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Commission Passes Tax, OK's ROTC

85 Students Have Signed For Classes

By Sherry Matthews

After four years of trying, the Hoke County Board of Education unanimously approved funding for a new Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program.

The vote came after county commissioners agreed Monday night to transfer \$23,000 from the school's revenue sharing budget to the board's general fund appropriations.

Although the commissioners transferred the monies, they declined to make any binding commitment to fund the ROTC program after this year.

The move, however, increases the money which could be used for the program in the future and assurances were given that school money would not be cut next year.

"Personally, I feel that this is a great program and one that is needed in the schools," Commission Chairman John Balfour said, adding that he wasn't sure the commissioners could commit future governmental bodies to funding it every year.

"My intentions are to fund this program," Balfour said.

"I cannot sit here and commit another commission to something I voted for here tonight," Commission Vice-Chairman James Hunt said.

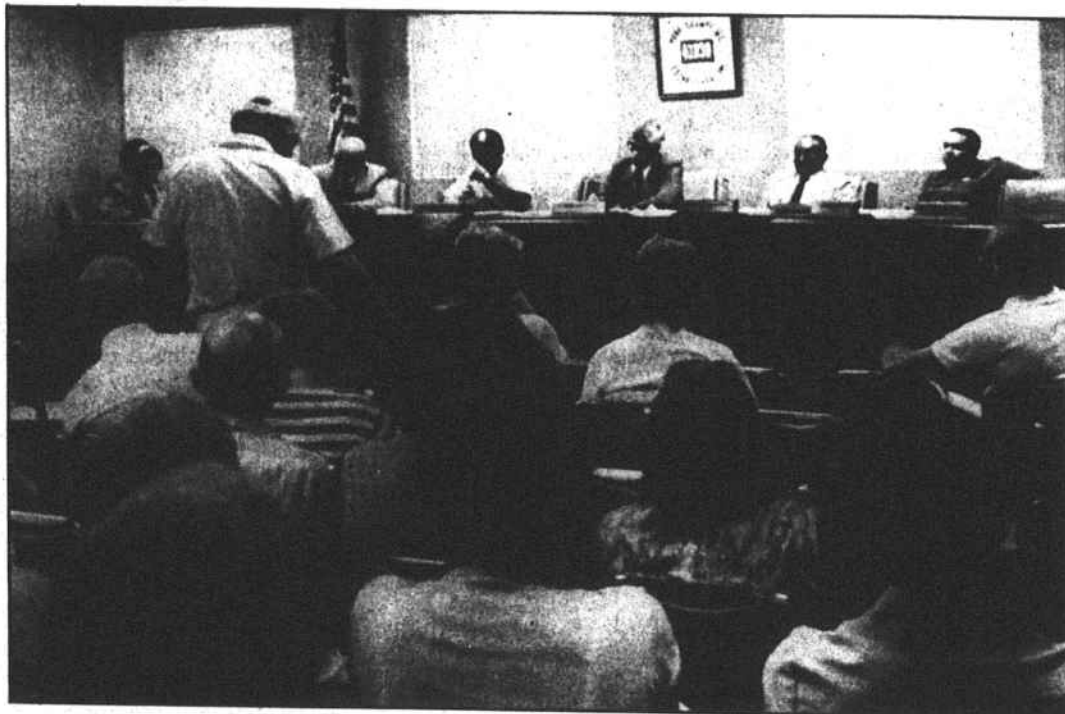
"I would hate to start this program and then not be able to keep it next year," School Board Chairman Bill Cameron said.

"It would not be worth starting," Cameron added.

According to Cameron, \$23,000 was left over after roofing repair bids were accepted.

The \$64,000 budgeted in revenue

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Standing up for sales tax

Former Hoke County School Superintendent Raz Autry (standing) addresses members of the County Commission during Monday's meeting. Autry backed the one-half cent sales tax proposal which was later passed.

Tax Designed To Help Schools, Sewer Lines

By Sherry Matthews

Following a public hearing Monday night, members of the Hoke County Commission unanimously agreed to levy the one-half cent sales tax that will bring additional revenues into the county.

An audience made up of mostly past and present county and city employees and elected officials were on hand for the public hearing, with over half voicing their support for the tax.

"We simply cannot afford to let this opportunity by-pass us," former Hoke School Superintendent Raz Autry said.

"We need that additional money to help repair the critical physical needs of our school buildings," Autry added.

The new tax, which was voted into law by the General Assembly in July, allows the commissioners to levy the additional sales tax and designates portions of the money to be spent on school capital outlay items and water and sewer needs.

If all North Carolina counties implement the new tax, Hoke will receive about \$471,000 with \$160,000 going to the schools and \$71,000 benefiting the city. The remainder, \$240,000, will be divided as the commissioners choose, Commission Chairman John Balfour said.

