



AGILE WORK -- This painter makes his way with apparent ease around the steeple of the First United Methodist Church in Raeford to a lofty perch for painting. The work was being done last week as part of the church's sprucing up campaign.

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Ambulance Subsidy Hiked By 63.3%

By Bill Lindau
Members of the Hoke County Commission voted Friday to re-write the county's contract with the Hoke Ambulance Service, and to increase the firm's tax paid subsidy by more than 63.3%.

The action came in a specially called meeting and after a two-hour executive session. As a result of the move, Hoke Ambulance Service will receive \$105,436 per year, which is an increase of \$40,883 over the firm's previous contract.

The agreement also provides that the commission will not automatically renew the contract when it expires on December 31, and that the body will investigate the feasibility of the county going into the ambulance business.

"It was our lowest estimated option," County Manager James Martin said, noting that another proposal would have cost the county more than the figure agreed on with Hoke Ambulance.

Under the new contract, the county has agreed to:

- Make the new arrangement retroactive to January 1, 1983.
- Seek county owned space for the ambulance service headquarters. If the space is found the contract would be reduced by \$9,746 or \$812 per month.
- Allow the firm's owner Jim Henley to use a county vehicle for 30 days until an additional qualified Emergency Medical Technician can be hired. The car will allow Henley, who has a top certification, to respond in the vehicle when needed.
- Deny efforts by Henley to raise the ambulance fees from their present level.

The action came shortly before noon after an executive session that ran from about 9:45 a.m. to 11:38 a.m. The amount of county money provided in the 1983 budget is about \$9,000 more than Henley had asked the commissioners for.

However, Commission Chairman John Balfour explained after the meeting that the amount was raised because the commissioners turned down Henley's request for an increase in the service's per-patient fee to \$55 and the travel expense charged patients to \$1.25 from \$1 per mile.

Henley's budget proposal submitted earlier totaled \$129,475.29, of which about \$33,000 would be provided by charges collected from patients, with the rest to come from county funds.

The county total, however, would be \$84,000, if the county provided a building for the Ambulance Service and paid the utilities bills, according to the proposal.

Last year, the county provided \$64,553.

Henley had reported, however, that the Service was unable to collect about \$54,000 in charges due from patients since the Service started in 1979.

Henley had advised the commissioners that he would need \$32,435 more in county money annually to operate and that his company would go bankrupt if the old contract were not renegotiated within 30 days.

Henley also requested after the commissioners acted on the budget the use of a Sheriff's Department surplus vehicle. The commissioners agreed to leave the matter up to the county manager, James Martin. No objection was expressed.

The Ambulance Service's first contract, led by the commissioners in 1979, was for five years, but Henley at last week's meeting said he didn't want one for more than a year -- to June 30, 1984 -- because of the possibility that national economic conditions would change, affecting the Service's financial situation.

The original contract was to run until June 30, 1984, but the commissioners' Friday action invalidated the contract and had the (See AMBULANCE, page 6A)

Turkey Plant Begins Construction

By Warren Johnston
Construction of a waste water pre-treatment facility is expected to begin at the House of Raeford turkey processing plant this week, members of the Raeford City Council were told Monday.

Letters of commitment, plans and specifications, which outline the firm's intentions to construct the gravity flow pre-treatment facility, were received by the city Monday, and officials are optimistic that a 10-year struggle over the turkey plant's sewage discharge has been resolved.

In a letter, dated Monday, to Mayor John K. McNeill, House of Raeford Controller George W. Kitchens noted that a contract was signed January 31 with the Keystone Heights, Florida, construction firm of Royal Jones and

Associates Inc. to build the facility. "Construction is to be started today (Monday), and there will be 30 working days required to complete this project. It is our intention to have this project completed by March 31, 1983, weather permitting," Kitchens said in the letter.

If the firm completes the pre-treatment facility and brings the plant's discharge in line with a municipal ordinance, council members have agreed to waive more than \$30,000 in violation charges levied earlier, as well as \$3,000 per month which is accumulating during the construction period.

