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Commission OK's Airport Merger

By Sherry Matthews

County officials unanimously voted Monday night to take joint responsibility for "improving" and "bettering" the existing municipal airport.

City Manager Ron Matthews and Councilman Vardell Hedgpeth and Benny McLeod were on hand Monday night to ask the county for its "cooperation" in establishing an airport authority and financially backing a "joint facility" that would benefit the "entire community."

Monday's request was the first time the county has been formally asked to support the airport.

"I think we need to participate

in this. It is a part of the community. I think we ought to be actively involved with it," Commissioner Wyatt Upchurch said.

"We would like to work towards getting a Raeford-Hoke airport that would benefit the entire community," Matthews said.

According to Matthews, the airport is a "million dollar" facility, that "could" work to bring "needed industry" into the area.

"I think the airport will help develop the community and bring industry into the area," Commissioner Cleo Bratcher said.

"We need to become a part of it," Bratcher added.

Commissioner Neill McPhatter

noted that being a part of the airport would be a "big help" to the community.

"I think we should join together in this thing," Commission Chairman John Balfour said.

Balfour agreed with Matthews that an airport could be the "front door" to the community.

"There is no doubt in my mind that the first thing industry looks at is facilities, and the airport will probably be the first one they see," Balfour said, noting that the facility should be appealing.

Commissioners agreed to participate with the city in getting the "airport venture" off the ground

and voted to financially back the facility on a 50-50 basis.

"We are ready to work with you in any way," Balfour said.

"I think this is a giant step for the community," Upchurch added.

The "giant step" taken at Monday night's meeting comes on the heels of the city's acceptance in May of recommendations by a Blue Ribbon Study Committee designed to improve conditions at the Raeford airport.

One of the committee's recommendations was that city and county officials participate on a 50-50 basis in operating the airport.

The issue of improving the Raeford Airport came to a head a year ago after the study committee was established. Some of the problems surrounding the operation of the facility stem from an existing parachute jump school located at the airport.

Committee members have said that the present jump landing zone is dangerous and should be moved further from runways.

Parachute Jump School owner Gene Thacker denies that safety problems exist with the present parachute landing site, and has rejected the idea of moving the location.

Aerial photos, taken in 1979, in-

dicating that the parachute landing zone is only 650 feet away from the runway. Thacker claims the jump zone is over 1,200 feet away from the actual runway.

A format for the joint operation of the facility will be developed by City Attorney Palmer Willcox and County Attorney Duncan McFadyen.

Both city and county officials are expected to establish an airport commission to oversee the operation of the facility. That move should come in November.

In other business, commissioners voted to take "no action"

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Hunt Incarcerated, Misses Co. Meetings

By Sherry Matthews

Hoke County Commissioner James A. Hunt was spending his sixth day in jail Wednesday after being arrested by Scotland County authorities Friday on 20 new "bad check" warrants.

This is the fifth and longest jail stint the nine-year commission veteran has faced since early June when financial and legal problems began mounting against him.

Apparently because of the incarceration, Hunt missed both Monday and Tuesday night's commission meetings. He had missed one other meeting earlier because of a Columbus County arrest.

Hunt was arrested and taken away by Scotland County officers Friday, just minutes after he received three suspended sentences in Hoke District Court for other worthless check charges.

Hunt missed a regular county commission meeting Monday night and a joint meeting between the county and the Board of Education Tuesday night.

In Scotland County, where Hunt was confined Wednesday under a

\$17,400 cash bond, 20 worthless check arrest orders have been served against the veteran commissioner. The checks total \$4,585.79 and were all written to Three Guys Grocery in Laurinburg. All the checks were written in May and early June.

Hunt is also facing a failure to comply warrant in Scotland County, where he has failed to meet payment deadlines on 22 worthless checks for which he has already been convicted.

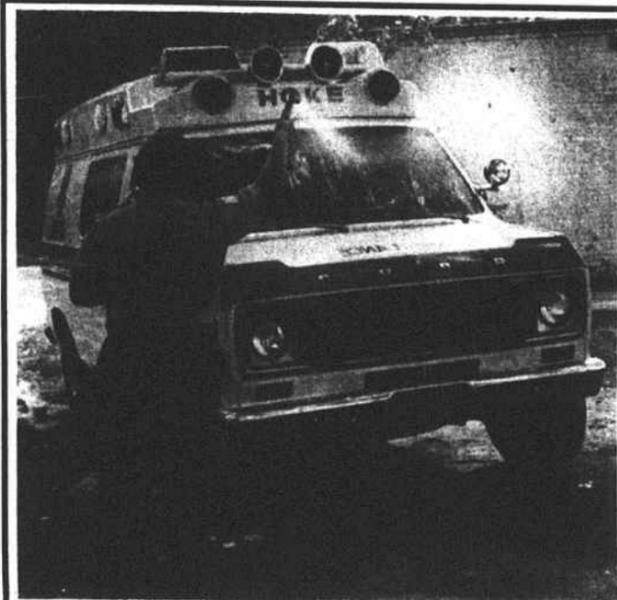
Those checks totaled over \$5,000.

