

# The News-Journal

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## Around Town



Saturday night or early Sunday morning a thunderstorm came through the county. We don't have many of these in the fall of the year. The temperatures have been about normal for this time of year, with the highs in the 60s and the lows in the 40s. It has been windy and it doesn't do much good to rake leaves. Some trees are almost bare of leaves.

The forecast calls for the same type of weather for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday. The highs will be in the high 50s or low 60s and the lows will be in the 40s. There is a chance of rain on Friday.

I had a call from Morgan Jackson, who is administrative assistant in the Rockingham office for Congressman Bill Hefner. He said that he would be in Raeford and Hoke County on Wednesday, Nov. 12. He will meet people at City Hall on that day. If you have some business that you need the congressman to help you with, Morgan will be glad to assist you.

I know that he can be of  
(See AROUND, page 8A)

## Expert says county voting districts not feasible

By NICOLE GABRIEL  
Staff writer

Drawing county commissioner districts in Hoke County that will pass the U.S. Justice Department's racial diversity test remains a difficult or even impossible task, a demographer from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte told the Board of Commissioners Monday.

Dr. Gerald Ingalls, a geography professor who developed three districting plans for the state and two other counties, said Hoke County fails to meet at least two of the three federally mandated legal preconditions required to prove

the need for districting.

The county opted for Ingalls to look into the legal viability of a districting plan after the Concerned Citizens for Effective Government, a group that wants to restructure the commission from at-large to district representation, presented its plan and a petition to the commissioners last month.

Ingalls focused on the Native American community, studying previous elections and voter registration population. Based on his initial investigation, he said the county should use districts "as a last resort."

"Basically, it doesn't look like districting is a feasible option,"

Ingalls said. "Particularly if the minority group you're looking at is Native Americans."

Ingalls said the county would have to draw eight to 10 districts to meet the federal legal conditions. Even then, Ingalls said, the districts might not give the Native American population the vote they want.

Drawing a district that will give the Native Americans a safe 60 percent majority vote will be difficult because of Hoke County's Native American voting population, Ingalls said.

Most of Hoke Native American voters live in three precincts — Blue Springs, Antioch and

Allendale — but those numbers aren't enough to meet the Justice Department's "sufficiently large and significantly compact" rule to justify a district, Ingalls said.

"In my opinion the Indian population is not large enough," Ingalls said. "I think the issue here is a lack of candidates."

Ingalls said in order to create a district with a Native American majority, the county would be forced to draw a skewed district that included all the county's Native Americans. That's a tough sell to the federal Justice Department, he said.

"You can draw districts," Ingalls said, "but will they stand up in

court? That's the question — whether or not the (U.S.) Justice Department will accept it."

Another factor that makes districting difficult to justify in Hoke county is the county's history of electing minorities, Ingalls said.

Black candidates in the previous commissioners and Board of Education races showed the strongest rates of election, Ingalls said.

Of the black candidates that ran between 1990 and 1996, Ingalls said, the voters elected 81 percent of black candidates, compared to only 31 percent of the white candidates and 25 percent of the Native American candidates.

## Doing what he does best



Nicole Gabriel/News-Journal

Newly re-elected mayor Bob Gentry talks about his victory Tuesday night at The News-Journal office with granddaughter Katie Robeson and James Guy. Several of the candidates were on hand for the posting of results.

## Gentry wins again

McNeill and McLeod return  
with newcomer Jordan to Council

By NICOLE GABRIEL  
Staff writer

Bob Gentry returns for another four years as Raeford's mayor after winning yesterday's election by 175 votes.

Also returning to Council for four more years are Eddie McNeill and James "Benny" McLeod with 732 and 661 votes respectively. Newcomer John Jordan beat out the competition for Joe Upchurch's unexpired seat with 533 votes.

"I'm just thankful the voters of the City of Raeford have come forth and said who they wanted to spend their tax dollars," Gentry said last night, "and who they wanted to lead us into the next century. I'm grateful they gave me back two great council members and one new one."

Mayor candidate Milton Williams said he respected the voters' decision.

