

# The News-Journal

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RAEFORD, NORTH CAROLINA

25 CENTS

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## Condemnation may be next threat to Raeford Hotel

Raeford City Council might begin condemnation procedures against Raeford Hotel. At Council's regular monthly meeting Monday, councilman Eddie McNeill said the building was a nuisance and a danger too.

The hotel, built in 1927, was most recently used for apartments. It has been vacant of renters since late 1990. Though a few businesses remain open in portions of the hotel building, the Main

Street front is vacant, its ceiling is falling down and some of its windows are broken. Council members also said there are people who manage to get into the building each night and sleep on the upper floors of the three-story building.

"If we have a fire one night with those winos," McNeill said, "we're going to lose that side of Raeford."

"There's no fire separation."

City Attorney Palmer Willcox said the banks attempted foreclosure on the building but it was dismissed.

Council agreed to "pursue its legal options" which may include foreclosure for taxes and condemnation for safety and health reasons.

The board did not want to force current businesses from the building, however. On another matter, an idea by new Council-

man Steve Phillips to reorganize city council died for a lack of a second.

Phillips wanted the council to be appointed to committees representing each department head with the idea that each councilman would be an expert in a few areas of city administration.

"We are here to look after the city's business ... we need to be familiar with its activities — we (See CITY, page 9)



When Teresa speaks...

...her teammates listen, at least after one particularly difficult question during the "Battle of the Books" competition held last week at East Hoke Middle School. (Their team lost anyway.) Students study the styles and viewpoints of prominent authors then compete in a quiz bowl-like event. Each team answers questions about the 24 books they've read. Team B was Kisha Britt,

Cherish Foy, Joli McMillian, Teresa Knott and Danyelle Leggett; Team A was Briana Parkins, Cassandra McRae, Joe Reneau and Carol Miller. The East Hoke team will take on West Hoke Middle School May 1 with the winner going to the regional battle May 8.

## Commission okays deputy dog for sheriff

Hoke County commissioners said Monday Sheriff Wayne Byrd may accept donations to buy a dog to sniff out drugs.

Most of the costs associated with the dog will be paid for by donations, Byrd told commissioners.

Despite opposition from Wyatt Upchurch, chairman of the board, commissioners found that deal too sweet to pass up. Byrd said he has already had plenty of donations pledged.

"I've had enough people to come to me to buy the dog," Byrd said. "I need something from you all to be able to do this."

Upchurch warned buying a dog would duplicate services already provided by the Hoke-Robeson Drug Task Force and would eventually be used to justify an-

*"I've had enough people to come to me to buy the dog"—Sheriff Wayne Byrd*

other man on the force.

"I can see overtime running wild on that individual," Upchurch said of the officer designated to work with the dog.

"I'd rather put the monies in the task force," he said. "It's a regional thing, we don't manufacture all the drugs that are shipped into the county."

"I say it's going to add to your budget as far as manpower in the future," he said.

Byrd countered that a drug dog would actually reduce the number of man-hours

by cutting the time necessary to search for drugs at the scene of a bust.

Commissioner Cleo Bratcher ended the debate with a motion.

"I'd like to see us give them permission to go ahead and get the dog with the understanding that it won't cost the county any funds," Bratcher said.

### Sheriff asks for money

One reason for Upchurch's concern may be that just before commissioners considered Byrd's dog request, they approved \$34,000 more for the sheriff's budget this year.

Commissioners supported Byrd in declining to pay high medical and psychiatric bills charged by the state, which is keeping several (See DOG, page 5)

## Zimmer would rework planning, development

Patric Zimmer, Raeford and Hoke County's director of economic planning and development, proposed sweeping changes in the way Raeford and Hoke County plan and develop Monday.

Zimmer, who moves on to a new job in Rockingham County soon, would split his current job in two—a planner and a developer.

The planner would be in charge of planning, zoning and inspections; he or she would oversee two inspectors and a secretary.

City and county inspections would be combined under one roof under Zimmer's proposal.

"The county's doing the majority of the inspections for the city anyway," he said.

Under the proposal, there would be only one Board of Adjustments for both the city and the county. Landowners with special hardships carry their zoning grievances before the Boards of Adjustments, which can recommend that a variance be granted.

Commissioner Tom Howell said the proposal made sense and would ease the process for developers and

people who want to build homes in both Raeford and Hoke County. He called it "one stop shopping."

"I like the idea, I think it's the direction we need to move in," Howell said.

Under Zimmer's proposal, the developer would oversee industry hunting, downtown revitalization, the Chamber of Commerce and the Committee of 100.

A commission appointed by the city council now makes recommendations on downtown revitalization; the Chamber and Committee of 100 are now private entities.

Zimmer said the city and county did "the hard part" when they combined planning boards to form the Raeford-Hoke Planning and Development Commission.

County commissioners and city councilmen each appointed three people to a committee to study the idea. Commissioners Tom Howell and L.E. McLaughlin and city councilmen Eddie McNeill and Ken Booker were appointed to the committee, along with County Manager Barry Reed and City Manager Tom Phillips.

## Foy: baseball, softball grow almost too fast

Youth baseball and softball programs have grown almost too fast, said Hoke's director of parks and recreation Monday.

