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After more than a year

Appeals still delaying nursing home

By Ed Miller

Almost a year after applications were filed by two companies to build a nursing home in Hoke County, there is still no facility and there may not even be a hearing on the matter until December.

In addition, state officials say more appeals could tie up the Hoke County project indefinitely.

Although appeals were filed last spring, a state officer to hear the case was just recently appointed, said Kathy Matthews, Planning

Specialist for Britthaven Inc. said Tuesday.

Britthaven and Autumn Care Corp. both submitted applications last fall to Cardinal Health Agency in Lumberton for a certificate of need to build a facility in Hoke County.

Britthaven was awarded the certificate by the local agency, but that decision was overturned and Autumn Care was awarded the certificate by the state.

The current process for resolving

ing certificate of need conflicts is too slow, I.O. Wilkerson, Director of the Division of Facility Services, North Carolina Department of Human Resources (DHR) said.

"I guess it's the American way," Wilkerson said, adding that his superiors have instructed him to find a way to shorten the process.

"I don't know how to do it yet," he said.

Wilkerson has the final decision on who is granted a certificate of

need at the state administrative level, he said.

Current processes dictate a hearing before a lawyer who acts as a judge before the decision is left up to Wilkerson, and if either company does not like his final say, they may appeal further to the North Carolina Court of Appeals, said Wilkerson.

"I don't have the final decision until due process has been exhausted," Wilkerson said.

The director said one reason

why conflicts are resolved so slowly is because there are so many of them.

"About two-thirds of all situations are appealed beyond the state administration," said Wilkerson.

"We're so far behind that if a person were to appeal a decision made today, we wouldn't get to it until next July, probably," Wilkerson said.

So far, the only solution to shortening the appeal process is to add more people, Wilkerson said.

"That's an unpopular choice because it costs money," he said.

Whether the scheme of appeals can be shortened or not is a question still unanswered, but Hoke County is apparently not much closer to having a facility to house sick and elderly people than it was three months ago.

Leonard T. Jernigan Jr., recently appointed a Hearing Officer for the Britthaven vs. Autumn Care (See NURSING, page 3A)

Beer walk draws can

A 24-year-old Hoke County man, Ricky Chavis, was arrested last Tuesday for walking out of a store with a case of beer, according to reports from the Hoke County Sheriff's Department.

Chavis has been released from jail under \$200 bond.

According to a report by new Hoke County Deputy Dan Hardin, Chavis walked into the Lake McNeill Beverage Store and asked for credit on a case of beer.

When store operator Edward Taylor refused credit, Chavis began using abusive language and spit in Taylor's face, reports say.

Chavis also allegedly picked up a case of beer and walked out with it.

Deputies Hardin and Eddie Allen searched the area near the store until they spotted Chavis and picked him up, reports say.

In other local incidents, a county woman shot at a "peeping tom" with a shotgun last week and reported the sighting to sheriff's deputies.

Theresa Roberts sighted a man peering into her bedroom on last Monday, according to reports.

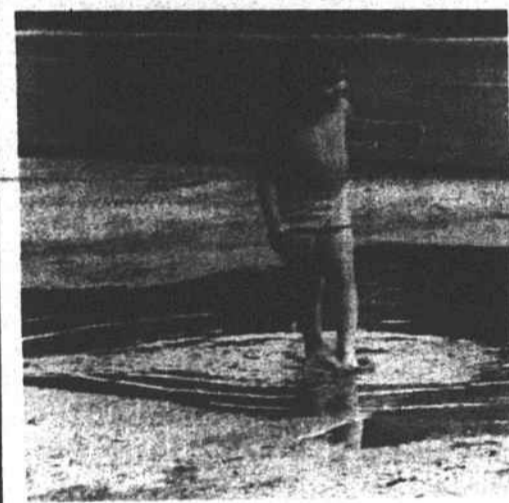
She took a shot at him with a .20-gauge shotgun, reports say.

