

The News-Journal

RAEFORD, NORTH CAROLINA

Covering Hoke County Like A Roof Since 1905

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School board is sued

By Sally Jamir
News-Journal Staff Writer

The Hoke County Board of Education is among 22 North Carolina school boards being sued by the U.S. Department of Justice for failing to comply with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, according to county school officials.

County Schools Superintendent Dr. Bob Nelson said Thursday that the suit was filed last week by the Justice Department against the State of North Carolina, the State Board of Elections, the State Board of Education, and 22 local boards of education, charging them with failure to seek the permission required before changing the voting procedures for election of the boards of education.

Nelson said news of the lawsuit made it to the hands of the media before it reached the defendants.

The day after news of the lawsuit appeared in newspapers, Nelson reported that no papers had been served to the education board.

Nelson explained last week that his exchange with a Fayetteville Times reporter revealed that the Justice Department had been sent a press release about the lawsuit before they informed the defendants of their intentions.

Both Nelson and Caroline Shook, Supervisor of Elections for the Hoke County Board of Elections, said that this week they received legal documents pertaining to the case.

Hoke County Election Board Chairman Delbert Minshew, after receiving the documents from the

Justice Department, said he would be "turning it over to the county attorney for a response to the department."

Nelson consulted Eddie Spear, specialist in school law at the state Attorney General's office and Bill Moses, county education board attorney, in researching the matter.

Nelson learned that in the late 1960's the election of the education board members was established by a change legislated in the Omnibus Bill by the General Assembly.

According to Nelson, the "pre-clearance" for the change was not obtained from the federal government as was required by the Voting Rights Act.

Nelson said he learned that another change in the voting procedures was made in 1973 which did not receive the appropriate clearance from the federal government.

This change concerned the staggering of the four-year terms for which board members are elected.

All the full background on the changes in question are not yet known, Nelson said, and more research may be needed at the state records in Raleigh before this occurs.

"As far as we know, there was an administrative detail that wasn't taken care of," Nelson said. "The requirement came about from the Voting Rights Act. People hadn't been used to dealing with it and didn't know how."

The education board may be able to obtain a "retroactive pre-clearance" in order to comply with federal requirements, Nelson said.

He said he didn't think that the nature of the "administrative oversight" in the late 1960's was in any way a violation which would affect the current board to the extent that a special election would need to be held.

Regarding the upcoming court proceedings, Nelson said "I have no idea who is going to defend us in the case. I don't know if we will take an active part in it or if we will be in the background. We'll just have to wait and see."

It is not apparent why the Justice Department has brought attention to the matter after approximately 15 years has lapsed since the alleged violation or why the Justice Department has chosen the means of a lawsuit to rectify the situation.

"Why they are bringing it up now, I don't know," Nelson said.

"I don't know why they didn't just send a letter and the matter could have been cleared up in 24 hours," he said. "But they've chosen to go this way."

In an executive session during the regular meeting of the Hoke County Board of Commissioners, County Attorney Duncan McFayden informed the commissioners of the lawsuit. Commissioners approved McFayden's intentions to work with the Board of Elections, the Board of Education and the education board attorney, Bill Moses, in preparing a response to the Justice Department.

The legal documents issued state that response to the department must be within 20 days.



Holiday lights

Christmas lights glow at the residence of Betty and Keith Jackson on the corner of Magnolia Street and Elwood Avenue in Raeford. The Jacksons have joined many local residents in decorating their

homes for the holiday season. Visitors from other counties are coming to Hoke County this season to look at the Christmas displays.

Spanco to buy JRA Industries

By Sally Jamir
News-Journal Staff Writer

A Sanford Industrial company is carrying out negotiations to buy JRA Industries, members on the Hoke County Board of Commissioners were told Monday at their regular meeting.

Spanco Industries, Inc. of Sanford began negotiations December 9 for the purchase of JRA Industries, according to company spokesman Coak J. May, Treasurer.

May spoke to the commissioners in order to obtain approval and authorization for the release of JRA Industries, Inc., and its parent company Jung Corporation, from obligations relating to an industrial revenue bond and the assumption of these responsibilities by Spanco.

Originally, the bond was \$3.03 million.

The commissioners granted approval for this transaction subject to the approval of the Branch Banking and Trust Company.

May said Spanco planned to complete negotiations for the purchase by December 23.

Early on Monday, a JRA spokesman released a statement to *The News-Journal* saying that Spanco had entered into an agreement in principle with JRA Industries to purchase the Raeford plant.

According to the spokesman JRA Plant Manager Horace Stogner has said that he sees the purchase as a positive move for the Raeford plant.

Spanco operates two plants in North Carolina with 200 employees at each plant, according to May. He said both companies produce the same product, a covered elastic yarn, as the

Raeford plant.

May said Spanco has no plans to change the Raeford plant other than to make improvements, such as the addition of equipment.

According to May there were no plans for any changes in employment. He stated that in the 16 years of the company's existence, there has never been a layoff and they have experienced only one shut-down.

