

# The News-Journal

The 44th issue of our 84th year

RAEFORD, NORTH CAROLINA

25 CENTS

Wednesday, February 10, 1993

## Commissioners change personnel policy in emergency meeting

In an emergency session Monday, the Hoke Board of Commissioners changed county personnel policy to dilute the hiring power of the county manager. The session was apparently prompted by the hiring of a new economic development director.

The reason for the meeting seemed unclear to some board members; Chairman L.E.

McLaughlin opened the session saying, "there are some misgivings about some things."

"The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the hiring and procedure practices for the county," McLaughlin told the board.

McLaughlin said diverse interests and different philosophies "create friction" among the board, and the members needed to find a "common

ground." The source of friction initially centered on a personnel decision, from one member's standpoint.

Vice-chairman Riley Jordan said he had some "very serious doubts" about how the new economic developer, Dorothy Meacher, was hired.

According to county hiring and firing policy, the county manager may hire or fire at his discre-

tion, without board approval. Barry Reed, in conjunction with Raeford City Manager Tom Phillips, hired Meacher, of Robeson County, to serve in the 75 percent county-25 percent city-sponsored position.

"I personally feel I've been left out of things," Jordan said. "I feel I've purposefully been passed (See COMMISSION, page 10)



### House, cars destroyed

Firemen are silhouetted against the lights of a fire truck (top) at house fire on Dockery Street last week. One fireman was hurt and a house and two cars (bottom) were destroyed in this Thursday night fire in north Raeford. Johnny Baker, North Raeford Fire Department chief, said fireman Tim Hair suffered a first degree burn while fighting the fire. Baker said a bystander pulled on a fire hose, which knocked a downed power line onto Hair's leg. The live wire glanced off his leg but burned him enough that he required treatment at a doctor's office. Baker says the cause of the 10 p.m. fire is undetermined. West Hoke, Tylertown and Hillcrest departments assisted along with Hoke Rescue Squad.



## Water bond issue passes Light turnout reported

In one of the lowest voter turnouts in Hoke history, 465 voters said "yes" to issuing over \$3 million in water bonds. The public approval allows county officials to begin Phase II of the Hoke water system.

A scant 5.7 percent of registered Hoke voters turned out yesterday to vote in what Elections director Caroline Shook said is one of the smallest turnouts in recent memory.

Puppy Creek showed the largest turnout, with 81 in support and four opposed to the bond referendum.

Buchan and McCain voters showed the greatest opposition, garnering 15 "no's" in each district.

A total of only 91 voters thought the next phase in the water system a bad idea.

The water bond issue will allow the county to provide water to virtually all geographic areas in the county and "fill in some gaps to make Phase I better," County Manager Barry Reed said.

Now residents in the western part of the county can expect water service in the near future as tentative plans include the takeover of the McCain water system and treatment facility, and the addition of a new tank and well in Arabia and an additional well in the airport area. Reed said last year that the McCain takeover would remove county dependence on the city water system as a backup and delay the need to sink additional wells.

"The Arabia well and tank will stabilize the water system and break that reliance to them," Reed said. "It would be more like backing each other up."

Beyond providing a city backup, the expanded system could bring on about 1,200 to 1,300 new customers in Bowmore, Quewhiffle and McCain, holding rates down for current users and keeping up the current level of service.

(See BONDS, page 7)

## New economic developer hired

County Manager Barry Reed can finally take a breather — at least in one role. Last Thursday, he and Raeford City Manager Tom Phillips hired an economic development director.

Reed, who served as the economic developer when Patrick Zimmer left last April, said he's looking forward to retiring that hat.

Since Zimmer's spring resignation, Phillips said he and Reed held two rounds of screenings before finding Dorothy Meacher of Lumberton to fill the void.

"We went through one screening back in the late fall and it was unproductive," Phillips said. "So we went back and re-advertised. We probably had about 20 to 25 applicants for the position. She brings a lot of experience to the position and a lot of regional experience."

The Tabor City native is a married mother of two who will be relocating to Hoke County. Meacher's daughter is a chemist in Wilson and her son is newly (See ECONOMIC, page 9)

## School Board okays year-round school

It may be the biggest leap in the county's educational history.