After a search of the area, deputies reported finding no tracks or blood.

A break-in at Country Fair Mobile Home Sales netted apparent thieves \$285 in cash and a \$250 television, reports say.

The sales offices of the trailer dealership was broken into last Saturday.

Investigations are continuing in- (See BREAK-IN, page 3A)



Caught in the act

Sean Davies must have thought no one was looking. He walked into a West 5th Avenue mud puddle with his stick and splashed until his contented ears heard his father calling. No joy in Mudville. After a slight reprimand, Sean left his stick to the water and went inside for the big clean-up. Almost anywhere a child chose to play in the past few days has been

waterlogged. During the weekend, two inches of rain were measured in Raeford. Another estimated inch fell Monday night. At about 7:30 p.m. Monday, the rounded edge of a thunderstorm swept from one horizon to the other over Raeford. Sean is the son of Margaret and David Davies.

Photo by E.W. Miller, III

Welfare fraud cases get more attention

By Ed Miller

There are 86 cases of suspected fraud to the Hoke County Department of Social Services (DSS), members of the DSS Board were told Monday.

Allison Poole, recently named Fraud Investigator, told board members that by using social security numbers through cooperation with the North Carolina Employment Security Commission, more cases are being discovered every week.

Different case workers run "wage matches" on cases in their care to check on the honesty of their clients, Poole said.

Although it may take as long as six months to catch-up with people, a lie on a food stamp application or update form will not go unchallenged, said Hoke County DSS Director Ken Witherspoon.

According to Poole, fraud, when proven, is placed into three classifications.

The first is an "intentional program violation," she said.

A label of this type is placed on a case when workers have reason to believe that the food stamp recipient has full knowledge of the fraudulent act and fully intended to lie on the application, said Poole.

"Inadvertant household error" is tagged on cases where an honest mistake by a recipient is suspected, she said.

When the local DSS office makes a mistake, "agency error" is to blame.

Persons suspected of intentional program violations can be pro-

secuted in court, said Witherspoon.

Any discovery of fraud, no matter whose fault, is beneficial to the local DSS and to the county, said Witherspoon.

When fraud is proven and judgments are entered requiring persons to repay funds overpaid, the county gets 50% of the amount recovered, said Witherspoon.

Even when people have to repay agency error, the county gets 25% of the amount recovered, he said.

Most of the fraud currently under investigation is in the food stamp program with people working and not reporting their income to DSS, but some is in Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), said Poole.

There are three ways that the department can be repaid, she said.

Money can be repaid in a lump sum, by installments or by "recoupment of stamps," said Poole.

When the DSS garnishes stamp allotment, \$10 worth of the monthly allotment or 20% of the value of the allotment can be kept, whichever is greater, said Poole.

In action during the meeting, members voted to allow Witherspoon to apply for an additional \$57,142 in daycare money to be available to certain Hoke County residents.

The money was made available by the North Carolina General Assembly, said the director.

A total of \$115,680 is now

(See DSS, page 3A)

Good turnout expected for start of new school year

By Ed Miller

All children in Hoke County need to attend school on the opening day "at least to register," school officials say.

Hoke schools open Wednesday and Superintendent Dr. Robert Nelson is asking that every child to be enrolled this year be present on the opening day.

"If they have to go home to work, we'll let them, but we need to get every child registered,"

Nelson said Monday.

Children are to report to their assigned schools at 8 a.m. Wednesday morning although some students will have shorter days than others.

Children in grades kindergarten through four will attend school the first day until 2:30 p.m. while older students in grades five through 12 will be in class until 3 p.m.

This year, the state is projecting 4,986 students to attend school in the county.

"We are hoping to break 5,000," Nelson said.

The additional 14 students would mean more state money for the schools.

Teaching the students this year will be a force of 290 "professional people," said Nelson.

There will be 80 teachers at Hoke High School, 18 at J.W.