"I think this new tax is a much fairer distribution of funds than the one cent sales tax," Balfour said.

The one cent tax which is presently being levied allows for the monies collected in a particular county to stay within that county.

With the one-half cent sales tax, most counties will receive more revenues than they have in the past because collected monies will be divided on a population basis.

Raeford Mayor John K. McNeill also endorsed the implementation of the new tax.

"The city officials endorse the one-half cent sales tax 100% and hope you will implement it without calling a referendum," Mayor McNeill said.

According to the mayor, the city's portion of the collected monies will be spent on water and sewer needs.

"Water and sewer means a great deal to Hoke County, and the city supplies those needs. That money will benefit us all," McNeill said.

"No one likes to pay taxes, but there comes a time when we must," Hoke High Principal Dr. Linwood Simpson said.

"Our needs are getting greater all the time," Simpson said, adding that the money was just not there.

"This tax will pump money into the county and the schools, and we need it," Simpson added.

"I urge you to enact this one-half cent tax with the greatest of haste," School Superintendent Dr. Robert Nelson said.

"I'm speaking for the 4,900 children in the Hoke County Schools because I feel a huge responsibility towards those kids," Nelson said.

According to Nelson, school children "deserve" safe, clean and adequate facilities.

"At present, our children are not receiving those things," Nelson said.

Nelson cited "over-crowded" classrooms and heating and cooling problems as examples.

"We are not able to catch up with all these problems, and we are barely able to keep up," Nelson said.

(See SALES, page 13)

Nutrition Site Selected

By Sherry Matthews

Hoke County Commissioners agreed Monday night to move one of two area nutrition sites to a new location that will apparently "better serve" county senior citizen.

The site, which will be moved to the Evangelical Methodist (EMC) Church Fellowship Hall on Sixth Avenue, has been operating out of McLaughlin School since June.

"We have to vacate the McLaughlin School site by Friday August 19," Health Director Lloyd Horne said.

Horne and the Hoke County Advisory Council have been searching for a new site since May when the nutrition center in the South Hoke area closed.

"We have been welcomed by three different communities so this was a tough decision to make," Horne told the commissioners.

Offers to welcome the nutrition center came from Laurel Hill Church, Walls Chapel and the EMC Church, Horne said.

"We chose the EMC Church because that is where the senior

citizens wanted it," Horne said.

According to Horne, a poll at the McLaughlin site indicated that the senior citizens wanted the site to remain in the city.

Horne also said that less travel money would be needed at the EMC site than was used at the South Hoke site.

"We were spending \$500 a month in transportation cost when we were at the South Hoke site. We now are spending about \$100 a

(See NO ACTION, page 13)

Around Town

by Sam Morris

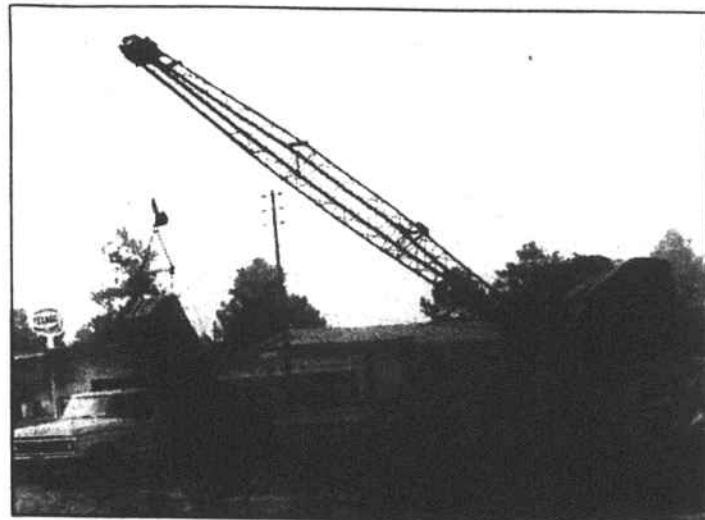
If the weather wasn't mentioned at the beginning of this column then you would think someone else was writing this week. All I will say is that if the temperatures will remain this way in the day and at night for the rest of the summer, it will suit me. Of course, we all know there will be many more hot days and nights through September. So let's enjoy these days.

As you become older, things that many years ago wouldn't have crossed your mind, seem to cause you to take notice of these days. Sunday morning I was on duty at the Raeford Presbyterian Church greeting people as they came to the morning worship service. A group of ladies, four in number, came through the door at which I happened to be stationed for my duty. It didn't take me any time to recognize them and this recognition brought to mind many years ago.

