

# The News-Journal

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## Budget accepted with tax rate hike

After six weeks of debate, a five cent ad valorem tax rate hike was given unanimous approval Tuesday night as members of the Hoke County Commission passed the largest operating budget in the county's history. Although the approval of the \$5.46 million budget raises the county's tax rate from 70 cents per \$100 of evaluation to 75 cents, the move also provides for increased funding for schools, a 7.5% pay hike for county employees, the hiring of three new sheriff's deputies and additional money for industrial development.

### School funding

In the final plan, the schools will receive just over \$1.1 million in local funds, which is down \$60,000 from what had been proposed earlier.

The new school local budget is about 12% or \$118,000 higher than last year's.

Under the budget, a proposal for improving the schools was left intact and will be funded by using a larger share of the county's portion of the one-half cent sales tax rebates.

The Board of Education will receive \$200,000 to repair roofs on Hoke High School and at South Hoke School from the sales tax funds.

Bids for the jobs were recently taken and came in at \$125,000. The extra money will be earmarked for the reroofing of other school buildings and should help the school board get ahead on a 10-year rehabilitation plan, Commission Chairman John Balfour said Tuesday.

"That gives them the money for year one. They could proceed to another roof which is part of the year two plan," Balfour said.

The money cannot be legally used for any other purpose other than roofs, County Manager James Martin said.

The county discovered that the roof bids were lower than the proposed \$200,000 through an investigation,

and not because the information was volunteered by school officials, Martin said.

An additional \$129,100 will also be given to the schools from the county's federal Revenue Sharing funds. The schools had requested \$171,100.

After considering a proposal for the revenue sharing funds which would have required school officials to request money for the exact item proposed in the school budget, the commission voted to give the board of education the "lump sum without strings."

"The school board is elected. They should be the ones who know the needs of the schools best," Commissioner Wyatt Upchurch said.

Commission Vice Chairman James Albert Hunt objected to \$22,000 targeted for paving the parking lot at South Hoke School.

The paving was not needed and the funds could be used for other school improvements, Hunt said.

"There could come a flood like Noah, and that parking lot wouldn't hold water," Hunt said.

Paving the lot would improve the value of his own property which adjoins the school, Hunt said, but noted that he did not believe taxpayers should pay for increasing his worth.

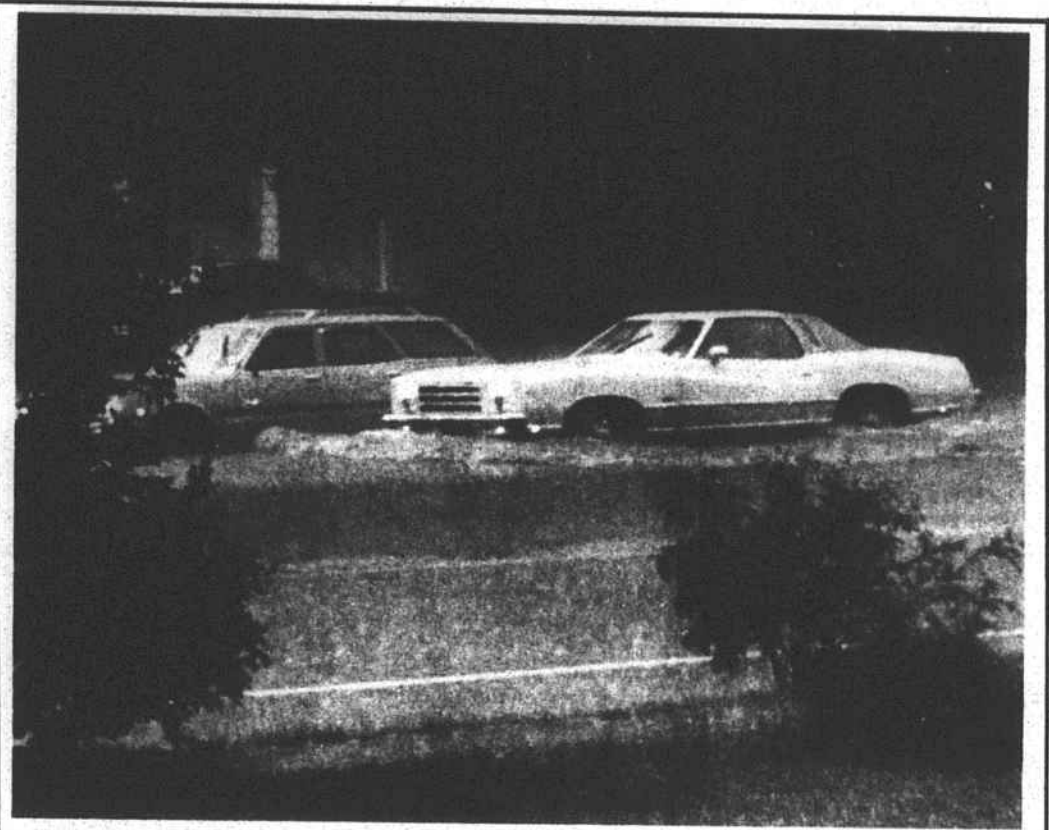
"I don't want taxpayers paying for improving my little shack," the commissioner said.