McLaughlin School, 46 at J.W. Turlington School, 33 at Scurlock School, 29 at South Hoke School, 57 at Upchurch Jr. High School and 27 at West Hoke School, said the superintendent.

"Those numbers may change a little after 10 days," said Nelson.

In an effort to provide students with better facilities for study and teachers and administrators with environments more conducive for learning, roofing projects are

ongoing in the county, said Nelson.

Tuesday afternoon there were 15 men working on the roof of Scurlock School, said Nelson.

Work has just been completed at Hoke High and Upchurch Jr. High, he said.

West Hoke will be the next on the list, according to the superintendent.

"We've got about a half a dozen

projects slated for this year," said Nelson.

At West Hoke, classrooms, administrative offices and the cafeteria will be reroofed, he said.

A future contract has been signed for additional roofing at J.W. Turlington School.

Although no contracts have been formalized, more work at Hoke High School will also be coming up next year, Nelson said.

Angier man appeals sentence for beating woman

A 25-year-old Angier man, Thomas Louis McNeill, has appealed a two-month prison term given him after he was convicted of beating up a woman.

According to a warrant for the man's arrest issued on June 14, McNeill hit Glory McNeill, a Raeford resident, in the head and face with his fists.

The man was originally sentenced to two years but that was suspended for two years on special supervised probation and 60 days in jail, records say.

McNeill's appeal bond was set at \$300 cash, according to records.

In other court action last week, a Raeford man was placed on supervised probation for two years after being convicted of maintaining a dwelling for purposes of selling drugs.

John Henry McNeill, also known as John Monroe, was originally charged with possession with intent to manufacture, sell and deliver marijuana, according to warrants issued on May 29.

McNeill was also charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, according to another warrant.

The man pleaded guilty to keeping a house for selling drugs.

McNeill, 49, was sentenced to 12 months suspended for two years supervised probation and fined \$500, records say, adding that the man was caught with 113 grams of pot when he was arrested.

Commie Wall, a 43-year-old Shannon resident, was sentenced to 30 days in jail after being convicted of being drunk in public on June 21, records say.

Wall appeared at B.C. Moore's

Department Store in Raeford in the disruptive condition, records say.

In other alcohol related convictions last week in Hoke County District Court, Larry Blue, a Raeford man was sentenced to three years supervised probation and 14 days in jail after being convicted of his second offense of driving while impaired (DWI), records say.

The 31-year-old Blue was arrested on July 7 and also charged with driving while his license was revoked.

Alex James Butler, a Red Springs man, 60, was sentenced to a seven-day jail term after his second DWI conviction, records say.

Butler was placed on supervised probation for two years and fined \$300, records say.

A Raeford man, Thaddeus Ezell Jones, 40, was given a suspended sentence but ordered to spend 24 hours in jail after being convicted of DWI on April 13 and helping another man to drive drunk on March 20, records say.

For both the convictions, Jones was ordered to pay a total of \$200 in fines, records say.

The man apparently helped John Summie Daniels drive drunk. Jones was sentenced to three years unsupervised probation in each case, records say.

Robert Martin Pettit, of Fort Bragg, was sentenced to six months suspended for three years on unsupervised probation after being convicted of driving while his license was revoked on May 10, records say.

Pettit was also fined \$300.



Season opener

Members of the Hoke High Band have been practicing this summer for the upcoming season. We take a look at the musicians on page one of today's B section.

Around Town

By Sam Morris

Rain, rain go away. Come again another day. It is very seldom that at this time of year we have too much rain. Over the weekend we received two more inches of rain and the forecast is for rain through Tuesday.

Some parts of the state don't have enough rain, but in Hoke County it is getting serious. It is almost impossible to get crops out of the fields and some crops have been drowned in low places.

A good friend of mine told me several weeks ago that he had asked the preacher to pray for rain. Good friend, go back and ask the

(See AROUND, page 2A)