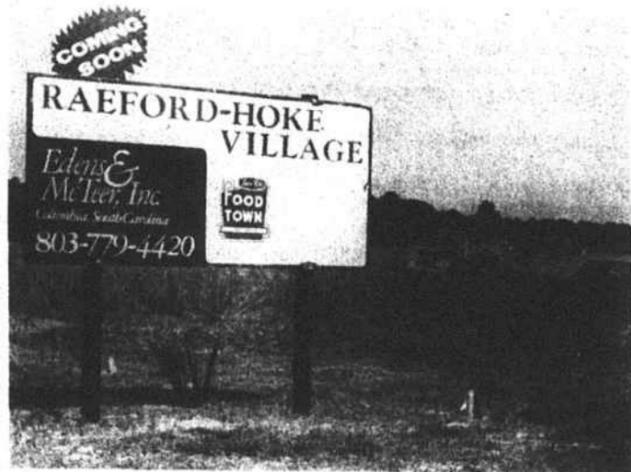
will cover about \$60,000 square feet. The parking area for prospective customers will be "ample," he added (specific square footage or the number of parking spaces planned was not immediately available).

He said Sky City, Food Town and Revco have made commitments definitely to establish retail stores in Raeford-Hoke Village. Sky City is a department-variety store chain, Revco operates discount retail drug stores, and Food Town is a supermarket chain.

He said, that besides are areas which will be occupied by the chain stores about 12,000 additional square feet will be available in retail space for lease.

The cost of construction of the center is about \$1.5 million, he said.

Devaney planned to visit the construction site Tuesday Afternoon.



The earth mover in the background broke the first ground the afternoon of June 2 for the planned Raeford-Hoke Village shopping center.

## For Lester Building

# Heating-Cooling System Bids Sought

The Hoke County commissioners Monday directed County Manager James Martin to have specifications drawn and bids asked for a new airconditioning - heating system for the Lester Building on South Magnolia Street.

The action was taken during the commissioners' regular session for June and after the commissioners discussed with Jack Ellis, head of the county maintenance department and building inspector, and Mack Sessoms, owner-manager of Raeford Plumbing & Heating Co.

Ellis said an estimate he received from a power company energy services engineer, Vicki Stout, was that a proposed system of heat pumps would save \$7,523.74 in energy costs a year from the present system chiller system. Martin told the commissioners the new system would cost about \$65,000. The energy costs per year are estimated at \$9,091, compared with \$16,614.74.

The interest in replacing the system, installed when the building was erected about seven years ago, is reflected in Commissioner Mabel

Riley's statement made during Monday's discussion: the county has had trouble with the present system chronically ever since it was installed. The airconditioning system currently is broken down, and electric fans are being used to cool people working in the offices.

Initially, Ellis advised the commissioners that if more than one supplier were contacted the county would have to employ an engineer to draw up the specifications. He also said that any engineer mentions a brand name in the specifications. The commissioners agreed, however, since Sessoms' company is the Hoke County dealer for General Electric that if the engineer mentions General Electric, or any other brand name, he must add the words "or equal" after the name.

Advertising for the bids was scheduled to be done in this week's edition of *The News-Journal*, and Martin said that the bids could be opened as early as seven calendar days after the advertisement appears. That would make the bids

opening on June 10, since *The News-Journal* is dated Thursday (though it comes off the press Wednesday mornings).

In other business, the commissioners heard proposed schedule of improvement work on Hoke County secondary roads during the fiscal year 1982-83. Martha C. Hollers of Candor reported the proposed priorities schedule and said also that \$130,661.28 in all is available for the secondary roads work in Hoke. The work is scheduled under the state's Transportation Improvement Program. Mrs. Hollers is the member of the State Board of Transportation representing highway Division Eight. The commissioners postponed acting on the proposal to allow themselves time for studying it.

