

The News-Journal

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RAEFORD, NORTH CAROLINA

25 CENTS

Wednesday, October 6, 1993

Hoke Commission revises Junkyard Ordinance

The controversial county Junkyard Ordinance was reworked to help local operators stay in business.

On Monday the County Commissioners unanimously gave their approval to a tentative proposal which would allow junkyard operators currently open to place vehicles 10 feet from the end of the road right-of-ways, rather than the tougher current setbacks.

Junkyard owners across the county joined forces to combat the ordinance which was adopted in 1987 to regulate junkyards in the county.

Under the ordinance, in 1987 the operators should have met strict setbacks, placed fencing and shrubbery around their property and applied with the county for a license and/or variance request.

Many junkyard owners said they never knew about the application fee, and did not understand what they should have done. That is, not until Dodger Huggins and other operators were forced to close down under court order.

Most of the owners said their property is too small to meet setback requirements as deep as 300 feet

originally mandated by the ordinance.

Now, they will be able to stay in business.

The new proposal calls for the more lenient 10 foot setback from the right of way, and also will place restrictions on schools, churches or homes being built beside currently-operating junkyards which would

(See JUNKYARD, page 5)



A Raeford Police officer talks with the driver of a car stopped at a check point on Main Street Monday. The officers are enforcing seat belt laws as part of the "Click it or Ticket" campaign. Violators pay a \$25 ticket. Sixteen drivers were charged Monday; nine others were charged with other infractions.

Witness describes Cameron murder

Cousin of McNatt tells of beating, robbery

What started as a good day for fishing for two sets of cousins ended in the murder of a prominent Hoke citizen.

James Anthony Harris testified last week his cousin, William Earl McNatt, was responsible for the beating death of Hoke businessman Tom Cameron on March 21, 1991.

Clyde Upchurch found his cousin, Tom Cameron, beaten to death and robbed near a pond he co-owned on June Johnson Road in northern Hoke County.

In arraignment proceedings McNatt pleaded not guilty to first degree murder and first degree robbery charges in the case.

That fateful spring day began with three cousins meeting at their grandmother's house, James Harris said.

James and Bruce Harris and William McNatt, he said, were all at their grandmother's when the three decided to go fishing.

James Harris said he asked McNatt and Harris where they were going, and they told him fishing. He asked to come along.

He said McNatt's father drove the trio to some woods where they, armed with fishing equipment and a rifle, made their way to Cameron's pond.

"He (McNatt) had fishing poles, a rifle. Looked like a .20 or .22 rifle. He said the rifle was to kill snakes and stuff."

Harris went on to describe how the three cut through the woods to the pond and started fishing. They put their catch in a white bucket. The prosecutors found a white bucket near the crime scene.

He said they just fished "until around school time," when they saw an elderly man approach the area.

"He was an old guy. He was a white guy."

The man, Cameron, asked the three for identification and told them to put the fish back in his pond. That's when James Harris said the scene turned violent.

"They handed him their I.D.'s and stuff. I seen 'em hit the man with the rifle. William McNatt hit the man. William," he gestured to a swing to an invisible Cameron, "he hit him on his jaw. The right."

Harris said McNatt hit Cameron with the butt of the rifle.

"The man fell to the ground. The gun went off. It broke in two. They started beating the man. William started beating the man, all up side his face."

He said his other cousin, Bruce Harris, kicked Cameron.

The Cameron family cringed and appeared angry when Harris described Tom's last moments alive.

"I seen blood, running out his mouth and nose. The man was moaning and breathing for air," he said.

Harris said he watched as his cousin, Bruce, emptied Cameron's pockets, rolling the man over in the grass.

"I seen him take the watch off the man's arm. Bruce did."

While Bruce Harris and McNatt rummaged

(See MCNATT, page 5)



Will curbing increase the flooding problem downstream in the Bethel Road area? These youths walk in flood water there after a 1991 thunderstorm.

South Hoke youth killed

A 16-year-old man was murdered in a yard off Old Maxton Road on Saturday.

Kenneth Dewayne Parker of Route 1 Red Springs was shot once in the chest killing him.

Detective Mike Underwood with the Hoke County Sheriff's Department said Lenotta Baldwin, 25, of Route 1 Box 93 D, Lumber Bridge was charged with first degree murder. He was held without bond.

Underwood said the two men knew each other for a couple of years and argued earlier in the week.