Before Hunt was arrested by Scotland officials Friday, he appeared in Hoke District Court on three worthless check charges totaling \$2,029.76.

Hunt pled not guilty to all three charges, but District Court Judge Joseph Dupree found Hunt guilty on each of the charges.

Hunt was charged with writing a \$1,528.74 check to Raeford Oil Company in May and was given a six-month suspended sentence for

(See HUNT, page 2A)



Readying for changeover

Ambulance Service EMT Jimmy Stewart washes one of the ambulances which was to be taken over by the county Wednesday. Hoke County will operate the service under the name of Hoke County Emergency Medical Services and persons wishing an ambulance should call the Hoke County Sheriff's Office at 875-5111. Persons calling the old Hoke Ambulance Service number will be directed by an operator to the new number.

County Takes Over Ambulance Service

By Sherry Matthews

Hoke County Commissioners decided Monday night to maintain two fulltime ambulance crews, as the county prepares for the Wednesday emergency services takeover.

The decision, which will cost county taxpayers an estimated \$52,000 more than the \$163,852 originally anticipated, came after Cape Fear Valley Medical Center announced that it would not sponsor the county ambulance service if it failed to operate below a two-crew level.

The county had voted last week to operate with one crew on duty and one on call.

In a letter written by Cape Fear's acting medical director, Dr. Mort Meltzer, the commissioners were informed that anything "below" adequate coverage for the county would not be acceptable.

"Our support is for a two-vehicle ambulance service operational at all times," the letter indicated.

Without Cape Fear's support, the county could not operate at the

same intermediate emergency technician level as was maintained by the Hoke Ambulance Service.

The county needs the intermediate care, County Emergency Management Director Bill Niven said.

"I'm for an intermediate level of care, but when you throw more dollars into it this quick, it is something to think about," Commissioner Wyatt Upchurch said.

"I don't see any other choices," Chairman John Balfour said.

In addition to manning two crews instead of one, the county opted to raise ambulance service pickup fees by 57% and mileage fees by 33%.

Under the new rates, which became effective Wednesday, a person using a county ambulance would be charged \$55 for pickup services and \$1.50 per mile.

Under the present contractor, \$35 is charged for pickup and a \$1 per mile.

Also under the package rate charges, proposed by County Manager James Martin and

(See RATES, page 2A)

One-third Of Hoke Residents Are Illiterate

By Sherry Matthews

Of Hoke County's nearly 22,000 residents, 33% are considered illiterate.

Those are shocking but accurate figures, Hoke Reading-Literacy Council Director Barbara Buie said.

Buie, with the help of the literacy council, is trying to correct the rising figures.

"There are a lot of people in this county who are not aware of the literacy council or the literacy problem," Buie said.

According to Buie, those most directly involved with the problem are the least aware of the solutions.

"Many people who need help learning to read don't realize that there is a place that can help them achieve their goals," Buie said.

The Literacy Council is the place people can come to for help, according to Buie.

From June 1982 until May 1983, there were 27 students in the literacy program. Two of those students spoke a foreign language, five were children 12 and under, but the bulk of the class, 20 students, were adults, 18 or older.

Eight tutors spent 746 "working" hours trying to help those 27 students achieve their goals.

"We need more tutors to really get things going," Buie said.

Buie and others actively search for tutors, but funding only allows them to go so far.

"Our budget simply does not allow for going out and finding those who need help or those who wish to volunteer their services," Buie said, noting that "it's a real problem."

Coupled with an "extremely" tight budget, is the problem of finding tutors.

"Right now there is not an overwhelming response from volunteer tutors," Buie said.

Buie credits this problem to lack

of knowledge and lack of time.

A tutor first has to know a problem exists and then have the time to devote to the problem, Buie said.

According to Buie, the Literacy Council does not even have the money to compensate for mileage.

The council is presently funded by both the city and county governments, the United Way Fund and the Youth Task Force.

Together those organizations contribute about \$7,000 to the council.

"We are never guaranteed these funds," Buie said.