Mrs. Hollers said she and members of the Hoke County Transportation Efficiency Council had attended a meeting in Raleigh Monday morning with Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr. The members who attended are Lawrence McLaughlin, Ellen McNeill, and Ken

McNeill of Raeford. They also attended the public hearing on the secondary roads held by the commissioners, with State highway Division Eight officials.

The other members of the Hoke council are County Commissioners Danny DeVane and James Hunt, and Sam Morris of Raeford.

In other business, the commissioners set a special meeting for Monday night to discuss the proposed budget and also, with Rockfish community people, a new site for the community building, which is to be moved from its present location.

The commissioners at the meeting are scheduled to set a tax rate for each of the county's 10 fire districts for the 1982-83 fiscal year.

The special meeting will follow the 8 p.m. Monday public hearing on the proposed 1982-83 county budget. The public hearing will be held in the courtroom of the Courthouse. The commissioners' special meeting will be held in the commissioners' conference room in the Annex.

# Hearing On Proposed City Budget

A public hearing on the proposed budget for 1982-83 for Raeford will be held at 7 p.m. Monday in City Hall.

The hearing was scheduled by the City Council at its June meeting Monday night.

City Manager Ron Matthews advised the council that it could adopt a budget any time after the hearing and by July 1, the deadline set by state law.

The council tentatively approved a tax rate of 54 cents per \$100 property evaluation and voted 4-1 to cut what amounted to \$77,000 in recommended specified spending from the city's federal Revenue Sharing funds. The action leaves \$10,000 each in recommended Revenue Sharing funds for Raeford downtown revitalization and for the Hoke County Parks and Recreation Department. The "no" vote was cast by Bob Gentry, who objected to omission of funds for the Hoke County Rescue Squad. Matthews explained that the Rescue fund was omitted because the Rescue Squad did not make its request in writing, though a verbal request was made.

The recommendations in the budget were made by Matthews. He said, replying to a question from the council, that he proposed operating budget for the new fiscal year amounts to about \$2,404,000, while the 1981-82 figure was \$2,344,145. Matthews said the

entire increase would be made up of a 7 1/2 per cent pay raise for city employees, if this is left in the budget that is finally adopted.

The proposed tax rate amounts to 6 cents per \$100 less than the current rate, but the proposed reduction is based on the change in the city tax base created by the countywide property re-evaluation made during the past year in compliance with state law. The law requires that every county have a re-evaluation done every eight years by an independent, out-of-county professional organization.

The taxable value of most of the property in the county has been increased by the re-evaluation, and many property owners have found their values doubled or nearly doubled. The result is many will pay more in property taxes than they did last year if the proposed lower tax rate is adopted permanently for the new fiscal year.

Mayor John K. McNeill, Jr., told the council that the city has been drawing from its fund balance year by year to avoid the necessity of raising taxes. He said, however, that this year's proposed budget contains no fund balance, though a properly financed city government should have at least \$50,000 in this fund.

Matthews told the council that the recommended budget is a "no growth" budget for the city, mean-

ing that it is based on the view that the city will not grow (during the next year).

The revenue-sharing motion, made by Councilman Benny McLeod, was that all proposed revenue-sharing allocations but the \$10,000 for P and R and \$10,000 for downtown revitalization be dropped.

During the discussion, the councilman agreed to leave unchanged the recommended \$340,000 for the Capital Reserve Fund (for use for emergencies), the Debt Service, General Fund and Water and Sewer budget.

The council can make changes in the proposed budget any time before it is finally adopted.

In other business, the council heard a report by Hi Marziano of Moore, Gardner & Associates of Asheboro, the engineering firm serving as consultant to the city, on the findings of a study of the city service area's water resources.

The study projected the city's needs to the year 2000, when the population is due to be 4,486, while the 1980 U.S. Census determined the population was 3,630, Marziano reported. He said the study projected the city's service area, beyond the corporate city limits, would put the total at 7,500 people.

Briefly, he said the study shows: -- It will take improvements costing an estimated \$1,390,000 in

the water system to meet immediate needs, including for fire protection. Among the improvements needed is extra storage capacity. These improvements would be integrated into future growth, besides bringing the system up to date.