In other business, commissioners granted permission to Economic Development Commission Director John Howard to proceed with plans to apply for a Development Planning Grant with the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources and Community Development. Commissioners also set a public hearing for the grant for January 5 at 9 a.m.

The decision followed an initial (See SANFORD, page 10)



Negotiations

Coak J. May of Spanco Industries, Inc. speaks to the Hoke County Board of Commissioners Monday night.

Around Town

By Sam Morris

The rain came in Friday and stayed most of the day. Then the cold weather hit us on Saturday and Sunday. The low Sunday morning was 20° and the temperature was in the 30s most of the day.

Monday the thermometer got up into the high 50s and the sunny skies made it feel warmer. The forecast is for 40s and 50s the remainder of the week.

Last week I wrote in this column about William T. Covington Jr. of Charlotte. Also in the paper was a feature on his father. When I wrote about William I didn't know about the feature. This week the following letter arrived at the office.

Ladies and gentlemen:
Please send me two copies of your December 11, 1986 issue.

Your article on my father in section B and Sam Morris's mention of the article about Kennedy, Covington, Todd and Hickman in the *North Carolina* magazine are very gratifying.

Please include your statement of charges.

With best wishes, I am
Sincerely yours
W.T. Covington Jr.

After reading the article last week about W.T. Covington and his sculpturing, it brought back to mind an incident that happened many years ago with Mr. Covington's work. I will try to relate the incident as best as I can.

My father came home one afternoon and told my brother Spec and me that Mr. Covington wanted to use our bird dog as a model. Now the dog was a family pet and wasn't any good for hunting birds because he was gun shy.

We went up to the Covington home on West Donaldson Avenue one day after school, just before Christmas. We would take turns holding the dog while Mr. Covington would do his work to prepare for his mold or whatever he did to create a figure of the dog.

Once while I was holding the dog, my brother pulled out of his pocket a small firecracker, (they were legal then) and lit the firecracker and tossed it on the ground. When it exploded the dog (See AROUND, page 8)

Roast fires local pride

Community pride was on everyone's mind as businessmen, politicians, local leaders and residents gathered around a glowing, circular fire outside the Civic Center Tuesday evening, December 9.

The occasion was The Third Annual Mullet Roast, an affair co-sponsored by the Raeford-Hoke Economic Development Commission and the local Chamber of Commerce. The yearly roast offers the community a chance to reflect on its accomplishments and to discuss plans for the future.

Although an appreciation for roast mullet was not shared by everyone, (chicken was offered as an alternate dish this year) all those in attendance did agree that Hoke County can be proud of its recent accomplishments.

"We're real proud of what's been going on the last couple of years," Chamber of Commerce president Terry Houston said as he opened up the informal after-dinner discussion.

Houston cited the newly-renovated Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development offices at the depot, the success of this year's Turkey Festival and the



Mullet roast

Steve Parker rakes the coals of a fire used to roast mullets last Tuesday. The county's Third Annual Mullet Roast was held at the Civic Center.

Community Light-Up program as examples of positive steps taken by the community in 1986.

The passage of Extended Area Telephone Service (EAS) between Raeford and Fayetteville this year is another of the community's important accomplishments, according to Houston. When EAS goes into effect this July, it will "help the tax base and help us make new friends," Houston said.

"We're always looking for ways

to improve the community," Houston said. "Now we've got to work on the widening of Highway 401."

Economic Developer John Howard told those gathered that businessmen outside of the area are beginning hear of the positive changes occurring in Hoke County.

Howard said since last year's roast was held, the county has (See ROAST, page 8)

Share Your Christmas is tremendous success

Share Your Christmas has been a tremendous success, stated Mina Townsend, Woman's Club Chairman of the project. Ken Witherspoon, Social Services Director says he has been thoroughly overwhelmed at the community's response at helping others.

One hundred and forty-four families that include 609 children and adults will receive assistance in a variety of ways. Our \$3,000 has been contributed by the community to provide both gifts and food.

Many volunteers assisted with the trees and literally hundreds purchased gifts for the families. Volunteer groups adopted many families.

Anyone who has a gift but failed to bring it to a tree should take the gift to the Department of Social Services by noon on Thursday, December 18th.

The Easter Children's Tree will remain at United Carolina Bank through Friday, December 19. Stars for the foster children will remain on the tree until Friday, Dec. 19, at 6 p.m. Those gifts should be returned to U.C.B. by Friday, Dec. 19 or to the Department of Social Services first thing Monday morning, December 22.

Families receiving assistance from Share Your Christmas will be notified by mail of the arrangements to pick up their gifts.

Depot to hold open house

Terry Houston, president of the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce and Tom Howell, chairman of the Raeford-Hoke Economic Development Commission, announce an "Open House at the Depot" for Friday, December 19th, from 3-5:30 p.m.

"This community has worked so hard over the past year to help us finish the Depot renovation, fur-

nish it, and help us move in," said Houston. "We want to show everyone how proud we are of these new offices for the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Commission."

Tom Howell remarked how the renovation, headed by Sandy Johnston, is probably valued

(See DEPOT, page 8)