Officials are also expecting the state Department of Natural Resources and Community

Development (NRCD) to lift a ban on new industry here once the turkey plant has brought its discharge into line with the city ordinance.

If the House of Raeford had not taken the action to clean up its discharge, NRCD officials had threatened to levy civil penalties on the city which could have run as high as \$10,000 per day.

Those fines would have been passed on to the turkey plant, and Kitchens has agreed that if the state fines are still levied as a result of the House of Raeford discharge, the firm would pay the tab.

City officials said after a regular council meeting held Monday, that they considered the letter from Kitchens a formal commitment from the House of Raeford to resolve

the problem.

Another Try
In other action, council members vowed to renew efforts to get reduced speed limits and caution lights on the U.S. 401 Bypass Highway around Raeford, despite an earlier rejection from the state highway department.

In response to an earlier request for reduced speed limits from the council and Hoke High Principal Dr. Linwood Simpson, highway department officials have agreed to lower the limit to 45 miles per hour from the Vass Road intersection to the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic Church, City Manager Ronald Matthews said.

The move would cause speed limits to increase in some areas and would not lower it enough in

dangerous sections near the high school, Matthews said.

"What they are proposing would raise it in the Vass Road and North Fulton Street areas," Matthews said, noting that those intersections are dangerous and do not need increased speed limits.

State officials are concerned about the reaction the department might get from truckers if the speed limit on the Bypass is lowered to 35, Matthews said.

"The only time the state will come in and do anything is when four or five people get killed," Police Chief Leonard Wiggins said.

City and school officials became concerned about the Bypass safety after two Hoke High students were hit while crossing the road near the school.

A move to put caution lights near the school was also rejected by highway officials because Hoke High is separated from the Bypass by a median, Matthews said.

City officials hope to join forces with members of the Hoke County Board of Education in an effort to get the lights and warnings near the school.

Other Matters
In still further business, the council took action on these matters during the regular monthly meeting:

- Approved for second and final reading an ordinance raising the basic fees charged to Jones Intercable customers by 60 cents per month. The hike will take effect on (See TURKEY PLANT, page 6A)

Around Town

by Sam Morris

The snow Sunday morning should have made everyone happy. To those who like snow it was on the ground for a while in the morning but it did not stick on the highways. So those who don't like snow were able to get around without any danger of slipping and sliding on the roads.

If we had received all snow during the period of the precipitation we would have accumulated about 10 inches according to Robert Gatlin. The rain melted much of the snow that had fallen during the night and then the rainfall was over an inch.

The forecast for the coming week and weekend is for warmer weather.

(See Around Town, page 3A)



PONDERING THE QUESTION -- Members of the Hoke County Legislative Delegation met here Saturday to answer questions from residents and constituents. Shown here from (left to right) are Rep. Sidney A. Locks, Rep. Daniel H. DeVane, Sen. David Purnell and Rep. Pete Hasty.

Delegation Backs McCain Hospital

Members of the Hoke County Legislative delegation vowed Saturday to continue efforts to keep McCain Hospital open as a tuberculosis treatment facility.

However, District 16 Rep. Daniel H. DeVane hinted that in order to justify keeping the 70-patient facility open, some of its buildings might have to be shared with other state services.

DeVane's prediction was apparently born out Monday, when the state Department of Corrections announced that its regional office would be moved from Fayetteville to the former staff living quarters at the hospital.

The move has been prompted by budget cuts and is expected to save the state rental fees and travel expenses.

Delegation members, who met here Saturday with Hoke County residents, said they would use their committee positions to keep the hospital functioning as the only state operated tuberculosis facility.

Efforts have been made by state Department of Natural Resources and Community Development (NRCD) Director Dr. Sarah Morrow to close McCain and transfer patients to local care units in community hospitals.

"We have our guns loaded, and we are ready to defend McCain Hospital," District 30 Sen. David R. Parnell said.

"We're convinced that it is in the best interest of the state to continue its operation," Parnell said.

A recent survey of doctors and (See LEGISLATIVE, Pg. 7A)