

The News-Journal

'If it happened, it's news to us'

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HOKE COUNTY 50 CENTS

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Schools go year-round

By Kristin Guthrie
Staff writer

The Hoke Board of Education drew the year-round debate to a close last night with a unanimous vote to convert all K-8 public schools to the year-round schedule.

The board members said they received many phone calls recently on the issue, but said most were positive.

"The only negative calls I've heard is not having total year-round, including the high school. I'd certainly like to look at the possibility of the high school becoming year-round also," Board Vice-chairman Leland Strother said.

"I've also had a few calls this week to have the high school go year-round also," board member Ann Hardin said.

"I think it's good (the year-round system)," board member Charlotte Kelly said of the positive calls she received.

Contrary to some recent opposition to the year-round system, the board said they felt the support weighed heavily enough in favor of the change to make a decision.

"Over 50 percent of our parents have voted in favor of the year-round concept at three of the four schools. Depending on how you count the ballots, quite easily fifty-four percent of parents could be interpreted as voting for the con-

cept at J.W. McLaughlin School," Superintendent Don Steed said.

Steed went on to say that local school principals, the county's two directors of instruction, the assistant superintendent in charge of curriculum and he himself agree that the year-round system is in the best interest of the students. He said the year-round system will allow the student to have an academic advantage that they have not had in years past.

"We must lessen the gap between where we presently score and our state bench mark as to where we should be," Steed said. With Steed's comments in mind, the board supported his recommendation to make the system's K-8 schools year-round.

South Hoke presents wish list

By Nicole Gabriel
Staff writer

This is part one of a two-part series regarding parental concerns at South Hoke Elementary School.

The South Hoke community made no bones about telling the Board of Education that they want their share of \$21.5 million state bond money earmarked for county schools.

During two hours of heated and often emotional discussion at a special meeting with the Board of Education at the school on March 6, parents, teachers and representatives from state and local Native American agencies voiced their concerns to the board that the South Hoke Elementary School wants a sufficient piece of that pie when the board divvies up that bond money.

Many in the community spoke about the serious maintenance

problems plaguing the school and said they feel the board has overlooked the school in the past.

Those that spoke included the Parent/Teacher Organization vice president. The Rev. Tony B. Hunt said the time has come for the board to face the issue.

The peeling ceiling and floor tiles and other did not happen overnight, the Rev. Tony B. Hunt said.

"Let's admit, we've been neglected in the past," Hunt drew rounds of applause from the crowd of about 100 parents and teachers who gathered in the school cafeteria that night during his fervent speech, at times pounding his fist on the table.

"The reason we're where we're at today is because of a lack of support for this school," Hunt said. "We need money here. Give us some money that's been due us. We're going to demand it; we're not going to sit down on this issue."

Schools Associate Superintendent Jeff Moss, held his ground and explained the board's reasoning behind its initial proposal to divide up the money between the schools.

First, he said although the county will receive just over \$21 million, by the time the county takes out architect, equipment and permit fees and takes out 6 percent for state taxes, actual construction dollars total just over \$16 million.

Moss also emphasized that while plans are still very fluid and nothing is final, the board has three priorities for the money. Those priorities include a new elementary school and expansions to the middle schools and the high school, which will use about \$13.9 million of that \$16 million Moss said.

"There are some priorities and the new elementary school is a priority," Moss said. "That's just a fact of life."

Officials rein in how land's used

By Nicole Gabriel
Staff writer

Hoke County teeters on a tightrope of growth — balancing between its rural heritage and industrial future.

Now community leaders hope a land use plan can serve as a safety net to prevent a fall into a zoning abyss.

Taking its first precarious step off that rope, the county commissioners, county planner and residents met with Department of Transportation representa-

tives to brainstorm over Hoke's economic growth and infrastructure needs of the not-so-distant future.

With a three-prong plan, community leaders hope to hedge off that fall by incorporating zoning and environmental concerns with transportation needs.

Their magic formula: controlling commercial, industrial and residential development without stifling them.

