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Action Group Re-surfacing, Plans Set To Unseat Board

By Sherry Matthews

After nearly six months of underground activity, members of the Lumbee River Electric Membership (LREM) Action Group have re-surfaced and are preparing a "renewed" attack on the co-op's board of directors.

The move to re-surface comes just one week before the co-op's annual membership meeting.

"The timing was just right for us to re-surface," action group spokesman Carl Branch said Tuesday.

"We are coming out just in time to stimulate people's thinking and get them off their duffs and to the annual meeting," Branch added.

Branch and the co-op action group went underground in March after efforts to oust the board of directors failed.

"We had to go underground because the board was always aware of what our next move was going to be," Branch said.

"Because they knew what we were doing, they were able to counteract our every move with the help of their high-priced lawyers," Branch said.

"After the lawsuit was dropped, we needed to get our goals re-organized without the eyes of the board watching our every move," Branch added.

The battle between the action group, and the co-op board of directors began brewing in January when board members fired general manager Derl Hinson.

At that time, Branch and other consumer members of the action group filed a petition with over 3,000 names, requesting a recall meeting be held.

Board members refused to call the special meeting, saying that the grounds for the petition, which dealt with Hinson's dismissal, were not sufficient reasons for allowing the meeting.

A second petition was filed two weeks later listing three new charges stemming from directors expenditures.

That petition, calling for a recall membership meeting, was also denied by the board.

In denying the second meeting, board members cited a lack of

clarity in the charges outlined on the petition. The charges were apparently not clear enough to show just cause within the meaning defined by the LREM by-laws.

Both refusals sparked more fire in Branch and the action group.

"That is when we decided to go underground and prepare our next attack," Branch said.

Along with the charges already presented, Branch intends to attack board members who have been "consistently" late with their light bill payments.

"I intend to lay into board members for the non-payment of their bills. If it were just a co-op member, their lights would have been turned off, but not a board member's," Branch said.

"That is not right, and it never will be right," Branch added.

In addition to the non-payment accusations, Branch said he intended to "rake" directors "over the coals" for playing around with the charter.

"They have repeatedly amended the by-laws to suit their actions. It is not right, and I intend to make

people aware of that fact," Branch added.

With his specially called meeting Wednesday night, Branch hopes to "spark fire" into co-op members.

"We have four people opposing the directors in the annual election next week, and we want people aware of this," Branch said.

"We want to lay it all out in the open and let the people see what is going on," Branch added.

Although the annual meeting is being held at the Pembroke State University gymnasium, Branch is "very optimistic" about his contenders' chances.

"Those people are very strongly supported by the action group and co-op members," Branch said.

"Unless the board pulls some underhanded maneuver, I think these people stand more than just a chance of taking board seats," Branch added.

"We are prepared for this," Branch said.

The time has come for us to re-surface, and we are ready to lower the boom this time around," Branch added.



A long reach

This unidentified construction worker reaches for his gloves as he balances on the top of the new Faberge Inc. expansion. The firm is expected to complete the work on the \$1 million project by the end of December.

EMS Sponsorship Delayed

By Sherry Matthews

Although efforts are being made to get a second hospital sponsorship for the Hoke Emergency Medical Services (EMS), County Manager James Martin said it could be January before any decision is made.

"The state regulations do not allow for more than one hospital to sponsor an ambulance service," Martin said, noting that the regulation was in the process of being changed.

"They are trying to change that regulation, but it may be January before it actually goes into effect."

At present, Cape Fear Valley Hospital is the only sponsoring unit for the ambulance service, but Moore Memorial Hospital had asked to "co-sponsor" the Hoke EMS.

At an October 10 meeting county commission members voted to study the feasibility of the addition

of Moore Memorial as a co-sponsor.

"Even if there were no regulations, Moore would have to get state approval before they could sponsor any ambulance service," Martin said.

"It will probably be January before Moore can be approved as a resource hospital, so it will coincide with the changing of the regulation," Martin said.

"We have been trying for two years to get this co-sponsorship going, and we simply have not been getting anywhere. Maybe this time around we will have some luck," Dr. Ronald Milewski with the Moore Department of Emergency Services said.

Milewski, who wrote a letter to Martin, and the commissioners asking that Moore be allowed to co-sponsor the Hoke ambulance unit, believes that a joint effort

between two hospitals would benefit all those involved.

"With radio contact to both Cape Fear and Moore Hospitals, I think it will provide much better continuity of patient care," Milewski said.

Although Cape Fear is the only sponsoring hospital that the ambulance service has radio contact with, 50% of the patients from Hoke are taken to Moore Memorial.

According to Milewski, ambulances transporting patients to Moore Memorial must contact Cape Fear who then relay patient information to Moore via phone.

"There is a sense that the doctors giving the instructions are not going to be taking care of the patients," Milewski said.

