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Special Olympics

On 1B

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City OKs central communications system

By Sally Jamir
News-Journal Staff Writer

Members of the City Council on Monday unanimously approved a proposal for a central communications system to serve the needs of county and city residents.

The proposal was formulated by a central communications advisory committee and will need to be approved by Hoke County Commissioners before it is established. The commissioners passed a motion at their Monday night meeting calling for a joint meeting between the commissioners and city councilmen to discuss the central system.

If established, the center will cost \$87,000 annually, which is less than is currently being spent on communications.

"I don't see how we can afford not to recommend approval," said Councilman Bob Gentry after reporting on a meeting of the committee on which he sits.

Gentry said the city would pay 25 percent, or \$21,875, of the total cost for the center each year, and the county will pay 75 percent. He said an initial \$95,000 for capital outlay would be spent by both the city and the county.

The one-time cost would include the construction of building area for the center, communications equipment, office equipment and contingencies.

Gentry said there would be a building added on to the jail area at the Sheriff's Department which would be used for the center.

Under the proposed system, the center would be set up by the county and overseen by a committee made up of the sheriff, police chief and one other public safety official. Employees would include a supervisor and four dispatchers.

Residents using the central system would be able to call one number in order to contact any of the city or county emergency service systems such as ambulance,

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Ride to the top

Two workers from "Painting by Bill" of Fayetteville, take an unusual ride to the steeple of the Raeford United Methodist Church last Wednesday.

County will apply for grant

Members of the board of county commissioners voted 3-1 Monday to apply for a Community Block Development Grant to rehabilitate substandard housing in the Tylertown community. The action includes a commitment of a \$60,000 local cash match.

If the grant is awarded, the county could get up to \$600,000 in grant monies to renovate approximately 42 structures on State Road 1302 in the community north of Raeford.

Tylertown is one of the 22 sites chosen as a potential target areas for the rehabilitation project. The site was recommended to the commissioners by the Economic Development Commission after two part-time employees, Maj. Ronald S. Scurry (U.S. Retired) and Barbara Rogers, studied housing conditions throughout the county. Scurry and Rogers then provided information to a volunteer citizens advisory board

that gave final approval to the target area.

Jim Perry, chief administrator with the Lumber River Council of Governments, told the commissioners that 100 Tylertown residents would benefit from a housing rehabilitation project. He said many Tylertown residents are elderly and that most of the homes are headed by females. Approximately 75 percent of the buildings are in a state of severe deterioration.

Hoke County has twice before applied for housing grants for the Tylertown community. Both times the county was unsuccessful, a fact that concerns Commissioner Mabel Riley who voted against submitting an application for the grant.

"This grant bothers me because there are so many places in Hoke County that need help," Riley said. "This is the same area we tried before and we haven't gotten

anywhere."

Riley also said she was concerned about whether or not a structure would be maintained once it had been rehabilitated. She said that in the 1970s the county was involved in a renovation project. Two years later "you couldn't tell which houses had been renovated," she said.

"I can't say that wouldn't happen again," Riley said. "That bothers me."

Economic Developer John Howard, who along with the Economic Development Commission initially recommended that the county apply for the grant, said that provisions in the project call for the structures to be inspected. He also said that contracts would be drawn up with owners of the renovated structures to insure the maintenance of the buildings.

During a public hearing before the grant application was approved (See COUNTY, page 2A)

Jury finds Cummings guilty

A Hoke County Superior Court jury on Monday morning handed down a guilty verdict in the first degree murder trial of Edward Lee Cummings of Wake County.

The nine-woman, three-man jury deliberated for less than an hour before finding Cummings guilty of slaying Karen Marie Puryear, formerly of Raleigh, whose body was found in a shallow grave in Hoke County last January.

Closing arguments for the case were presented Thursday and Friday of last week, after defense lawyers James Parrish and Michael Boose told the jury that they would not present evidence or witnesses.

The prosecution presented over 140 pieces of evidence and more than 25 witnesses.

Prosecution lawyers John Dickson and Jean Powell were pleased with the outcome of the trial. Before the verdict was given, Judge Robert Farmer charged the jury with their task of deciding beyond a reasonable doubt that Cummings was guilty of first degree murder.

Farmer cautioned them that their recollection of the evidence, rather than that of the prosecution or defense, was to be used in their decision. He said that his rulings during the trial or even his facial or voice expressions must not influence them in their decision.

During the trial, the defense moved to eliminate evidence pertaining to the death of Theresa Puryear, Karen's sister, whose body was found at the same time and place as Karen's.

The motions regarding evidence and witnesses testifying to what Karen Puryear had told them about threats Cummings made to her were overruled.

Farmer also said to jury members that the fact that the

defense did not present evidence must not influence their decision.

During their closing arguments, the defense concentrated on what they perceived to be weaknesses in the state's case. They contended that the evidence did not support the charge of first degree murder.

The first degree murder charge requires that a jury decide that Cummings killed Karen Puryear with malice, premeditation and deliberation or with a cool mind.

Judge Farmer said that murder with deliberation did not necessarily mean that the murder was carried out without passion.

Defense lawyers argued that the witnesses statements indicated that Cummings had a motive for the murder in that Karen Puryear had filed a non-support charge against Cummings in October of 1985.