Giving the school board the unencumbered revenue sharing funds was approved unanimously, but Balfour, Upchurch and Hunt all expressed reservations and said they hoped the funds would be used for budgeted purposes.

"We have put the trust in the school board in the past, and we have not always been satisfied," Balfour said.

"Let them spend the \$109,000 where they see fit, but if the taxpayers jump on me, I'm going to put the shoe where it fits on the school board," Hunt said.

(See DEVELOPMENT, page 11)



### Making waves

The going has been tough for motorists lately in Hoke County because of torrential rains and thunder showers. This vehicle on Main Street in Raeford is making waves as he passes another stalled car during a storm Friday evening. From 2.5 to six inches fell in about an hour as the storm passed over the county. Raeford Police officers attempted to stop traffic on this North Main Street stretch, but their efforts seemed to add another obstacle as

drivers ignored flashing blue lights and pulled around the blocking police car. By noon Tuesday an additional five inches of rain had fallen in Raeford, bringing the total for the four days to 7.2 inches, according to National Weather Service Observer Robert Gatlin said. Some areas of the county received more than 10.5 inches for the same period.

## Raeford not meeting state sewer regulations

By Warren Johnston

Less than six months after a sewer moratorium was lifted, the City of Raeford is not meeting state-mandated treatment compliance standards and could face tougher expansion guidelines if discharges into Rockfish Creek are not cleaned up, a spokesman for state Department of Natural Resources and Community Development (NRCD) said Tuesday.

Testing by the state has shown that during the last six months, the city has been "out-of-compliance" half of the time, NRCD Depart-

ment of Environmental Management Regional Supervisor Mick Noland said.

A six-year ban on additional industrial use of the city treatment system was lifted by NRCD in January, but since that time, Raeford's compliance has been "bouncing around," Noland said.

The city was in compliance in January, April and June, but failed to meet the standards in February, March and May.

Raeford is not in an immediate danger of having the moratorium re-imposed, but a strict signed guideline agreement would have to

be instituted if the problem is not corrected soon, Noland said.

However, as a result of the present compliance record, the regional office would not recommend allowing a new industry to tie on to the Raeford sewer, Noland said.

A new firm would probably be allowed to tap on, if agreements were signed by the city outlining an immediate and specific cleanup action, he said.

Because of the violations, some industrial users are now being fined, City Manager Tom Phillips said.

Additional pre-treatment facilities are also being installed at the House of Raeford to help the city meet the standards, the city manager added.

"We're just on the borderline of being in compliance, and any little thing can knock us out," Phillips said.

Since the first of the year, the city has had a strong pre-treatment ordinance. That law is being used to fine local industries which do not meet the discharge standards, Phillips said.

Fines have or will be levied against both the House of Raeford

and Faberge, Phillips said.

Raeford officials received a letter this week from Noland informing them of the city's failure to meet the standards.

That letter is being answered, and the city will detail plans for future compliance, the city manager said.

The Raeford sewer plant is currently treating about 2.7 million gallons of effluent per day.

The plant has a capacity of about 6 million gallons per day, but to reach that level, additional equipment would have to be installed, Phillips said.

"That's what we are going to have to do to meet future demands," he said.

Members of the Raeford City Council are considering the purchase of additional land at the sewer plant which would allow enough room for future expansions.