"It would be better if the doctor responsible for the patient's needs

were the one giving the orders," Milewski said.

According to Milewski, a Hoke ambulance will call Cape Fear and tell them they are transporting a patient to Moore. Doctors at Cape Fear then instruct the Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's) on how to handle the patient.

"If they are coming to our hospital, we usually aren't informed until just a few minutes before the patient arrives," Milewski said.

"It really does not provide for the best patient care," Milewski added.

According to Milewski, co-sponsoring with Cape Fear would be the "ideal" solution.

"We are not interested in replacing Cape Fear or competing with them. Our interest is to work with them in a joint effort to provide better continuity," Milewski said.

Shelter Animals Face Another Cold Winter

By Sherry Matthews

Although plans are being made to begin construction work on a new animal shelter, chances of the facility being completed by November or early December are slim, Laurinburg architect Sam Snowden said Monday.

"I am meeting with James Martin on Thursday to discuss plans for the new facility," Snowden said.

"Everyone is ready to get to work on this project," Snowden said.

Although Snowden said the

"ball" was "beginning to roll," he admitted that the project would take some time.

"We are going to have to get our plans ready, and then the county must take competitive bids. These things take a little time, but we are ready to get moving," Snowden said.

County Manager James Martin also seemed unsure of when the shelter would be completed.

"I think we will be started on the new pound before the winter, but I am not sure that it will be completed," Martin said.

Although Martin is unsure of the shelter's completion date, he is making plans to "winterize" the existing pound, "just in case."

"We are prepared to do the same sort of things we did last year to winterize the existing pound," Martin said.

"We may even do some additional winterizing if we do not get the new facility completed in time," Martin added.

Hoke Health Director Lloyd Horne said he was prepared to get the old pound in shape for cold

weather even if the new facility is completed.

"We have not received any indication one way or the other about the new animal shelter. We are just going to prepare to go down and get the present pound ready for the coming winter," Horne said.

"I'm not sure what the hold up is now, but I just hope they will have something done by cold weather," Hoke-Raeford Humane Society Director Jack McGinnis said.

"They approved the site and ap-

pointed the committee, I just hope nobody drags their feet on getting the shelter completed," McGinnis said.

"My main concern is the animals protection," McGinnis said.

"I think we will have started on the project by November, but the chances are pretty remote of having anything completed by then," Snowden said.

"We are going to move as fast as we can but it is a little early to anticipate how long the project will take," Snowden added.

The animal shelter controversy, that has been brewing for over a year, dwindled down when commissioners unanimously voted in September to build a new shelter at the city landfill site.

"That site wasn't our first choice, but we went along with it hoping it would speed up the construction. Now I am not so sure it has," McGinnis said.

"I think everyone is ready to get this animal shelter completed. We are going to try to do just that as quickly as we possibly can," Snowden said.

Around Town

By Sam Morris

It would be nice for us to have a few inches of rain in Hoke County during October. There was rain last week in counties north of us, but none came our way. The temperatures have been ideal with the warm days and cool nights. Not hot enough for air conditioning or cool enough for heat. This makes for an energy bill that suits the pocketbook.

The forecast is for this weather to continue, but with the State Fair coming up we should get some rain. It seems to rain every year around fair time.

Robert Gatlin, who is the official weatherman for the National (See AROUND, page 2A)



Hanging on threads

This Raeford caterpillar cuts a prominent figure as the morning sun shines through his devastating web. These worms play havoc with local pecan trees. (Photo By Dale Dees)

Governor Courting Hoke District Seat

A meeting, held last week with North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt in an effort to retain a Hoke County District Court seat, was "fruitful," members of the local Legislative Delegation said.

All of the members of the Hoke County Legislative Delegation and a prominent county businessman met with Hunt Thursday in an effort to secure the appointment of Raeford attorney Warren L. Pate for the seat being vacated on the court.

Pate hopes to succeed Judge Joseph Dupree, who will retire as of December 1.

The Raeford attorney is one of three candidates nominated by the

12th Judicial District Bar Association for the post.

"I thought our conversation with the governor went well," state Sen. David R. Parnell said.

Hunt indicated that there was strong support for the other two candidates vying for the seat on the court, but said that Pate would be given equal consideration, Parnell said.

"We let him know that it would be good to keep the seat in Hoke County," the senator added.

Hunt is expected to decide on the appointment in the next two or three weeks and probably will interview each of the candidates. (See JUDGESHIP, page 2A)



Inside Today

Hands of time

The lamp light comes on, the radio is tuned in and the needles, plastic mesh, and measuring instruments are ready, as Ed Byrd sits down to work. Working with his hands gives him a "good feeling" and fills up his time. Byrd says. We take a look at his craft on page one of Section B in today's News-Journal.