-- The city's raw water supply and the treatment system are adequate to the year 2000.

Marziano added, however, that grant money which would pay half the cost of the city improvements is available to go with the city's share of the bill.

In other business, the council voted to accept a Planning Board recommendation to approve preliminary plans for Section Four Holly Park Subdivision. Joe Goodwin of Freedom Family Homes of Dunn, the developer, presented the plans. Gene Rice and Sheldon Weeks are his partners. The property is owned by Julian Wright of

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## May Rainfall

May in Raeford had drought its first two weeks, with .2 inch of rain falling in that time, reports Robert Gatlin, Raeford weather observer for the National Weather Service, but after that enough rain fell to give the month a total that is normal for May -- 4.5 to 5 inches.

A Hoke County General Fund budget of \$3,575,690.04 and a property tax rate of 72 cents per \$100 property evaluation has been recommended to the county commissioners for adoption for the fiscal year 1982-83 by County Manager James Martin. The 1981-82 General Fund totaled \$3,499,884 and the tax rate is \$1.01.

A public hearing on the proposed budget is scheduled for 8 p.m. Monday in the courtroom of the Courthouse. The commissioners probably will adopt a budget near the end of June. State law requires adoption by July 1, the first day of the new fiscal year.

The tax rate of the current fiscal year is \$1.01 per \$100; but Martin in his statement to the commissioners accompanying his budget proposals reports that the reevaluation of county private property made the past year has estimated the value of taxable property at \$307 million, an increase of about 43 percent from the past year's base.

The re-evaluation is the one required every eight years by state law and must be made by an out-of-county, disinterested private company.

With this increase in the tax base, and collection of an estimated 92 percent of the property taxes due, Martin says the total revenue which will come from this source is estimated at \$2,033,568, and this would be about \$9,300 more than the \$1.01 levy produced.

Besides the General Fund, the other parts of the total county budget the totals recommended by Martin and the figures for 1981-82, in that order are: Debt Service \$109,263 recommended and \$112,443 in fiscal 1981-82; Reappraisal (for 1990 property re-evaluation) Reserve -- \$29,250 and \$33,500; Armory Reserve (the county's share of the cost of a septic-tank system for the new Armory) -- \$840; Federal Revenue Sharing -- \$573,468 and \$560,493; and Facility Fee Fund -- \$81,590 and \$18,530, but the 1982-83 figure includes \$51,399 in a fund balance. The Facility Fee Fund includes interest on investments, and state sales tax refunds.

The proposed budget recommends a 4 percent raise for most county employees and a few additional adjustments in salaries, Martin explained to a reporter Thursday. No increases, however, are recommended for the county commissioners, Martin, or other key administrative people. The chairman of the board of county commissioners is paid \$2,100 annually at present, and the other commissioners \$1,500 each. Martin's present salary is \$26,232.

Besides the property tax, the other sources of revenue for financing the county budget are the one percent county sales tax, state-shared revenue, (an increase is expected for the new fiscal year), and appropriations from the county fund balance.

In his statement prefacing the budget recommendations, Martin says the following:

Again this year, the departmental requests total far more than can be funded from the revenues estimated to be available. Therefore, in most departments the amount recommended is less than the amount requested.

A key example is the school system. The amount requested for school - current expense is \$1,065,991. (37% increase), however, only \$835,411. (7.5% increase) is included for funding. Although the total of all requests in the General Fund amount to 15.9% more than the present budget - the amount included for funding is 6%.

Martin also lists in general terms what departments are recommended for increases, and what for decreases from the 1981-82 figures, and what are recommended for no significant changes. They are:

Increases: Finance, due to maintenance on equipment and capital outlay; Legal, based on prior year's expense; Register of deeds, purchase of a 3,000 copy machine; Sheriff, maintenance and repairs and vehicle replacements; Community Based Alternatives, supplies; Jail, food expense.

Inspections, vehicle for inspection and maintenance department. Request for half a clerical position

(See TAX, page 16)