"We're in trouble," said director Donna Foy.

So many kids have signed up for baseball and softball this summer, Parks and Recreation has put together 14 new teams, Foy said.

The growth is great, she said, but may be too much to handle if the department can't get a little help.

On the one hand, Foy said, "we're super pleased with the growth."

She said the growth is a testament to the programs' quality.

But, Foy said, she wants to make sure "that we don't lose that quality because we can't handle the growth."

The department still needs business sponsors — 32 of them — for the teams.

There are now 52 teams of kids signed up to play ball this summer, but Foy has only 20 sponsors.

More teams, Foy said, means more games, more equipment, more paperwork, more officials. Umpires for the extra 182 games will cost \$4,300, she said.

By next week, Foy must put in her orders for T-shirts. If sponsors don't suddenly appear before then, she said,

*So many kids have signed up for baseball and softball this summer, Parks and Recreation has put together 14 new teams.*

the department will have to "eat the cost" of the shirts.

That could mean either asking commissioners for more money or cutting back elsewhere, Foy said.

"I doubt seriously that I'm even going to be allowed to ask for it," she said.

Sponsorship of a team costs \$175, which pays for shirts and hats, and a little to offset the cost of new equipment such as catcher's pads, bats and balls.

Foy is looking at two fundraisers later in the year.

The first is the department's annual raffle, which Foy uses to raise money for officials and trophies.

She said she is also considering a "Saturday bonanza" where all baseball and softball teams would get suited up, not to play ball, but to collect donations on street corners.

"That was something we used to do in Camden County," Foy said.

Those interested in sponsoring a team or helping in other ways may reach Foy at 875-4035.

## Two to testify in Ed Harris murder case

### Deal struck for guilty plea

Two suspects in the murder of Ed Harris, a Southern Pines police detective who lived in Hoke County, have agreed to testify against seven other suspects.

Timothy Darnell McKayhan, 22, of 165 New England Avenue, Pinebluff and Shannon Martel McKenzie of Aberdeen both pled guilty Friday to charges of second degree murder and conspiracy to commit the murder of Ed Harris.

"They're admitting their involvement in the murder and the agreement to murder," said District Attorney Jean Powell.

The plea was part of a deal to testify against the other seven suspects in the case.

Powell described McKayhan and McKenzie as the "least culpable" of the nine suspects.

The two bore no weapons at the crime scene, did no shooting, had no prior criminal records and gave helpful statements to lawmen investigating the murder, Powell said.

Ed Harris, once a candidate for Sheriff in Hoke County, was gunned down a year ago Saturday in the doorway of his Ashley Heights home.

Harris was hit six times with 9 millimeter slugs, according to a medical examiner's report. Harris' wife, Judy, was injured in the hand by a stray bullet. Slugs from a 30-30 rifle were also found lodged in the house.

Harris, a former narcotic detective with the Hoke County Sheriff's Department, had worked for the Southern Pines police for the prior two years.

In addition to McKayhan and McKenzie, the following were also charged with the murder.

John Gregory Chisolm, 25, of 615 S. Carlisle Street, Southern Pines.

Terry Lee Evans, 21, of 1650 Richards Street, Southern Pines; Bernice Hugh McDougald, 21, of 1124 Midway Road, Aberdeen;

Mitchel Evans McNeil, 22, of 135 Coats Street, Southern Pines; Leroy Richard Medley Jr., 20, of 452 Shaw Avenue, Southern Pines;

Kerry Lemar Morston, 20, of Route 2, Aberdeen.

Morston has been fingered as the man who actually shot Harris.

## Leadership Hoke group gives findings

Area business and government leaders heard participants in the first Leadership Hoke institute present findings Thursday at Raeford's City Hall from research they performed over the last half a year.

On topics ranging from Hoke's economy to its drug problem, presen-

ters reported on masses of fact and opinion they had gathered, and made suggestions for the future.

Now finishing its first year, Leadership Hoke is a half-year institute that teaches future leaders about their community and how to design ways (See LEADERSHIP, page 5)

## Around Town

By Sam C. Morris

According to the calendar spring arrived March 20. Mother Nature didn't notice the calendar this year. We have had more winter weather since spring arrived than we had before. Record lows have been recorded four straight nights over the weekend. The frost each morning looks like it is February rather than April.

The good news is that it is going to warm up. The forecast for the remainder of the week will have temperatures in the 70s during the day and in the high 40s and 50s at night. Let's hope that this will continue through the Easter weekend. Easter is still over a week away.

Raz Autry said Monday that the cold weather has almost ruined his peach crop. He said the low temperatures on Thursday night were the worst of the

year. Raz was estimating, over the weekend, that he would get only 100 bushels, but he was a little more optimistic the first of the week. Only time will tell about the crop. \* \* \*

The political season is in full swing. More and more posters are appearing by the side of the road and where you find a vacant lot at street corners, you may find 10 or more signs and posters on display.

I have heard a few of the local arm-chair political leaders make predictions about the race for the two seats on the Board of County Commissioners. I would publish them, but they seem to change every day or so. Maybe I will list a couple of polls before the primary.

The state races for office holders haven't caused much talk in the coffee (See AROUND, page 5)