Hoke School Board members voted unanimously last night to use Upchurch Elementary to house the newly approved year-round school program set to begin in July. Hank Richards, principal at South Hoke Elementary, will be its principal.

The approval for the new school-within-a-school program followed the re-drawing of attendance lines for Scurlock, Rockfish-Hoke and Upchurch elementary schools.

Parents of students in the Upchurch Elementary attendance lines will be given first notice, and they can opt to

send their children to the traditional program or participate in year-round education with all transportation provided.

Parents outside of Upchurch's attendance lines will receive notice in three weeks and must agree to provide their own transportation for their children.

Harrison told the board of the sur-

veys sent to parents to measure interest, 415 families replied they were "definitely interested" in sending their children to a year-round program while 71 teachers said they were interested in moving to the year-round program next year.

(See YEAR-ROUND, page 6)

## Citizens to discuss issues at March forum

You'll be hearing a lot about Hoke County's direction in the next few weeks. Organizers of a grassroots planning process — known as strategic planning — are preparing for a giant public forum March 8.

The steering committee of the planning group, which met Monday night and is now armed with a \$17,250 grant from the Rural Economic Development Center, is hoping to attract several hundred people to East Hoke Middle School for the forum.

Those who attend will be asked to break into small groups to discuss key issues affecting Hoke County.

The forum is the first step in de-

termining what Hoke can do for itself to improve its citizens' way of life. It's intended to give everyone in Hoke County a chance to air their views and get their help in determining Hoke's direction.

The planning process, expected to take nine or 10 months, is intended to produce a series of low-cost, high-impact recommendations that a committee will charged with implementing.

The process will get help from several regional and state agencies, including Pembroke State's Office of Rural Economic Development, which will help ensure the recommendations are acted on.

## Legislative Breakfast is Saturday

Hoke will honor its legislative leaders Saturday with the annual Legislative Appreciation Breakfast. The event will be held this year at the Wagon Wheel beginning at 8 a.m.

Congressman Bill Hefner, state senators Aaron Plyler and Richard Conder, state representatives Frances Cummings, Ron Sutton and Danny DeVane — all Democrats — are expected to attend.

Tickets are \$5 for Chamber of Commerce members and \$6.50 for non-members. Tickets must be purchased in advance (by Friday morning) from the Depot or any Chamber board member.

## Landfill's life at end

### Closing in only weeks

Hoke County officials must scramble to find a new home for old trash as the landfill nears capacity and a March closing date.

Raeford City Manager Tom Phillips said the city-owned landfill nears capacity daily as even the "tailditch," or space in between storage cells, reaches maximum capacity. The cells which are the primary storage areas of garbage are already full and the tailditch, the only remaining space, is halfway there.

"We're now filling the tailditch," Phillips said. "When we arrive at the (See LANDFILL, page 6)

## Around Town

By Sam C. Morris

It seems that the weather people have a hard time when it comes to predicting rain. I was listening last week and a reporter said that we wouldn't have any rain for five days. It rained early Saturday morning and it rained again Monday. I hope they forget about snow!

The wind Sunday made it feel colder than the thermometer showed. On Monday and Tuesday the readings were in the 50s and the lows in the 30s.

The forecast calls for the high on Wednesday to be in the 50s and the low in the 30s. On Thursday and Friday we will see highs in the high 50s and lows in the 40s. On Saturday the high will be in the 40s and the low in the 20s. There is a chance of rain on Thursday and early Friday morning.

Don't forget that the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce Legislative

Breakfast will be Saturday at the Wagon Wheel Restaurant. The time is 8 a.m. and the price of the tickets is \$5.00 for Chamber members and \$6.50 for non-members.

All the lawmakers from the district who are from Hoke County will be in attendance, which is three representatives and three senators. Of course, you will be able to shake hands with many of the local politicians. I have heard that some people who may be candidates in the future will also be in attendance.

So go by the Chamber office (the depot) and purchase a ticket.

This column is being written before the people of the county go to the polls to vote in the Water Bond Referendum. I hope that the bond issue passes because I think that it will be in the best interest of the citizens of the county. If predic (See AROUND, page 16)