The defense argued this was not a possible motive since witnesses had said Cummings loved the children and that he and Puryear had been thinking of reconciling after a separation.

The two had not been married but had three children together, one of which died in childbirth.

During closing statements, defense attorneys said the state could not prove Cummings killed Puryear. Officials were unable to determine what caliber gun was used in the slaying, only that it was larger than a .22 and smaller than a .45.

Dickson mentioned a pearl-handled pistol, which Cummings was known to carry, that was not found by police during a search of a home he was building in Hoke County and his residence in Willow Springs.

The prosecuting attorney said that evidence they presented in the case was enough to eliminate any reasonable doubt of Cummings' guilt.

DSS director resigns post

Department of Social Services Director Ken Witherspoon will soon be leaving the community in order to take a new position in New Bern, Witherspoon said on Tuesday.

Witherspoon, who has been DSS director since 1979, will manage the Berne Retirement Village for the Southern Health Care System Inc. of Dunn.

The retirement community will provide 115 one and two bedroom apartment units and 30 extended care beds.

"They have state of the art living situations for the retirement community," Witherspoon said, explaining that he is moving from a position in the county of a "purchaser of services for the elderly" to one of being a "provider of services for the elderly."

"There is a continuing trend toward growing numbers of elderly who will be entering, in the next 15 years, an arena of staggering needs," Witherspoon said.

"I want to be a part of this growth and serve this population and their families."

Witherspoon says he loves Hoke County, has enjoyed working here and feels confident he is leaving DSS in a secure position.

"I've enjoyed working here," he said. "There are some things I've done wrong, but we've made such progress with the support of county commissioners, county managers, and a good staff."

"I'm extremely satisfied with the work I've done here and the progress we've made."

Neighborhoods join forces in group home opposition

Two neighborhood groups have recently merged in their attempts to fight the establishment of two intermediate care facilities for the mentally retarded, a spokesman for one of the groups said this week.

The spokesman, who wishes to remain anonymous, said that residents of the two neighborhoods where the group homes are planned oppose the homes because they don't think they should be established in areas of the city comprised of single-household residences.

Representatives of the company, Professional Community Services (Procomm), have said they are planning to establish one group home in an existing house on Old Farm Road in the Thomasfield area. They also say they are planning to build a new group home on Pinewood Avenue on the east side of Raeford.

Residents opposing the homes have signed petitions and have held meetings to plan their strategy for keeping the homes from being established. The spokesman said the two groups have combined to hire a lawyer to take their case to court.

If the company comes up with another site, the court case will be dropped, according to the spokesman.

Bill Parker of Procomm said Monday that the company was "making every effort to accommodate residents in the area" and was attempting to find a location for the homes.

"We may be able to find a third site on which both homes could be established," Parker said.

Ralph Comm, administrator of a 15-bed facility in Aberdeen, said he would be administrator for the homes in Raeford.

Comm said the establishment of the homes is part of a nationwide trend to move people who have these special needs out of institutions. Funding for the homes comes through Medicaid.

He said that the state's operating standards for the homes are "some of the strictest standards anyone could be under."

The people residing in the homes would be profoundly and severely mentally retarded, he said, with some physical handicaps as well.

Answering to a concern residents have about safety in the neighborhood, Comm said the likelihood of them causing harm to a neighbor is negligible.

"It is more likely that a neighbor would cause harm to them," Comm said.

"We are looking for neighborhoods like the ones we have chosen before," Comm said, describing the locations sought for the homes.

"There has been a lot of controversy and misunderstanding regarding the homes," Comm said. "We are making every effort to locate other areas for the home."

Charles Stephens of Procomm cited findings in a study done by the Governors Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities in Illinois in September of 1986 which supported their philosophy in placing homes in single-family dwelling areas.

The study said that group homes did not affect the value of residential property in the surrounding neighborhood and that they did not affect the stability of the surrounding neighborhood.



Hospice Auction

Frank Crumpler auctions off a kitchen appliance during a fundraiser Friday afternoon at the Edenborough Shopping Center. The auction raised \$530 for Hospice of Hoke County.

Around Town

By Sam Morris

The near 90° weather over the weekend was wonderful. Even the afternoon thundershowers weren't too bad. It all ended late Monday afternoon when the wind came out of the north and the temperature dropped into the 50s.

According to the weather prophets, it will not be cool for many days. It should get back close to 80° by Thursday. Maybe this is our last cool snap of the year.

Raz Autry, world traveler, told me last week that his peach crop was the best he has had since retiring from school work. Let's hope the good weather will continue and all growers will have a fine year.

Last Friday morning I went by the office after being out of town on Thursday and found a note on my desk signed, Larry Peele.

The note said that he was sorry to miss me and wondered if I still looked like I did on the USS Raleigh.

Not being in the Navy during World War II, I tried to recall who the man could mistake me for. Then I tried to remember who Larry Peele was and how he was associated with me.

Then it came to me that the USS Raleigh was a battleship that the Scouts of Raeford had visited in the 1930s in Wilmington. Then the Larry Peele became E.L. Peele Jr., an old schoolmate of mine. He was known to most of us as Junior. He was visiting in the state and especially his sister, Mary Peele of Raeford. I hated to miss seeing him, but have talked to some peo-

(See AROUND, page 2A)