"I wanted it to be a decision by the people and the people have decided," Williams said.

An excited John Jordan shook hands with bystanders after watching the results go up on *The News-Journal* board last night. "It was a good learning experience and I enjoyed getting out and talking with people and learning what their views are on certain issues," Jordan said.

Approximately 40 percent of Raeford's 2,410 registered voters turned out yesterday to cast their ballots, with 1,856 in Raeford No. 1, 1,380 in Raeford No. 2, 363 in Raeford No. 4 and 101 absentee ballots cast.

Gentry carried Raeford No. 2 and 4 and the absentee votes while Williams carried Raeford No. 1 in the mayor's race. Jordan carried in absentee votes and all three precincts for the unexpired Upchurch seat. Charles Daniels came in second with 232 total votes. Mark Jernigan, the third contender for the 2-year term, garnered 197 votes total. McNeill was the top vote getter for the 4-year term seat carrying across the board with 732, while McLeod ranked second in all three precincts and absentee votes with 661, beating Martha Beatty by 300 votes total.



Gentry



McNeill



McLeod



Jordan

## Teen curfew passes for county

By NICOLE GABRIEL  
Staff writer

Hoke County's youth and their parents could face court time and \$100 fines for violating a county curfew ordinance that goes into effect Jan. 1. The Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the youth protection ordinance for a 6-month trial basis.

As of the first of the year, the county will restrict juveniles 15 and under from public places between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m., seven days a week. It also restricts ju-

veniles not attending school from public places and establishments between 7:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. on school days.

The ordinance holds parents, guardians and establishment owners responsible for violations. Juveniles who violate the ordinance could face time in juvenile court. Any person other than a juvenile found guilty of violating the ordinance is subject to a fine for as much as \$100.

The curfew does not include the Raeford city limits.

Commissioner Thomas

Howell offered the motion to adopt the curfew for six months rather than one year, as the county's curfew committee originally suggested to the commissioners in August.

Despite Howell's reservations about how the county will enforce the ordinance and how much money it will require to restrict juveniles 15 and under during daylight and nighttime hours, he said, six months will give the county sufficient time to determine whether or not the

(See CURFEW, page 10A)

## Detective takes stand in Ferguson trial

By NICOLE GABRIEL  
Staff writer

Former Hoke sheriff's detective Bob Conerly will take the stand again today, continuing his testimony of a controversial statement he says Rodriguez Ferguson made the day after the New Year's Eve shootings at the Puppy Creek Family Fun Center and Zodiac Lounge three years ago.

Defense attorneys Henderson B. Hill and Lisa Dubs moved to

(See TRIAL, page 8A)



Kristin Guthrie/News-Journal

Shooting victim Mary Ann Hunter talks with former sheriff's detectives Bob Conerly (left) and Randy Howell as accused shooter Rodriguez Ferguson confers with his attorneys in a Bladen courtroom.

## Council adopts DOT's thoroughfare plan

By KRISTIN GUTHRIE  
Staff writer

After an uneventful public hearing, the Raeford City Council voted Monday night to adopt the 1997 thoroughfare plan recommendations from the N.C. Department of Transportation (D.O.T.).

Disagreeing with a small portion of the plan, Council member Clyde Thomas voted against adopting the resolution while the rest of Council voted in favor. Thomas said one of the recommendations from D.O.T. seemed to indicate that a Raeford house would have to be torn down in order for the plans to proceed as recommended.

The plans propose the realign-

ing of U.S. 401 Business to intersect Harris Avenue at Magnolia Street. According to Thomas, this plan would mean road construction where Frank Crumpler's home currently stands. "I don't agree with this," Thomas said.

Council member Eddie McNeill reminded Thomas that this thoroughfare plan is just that, just a plan, but Thomas still voted against the resolution.

D.O.T. associate Chad Edge reiterated that this plan is simply a proposal that Council would have to agree upon before any construction would begin.

"These plans are subject to how hard local officials want to push it," Edge said, and it also depends on state funding as well

(See PLAN, page 10A)