"We don't know from one year

to the next what monies we can count on," Buie added.

The council also sponsors fund raisers to help boost their "dwindling" budget.

Money seems to be a key factor in decreasing the number of illiterate county residents.

"With more money, we could provide transportation to those students who can't get here, furnish more textbooks and supplies and entice more volunteers into the program," Buie said.

"We operate on about a \$20,000 budget. That helps us keep pace, but it does not allow for any growth," Buie said.

"It is difficult at best to get things going with that type of budget," Buie said.

Despite money troubles, Buie and her staff make every effort to meet the needs of their students.

"The students set their own goals to meet their satisfaction, and we try to help them achieve those goals," Buie said.

Although many Hoke residents fall into the "functionally illiterate" category, where reading skills are below or just at an eighth grade level, Buie continues to plug away.

"We will manage somehow," Buie said.

Around Town

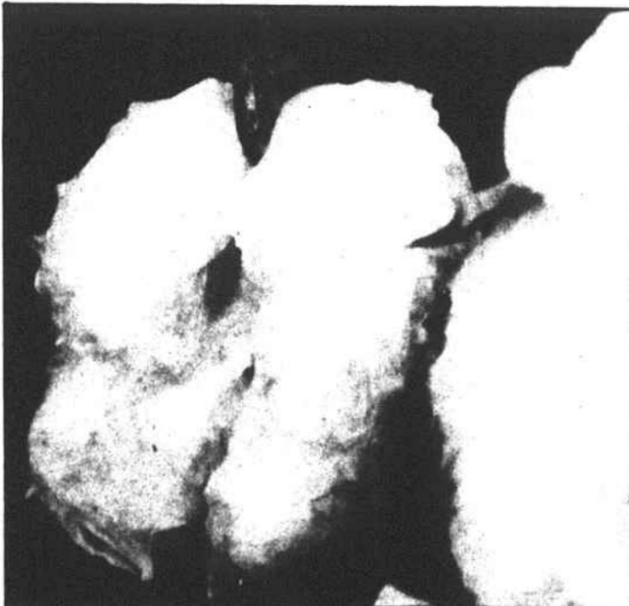
By Sam Morris

The weather is somewhat cooler than it was a couple of weeks ago and this is the way the season should come and go each year. It was still too hot for football last weekend, but it was better than the week before. About 10 to 12 degrees better. We still could use some rain but the need, as far as our water supply is concerned, is not as bad as some other parts of the state.

The forecast is for the temperatures to be in the 70s the last part of the week. Now this sounds good to me.

It was good to see Fred Culbreth, who now lives in Durham, at the Carolina-Miami of Ohio football game at Chapel Hill last Saturday. Fred was in a wheelchair, but he looked good and was in high spirits. He was accompanied by his daughter Carolyn and her husband. I guess the saying, "Tar Heel

(See AROUND, page 3A)



Cotton crop almost ready

Although the drought and hot weather will probably affect the yield and price of cotton, the crop is opening "on schedule", according to Hoke County Extension Agent Willie Featherstone. According to Featherstone, this year's cotton yield will be lower than usual. "The grade of cotton may also be low because the bolls opened before they really matured," Featherstone said.

School Task Force Given Green Light

Greensboro Woman Tapped As Associate Superintendent

By Warren Johnston

In a joint meeting, members of the Hoke County Commission and the Board of Education agreed Tuesday night to establish a "Blue Ribbon" task force to study the condition of the schools.

The 21-member committee will be chosen from taxpayers in the county and will have the job of determining what physical improvements need to be made to the schools and how to pay for them.

In an unrelated move following the joint session, school board members unanimously approved a Greensboro woman as the new associate superintendent.

Dr. Ginny B. Hayes, who is currently the Director of Elementary Education in the Alamance County Schools, will begin her duties here by mid-October, Superintendent Dr. Robert Nelson said.

Hayes will replace John

McAllister who retired in June.

Nelson worked with Hayes while he served as Superintendent of the Alamance schools.

"I've known her and worked with her for five years, and I think she is one of the strongest instructional leaders in the state," Nelson said.

The new associate superintendent has expertise in many areas of school work, and is expected to use those skills working in the local system, Nelson said.

Hayes received her Doctorate Degree in Education Administration and Supervision from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She has taught and supervised music, elementary education and reading.

The search for the new associate began in early July, Nelson said.

(See TASK, page 11A)



Inside Today

Aged and new gravestones are lying side by side in two of Hoke County's oldest churches. We take a look at the two churches, located on the Ft. Bragg Reservation in this week's B-Section of The News-Journal.