But that formula, community leaders said, should not be paid in loss of rustication.

"The rural atmosphere, people are concerned with preserving that," county planning director Al Mitchell said.

The current proposal, still in draft form, calls for:

- Targeting zoning codes to areas conducive to commercial development;
- Making choices with residents' wants in mind;
- Protecting natural habitats with environmental corridors;
- Targeting zoning codes to areas conducive to residential (See LAND USE, page 11A)

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Around Town

By Sam C. Morris
Contributing editor

The weather does not feel like winter. Spring is still a couple of weeks away and Monday the temperature was in the 80s. I hope that we don't have any more freezing weather because this hot weather has caused budding on most of the trees. I would hate to see the fruit crops lost again this year.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday calls for nice weather. Wednesday the highs will be in the high 50s and the

lows in the 40s. Thursday through Saturday the highs will be in the 60s and the lows in the 40s. There isn't much chance of rain until Saturday.

My item in this column last week about the United Way has brought forth one check. I hope others that haven't made a contribution to the fund will do so. Leave the check at the News-Journal or mail to: Hoke United Way, PO Box 914, Raeford, NC 28376.

In a couple of weeks the 3rd (See AROUND, page 11A)

Ballfield strikes out with law



Elisha Dial rebukes law enforcement at his club prior to being arrested.

By Nicole Gabriel
Staff writer

Brushing off the books on a 1913 civil law, area law enforcement temporarily closed a Hoke nightclub, calling it "a public nuisance." Sheriff deputies arrested the club's owner, Elisha Dial, after he allegedly resisted law officials in their attempts to serve him with the civil order — a temporary restraining order — Friday evening.

A convoy of Alcohol Law Enforcement agents and sheriff's deputies descended on the Country-side Recreation Nightclub, also known as the Ballfield,

at 1500 John Rd., at about 6 p.m. Friday to serve the order to owner and operator Elisha Dial. Deputies disarmed Dial before attempting to serve him the order.

While officials posted the order at the club's entrances and read a copy to him, he became belligerent with officials and, at one point, threw down the order and shouted, "I'll be open for business." He also threatened to release his dog on the deputies.

Deputies attempted to calm Dial, but eventually arrested him for resisting, delaying and obstructing (See BALL, page 12A)



A sheriff's deputy posts the civil notice above a door at the club.

County to put smokers out

By Nicole Gabriel
Staff writer

Smokers can breathe a strained sigh of relief — for now. The county delayed putting smoking out of county-owned buildings at its Monday night meeting.

Complaints from an area judge led county officials to consider an ordinance restricting

smoking in county-operated areas. But Monday the board postponed a vote on the issue until a public hearing can be held.

County attorney Neil Yarborough presented the proposed ordinance, which outlines county areas where smoking would be prohibited.

"This is not an ambitious ordinance in that it's trying to stop smoking," Yarborough said. "But

it is designed to address county safety, vandalism and protect buildings and equipment."

County Manager Mike Wood raised the issue at the last meeting because of complaints from Chief District Court Judge Warren Pate that smokers were vandalizing the courthouse and courthouse annex on Main Street.

Although a public hearing was (See SMOKERS, page 11A)

Republicans plan for future

By Nicole Gabriel
Staff writer

Republicans Frances Cummings and Gene Shelnett left no doubt about staying in the political game during last Friday's Republican convention.

Despite recent defeats in the N.C. House of Representatives and county commissioners' elections, both candidates joined fellow GOP members to garner support for the county's Republican Party.

Because of the party's inactivity, the state Republican Party did not officially recognize Hoke's Republican Party until

this convention. Ed Price, state GOP representative, monitored this year's convention and election, during which members elected 22 delegates.

Getting involved

Hoke Republicans can no longer sit on the sidelines, Cummings said. Instead, they need to make their dreams a reality, she said.

"Let's continue our forward march," she said.

Despite her loss, Cummings said she does not regret the turn her career took in the last election.



Gene Shelnett

"I have no regrets with my political decision," Cummings (See REPUBLICANS, page 12A)