Raeford needs to not only address the current non-compliance problem, but also to plan for improving the facility's future expansion, the city manager said.

"We need to stop reacting to problems, and start planning for them," Phillips said.

## Around Town

By Sam Morris

The hot weather last week finally brought forward the afternoon thundershowers last Friday afternoon in Raeford and Hoke County. According to reports approximately 2.5 inches of rain fell in the city beginning about six o'clock and lasting for something over 30 minutes. Water was coming down so fast that the storm drains could not take the water away and it was knee-deep in the streets. (Look for pictures elsewhere in the paper.)

There was anywhere from four-tenths in the Antioch section to approximately six inches at Rockfish. There were many stalled cars and a few fender benders during the short span of time.

Even if the downpour was so fast it was a much needed rain and helped the crops. We were still having thunderstorms Monday afternoon.

No damage has been reported as far as I can find out at this time.

The corn crop seems to have had rain just at the right time and most folks have been freezing all the corn they wanted to put up. There are plenty of tomatoes, cucumbers, peas, etc. for the people who want to freeze vegetables. Butter beans are coming in and the supply should be ample for all folks to put up what they so desire.

For the first time in three years, peaches are now available in an abundant amount. You don't have to go out of the county, for there

(See AROUND, page 12)



### Uplifting performance

Voices, flags and the spirits of the audience were raised Friday and Saturday nights as members of the Summer Youth Theatre performed "Broadway Our Way" at the Upchurch Junior High School

auditorium. Here members of the cast perform the opening number on Saturday. The production was directed by Alamance County teacher Marshall Qualls and lasted about 45 minutes each night.

## School board approves roof contracts

With Hoke County Commissioners approval of funding for roofing repairs at Hoke High and South Hoke gym, students should be drier.

A new type of "single ply rubber" may be providing a Hoke County school with an inexpensive covering and leave money leftover for other roof repairs.

Proposals for new roofs on the South Hoke Gym and two buildings at Hoke High School were heard at Tuesday night's

meeting of the Hoke County Board of Education meeting.

The proposal for the roofing at the high school is of the more traditional "tar gravel" type and is estimated to cost about \$119,590 for both buildings.

This type of roofing is proven to stand up to the elements and last better than any other type, School Superintendent Robert Nelson said at the meeting.

The newer type roof is proposed for the roof of the South Hoke gym.

It is made of a single thick sheet of rubber that is applied with a blow torch and literally melted on to the roofing surface, Nelson said.

The cost for re-roofing the gym is estimated at \$5,015.

According to Nelson, he and school Finance Officer Don Steed saw a roof of this type applied in Red Springs after the tornadoes.

From all that could be found out about the new type of roofing, it works well; however, there are not many of these roofs around and

the ones in place in the area have not been in use long enough to prove themselves over time, Nelson said.

The School Board accepted the bids for the new roofing to be contingent upon the County Commissioners approving funding for the construction.

In action Tuesday night, the county sliced \$60,000 from a proposed school budget and \$147,000 from what was requested by the Board of Education.

(See SCHOOL, page 11)

## Martin resigns post, heading for Robeson

By Ed Miller

Following an executive session Monday night, Hoke County Manager James Martin made public his resignation and announced plans to take a post in Robeson County.

The resignation was unanimously accepted with "deep regrets." "My resignation is effective August 31," Martin said.

All commissioners had nothing but good to say to Martin who has been on the job in Hoke County for over six years.

"I don't think anyone can say he didn't work well with everyone...with all three races in the county," Vice-Chairman James Albert Hunt said.

Martin will be moving to Robeson County to assume the position of County Manager there, he said Tuesday.

"I was not seeking the position; it was offered to me," Martin said, adding that he had been seriously considering the change for only a few weeks.

"I've enjoyed it here in Hoke County, and I'm happy here," he said.

"I think (the change) is a good opportunity for professional growth," Martin said.

Martin, 36, has been County Manager since January of 1978. Although he did not cite any specific accomplishments, Martin said he is pleased with the job he has done in Hoke County.

In other business, the County Commissioners were read a letter from the U.S. Department of Labor Audit Program Manager which said Hoke County owes \$10,396 in disallowed federal

(See COUNTY, page 11)



Supt. Robert Nelson ... Cuts could hurt