The four ladies were sisters and had lived next to me from 1918 until about 1924. We then moved to a new home, but were still in the same neighborhood. This family left Raeford in the late 1920's or early 30's. Two of these ladies live here today but one is leaving soon for the Presbyterian Home in High Point. The four are Mrs. Pauline Freeman McFadyen and Mrs. Marguerite Freeman Thomas of Raeford, Mrs. Hallie Freeman Whishart of Lumberton and Mrs. Frances Jan Freeman Carver of Chapel Hill. They were the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. W.E. Freeman and lived on Magnolia Street in the house now occupied by Mrs. M.C. McKeithan.

There were also four children in my family, one girl and three boys. Two are dead and I was thinking

(See AROUND page 11)



Tons of dirt

A crane, distributing dirt to waiting trucks, has been busy since last week. The crane and its driver are working beside the Raeford-Hoke Village digging dirt to fill up a hole near the Sky City store. According to City Manager Ron Matthews, "they are digging up dirt in one place to fill up another."

'High' Lead Levels Found In Residents' Blood

By Sherry Matthews

"Elevated" lead levels have been found in the blood of at least two Ashley Heights residents, who have been indirectly linked to a battery dismantling business which was conducted in the area.

Early test results have shown that elevated levels of lead have been found in the blood of relatives of men who worked in the dismantling business, Hoke County Health Director Lloyd Horne said.

Those people who have been given blood tests thus far were not directly exposed to dump sites where toxic materials from batteries and electrical transformers were placed, Horne said.

"These people have not been directly exposed. They are relatives of workers who might have come

in contact with the leads," Horne said.

Workers, who remain unidentified, were employed by Woody Wilson Jr. of Goldsboro, who conducted a transformer and battery dismantling operation on three Ashley Heights sites.

Wilson is alleged to have been using the three locations as a dumping ground for toxic leads and Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB).

Wilson, who is also believed by state authorities to have been burning electrical transformer parts and oil from the electrical units, is attempting to clean the dump sites and is apparently now complying with state laws.

"Of the 10 people we have tested and received results on, two had elevated lead levels in their blood

stream," Horne said, adding that they would be coming back for "follow-up" tests.

One adult and one child so far have shown the high lead levels, Horne said.

According to the health director, lead in the blood stream is dangerous to children as well as adults.

"It will cause mental retardation in some cases," Horne said.

At this point, Horne is not sure the connection between the battery operation and the elevated blood levels is accurate.

"It is really too soon to call the Wilson incident the culprit," Horne said.

"We can't really blame the battery operation for the elevated blood levels at this point, but it is a little suspicious," Horne added.

ages. The airborne particles are suspected as causing cancer in humans.

The test results indicated that at least six rooms in different schools showed signs of asbestos.

Buildings at Hoke High, J.W. Turlington, Upchurch and South Hoke were among the schools listed on the "viable asbestos report," Steed said.

According to Steed, there is only one room that has high levels of asbestos.

"There is an 85% asbestos reading in the boiler room of Upchurch," Steed said.

With the exception of the Upchurch boiler room, other asbestos findings are fairly low, he added.

At Hoke High's Gibson gym a 10% asbestos reading was found in the right ceiling while the left ceiling

indicated between 10-12%.

Four areas of J.W. Turlington were examined with results ranging from 2% in the back ceiling of the library to 12-15% asbestos in a classroom area.

Test results at South Hoke showed low level asbestos (10-15%) in the boiler room.

Although the EPA does not require that schools clean up the asbestos, only report its existence, Steed said something would be done.

"We would like to get the Upchurch boiler room repaired before school starts September 1," Steed said.

Cost estimates show that some \$3,500 will have to be spent on repairs to the Upchurch boiler room alone while \$50,000 would

(See SCHOOLS, page 13)

County School Complying With Fed Asbestos Rules

By Sherry Matthews

Hoke County is complying with a federal law which requires the reporting of any detection of asbestos in school buildings, board of education officials say.

"We do have some amounts of asbestos in some of our school buildings, but we have met all the federal requirements," School Finance Officer Don Steed said.

According to Steed the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) only requires the schools to run the test and post the results to all "appropriate personnel."

Test were conducted by two different firms on May 20 and 21 of this year and the findings were posted to personnel by June 22, the finance officer said.

EPA officials believe that asbestos becomes airborne when it

ages. The airborne particles are suspected as causing cancer in humans.

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With the exception of the Upchurch boiler room, other asbestos findings are fairly low, he added.

At Hoke High's Gibson gym a 10% asbestos reading was found in the right ceiling while the left ceiling

laced acid from the batteries following a day's operation.

Batteries were apparently broken open with axes and later with a machine, witnesses have said.

"Them boys would be dripping with that stuff when they'd come out of there," a witness, who wished to remain anonymous, said.

"That lead will absorb through the skin fairly quickly and go directly to the blood stream," Horne said.

"We are going out to look for these people and when we find them, we will administer the test. I am not sure what we might find," Horne added.

"Until we get to these employees, it will be hard to say that Wilson's operation is to blame," Horne said.