Underwood said on Saturday Baldwin was driving from Raeford

(See CRIME, page 7)

Around Town

By Sam C. Morris

The weather cooled off last week with the lows getting down into the 30s. Most folks had to turn on their heating systems and some people had jackets or sweaters on during the early morning. On Saturday the temperature began to rise with the low in the high 40s and low 50s, and a high in the 80s. We haven't had any rain recently and it is now dry again.

The forecast calls for the temperatures Wednesday through Friday to have highs in the low 80s and high 70s, and the lows in the 50s. Saturday a cold front will move through and the high will be in the 70s and the low in the high 40s. There is a chance of rain on Saturday.

Monday morning I talked with Patty Webb, president of the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce, and Helen Huffman, a director and chairman of the

Open Meeting. They were working on the agenda and since this column is written on Monday I can't give you the agenda.

I would expect the following items will be discussed. They are membership, finances, management, election of officers, by-laws, etc.

The Open Meeting will be held Tuesday, October 12 at the Hoke County Public Library. The meeting will begin at 7 pm. All members and prospective members are invited to attend.

It seems when I write that the Deer Restoration Fund is complete, others send me money or turn it into the chamber office. Donations were made to the chamber office by the following: A&R Railroad, Linwood and Helen Huffman and Tony McLaurin.

I received the following letter last

(See AROUND, page 14)

Raeford may phase in western water project

Also studying flooding problem in city

Water improvements to the west side of Raeford may be phased in. Raeford City Manager Tom Phillips presented a plan to City Council Monday night that arranges for better water pressure to areas inside the City limits while postponing improvements to areas outside the City.

Phillips proposed a pay-as-you-go approach to beef up water lines toward Hoke High School and in the area west of Highway 401 Bypass.

"Until we have everybody in Raeford covered," Phillips said, "I really didn't feel comfortable going outside and using our [financial] reserves."

The cost for the first phase would be approximately \$180,000 and would pay for a 12-inch line to extend from the water treatment plant on Dickson Street to Hoke High School. Several lines would be enlarged in the area of Raeford-Hoke Village Shopping Center.

Phillips said the plan would give adequate fire protection to Hoke High and would increase water pressure to residents and businesses along US401 and to the west of the highway.

The plan would not completely correct poor water pressure or correct a complete lack of water-system-based fire protection at West Hoke Middle School, however. (Hoke fire departments protect the school with tankers.) The school is outside the City limits.

"The citizens of Raeford are not obligated to look after that school building," Councilman Joe Upchurch said as Council debated the phasing-in approach.

The alternative to phases would be to fund and construct an elaborate system of water lines and a water tank in a single project with an estimated cost of \$1.1 million.

That was the plan presented last month by engineers charged with finding a solution to Raeford's water woes in the west. The money would possibly come from a bond issue.

Councilman Ken Booker said he was afraid the proposal presented by Phillips Monday wouldn't address an original concern that there is no water for planned development near West Hoke Middle School.

He said he would like to see the concern addressed in the first phase of the project.

Council authorized Phillips to use a portion of \$40,000 allocated for engineering to further investigate the phasing-in approach.

Too much water

One area of Raeford has too much water, but not the drinking kind. Residents of Roberts Street presented City Council with a 38-name petition Monday asking for curbing and guttering along Roberts and Edinborough Avenue.

When the rains come, large portions of the area are flooded. James Hubbard, who spoke for the group, said the curbing is "badly needed to take care of the water situation and beautify the western part of the city."

But the project will cost an estimated \$121,300 Public Works Director Mike McNeill said.

And, Councilman Ken Booker wanted to know what effect the project would have on residents downstream. When told it would likely worsen the flooding along Elwood Avenue and even as far away as the Donaldson-Prospect avenue area, he said, "Legally, can we do that?" City Attorney Palmer Willcox assured him it would be illegal.

Another issue is whether Council should spruce up one area of the City and leave the other 19 miles of City roadway alone.

"If you want to extend it through the town this gives you an idea of what it would cost," said City Manager Phillips of the \$121,000 estimate.

Phillips agreed to investigate the effects of the curbing on those downstream and report back to Council.

Other business

City Council agreed to pay the legal expenses of a Raeford police investigator who was acquitted of charges he assaulted a person while making an arrest.

Attorney fees for investigator Kevin Locklear amounted to \$2,750.