

# The News-Journal

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

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## Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS  
Contributing Editor

The weather was perfect over the weekend. The sun was shining and it didn't rain. Even though the temperatures were in the 80s during the day, we did have some cool nights. The temperatures were in the low 50s and high 40s. This should make the leaves start turning into their fall colors. You don't have to go to the mountains to see the beautiful colors, they are also in the Sandhills. I like this type of weather.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs to be in the low 60s or high 50s and the lows to be in the 40s. One forecaster said that the lows could get into the 30s over the weekend. This is getting near a time for frost. There isn't any rain in the forecast.

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Last Saturday morning when I arrived at the office, I found sample ballots for the upcoming election on my desk. Since we now have voting machines, I didn't realize how many different ballots are (See AROUND, page 7A)

## County takes major step to attract industry

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Staff writer

Both Hoke County Commissioners and members of the Hoke County Economic Development Commission took more steps to create an infrastructure to attract industry to the county.

Monday night, Commissioners approved three projects involving sewer service extension as major capital projects. The Economic Development Commission met the following morning and agreed to contract with a professional consultant, Ernie

Pearson & Associates, to refine an economic development plan.

Pearson, a Sanford attorney, is the former state deputy secretary of commerce. He and his firm have worked with the county for the past two years on economic development strategies.

The three projects include the East Hoke Middle School Project, Highway 20 Project, and Wayside and Rockfish. The East Hoke and Highway 20 projects would involve the City of Raeford as they would be served by the City sewer system. The other project would involve in-

stallation of sewer lines in the Rockfish and Wayside areas of McLaughlin Township and would be served by Public Works Commission of Cumberland County.

Commissioners were briefed on the final design plans of the projects from the engineering firm of Hobbs, Upchurch and Associates. They were also given an update on the possible development of two industrial parks near Raeford.

The estimated cost of the East Hoke Middle School project is \$330,000, according to the engi-

neers. The original plan was developed to serve an 80-acre site, but now a larger land tract is under consideration.

A 3-inch force main was extended to East Hoke Middle from the City when the school was built, and the County would utilize that line, which carries up to 150,000 gallons daily. "That would carry us into the future," according to engineer Charles McGougan, who said there is "always the possibility" to replace the 3-inch line with a 4- or 6-inch pipe.

Commissioners authorized

Interim County Manager Bernice McPhatter to continue negotiations with PWC for a sewer connection to serve Rockfish and Wayside. The estimated cost of that project is "just over \$1 million," the engineers said.

The third sewer project involves an industrial park site in the area of Oak Dale Gin Road, Highway 401 Business and Highway 20. The cost of that project is estimated to be \$282,000.

Engineers also briefed Commissioners on a mini-park site which involves 126 acres on the (See COUNTY, page 9A)



Smart Start ribbon cutting

First Lady Carolyn Hunt was the guest of honor last Tuesday at the Hoke County Partnership for Children and Families/Smart Start ribbon cutting ceremony. Some 100 business, government, civic and educational leaders, teachers and children turned out for the event and helped with the ceremonial ribbon cutting. Helping the children with the scissors are, from left, Raeford Mayor Bob Gentry, James Leach, chairman of the Hoke County Board of Commissioners, First Lady Carolyn Hunt, and Jean Brewer, president of the Hoke County Partnership for Children and Families. (Knight Chamberlain photo)

## Hicks trial set to begin Monday

By KNIGHT CHAMBERLAIN  
Editor

The trial of Frank Hicks, the Hoke County deputy charged with voluntary manslaughter in the death of an Ashley Heights man last year, is scheduled to begin Monday in Lee County.

Hicks shot and killed David Michael Sivak while on duty on August 29, 1998. Hicks told investigators he began firing when Sivak first ignored warnings not to get into a van, then tried to run him down with the van.

The State Bureau of Investigation and the state Attorney General's office investigated the shooting before turning their evidence over to a grand jury which indicted Hicks in December.

Hicks' lawyers Randy Gregory and Mike McGuinness asked that the trial be moved, citing pre-trial publicity about the case. Assistant

Attorney General Mary Winstead agreed with the change and Superior Court Judge Jack Thompson approved it.

Hicks' lawyers argued that the 32-year-old Sivak was not shot in the back as was reported by the media.

But a report from the Chief Medical Examiner's Office in Chapel Hill listed the cause of death as "gunshot wound of back." The report stated that a bullet entered the right side of Sivak's back and irreparably damaged his heart. The report also noted that Sivak had cocaine in his system at the time of his death.

Hicks, 42, of Robeson County, was initially placed on paid administrative leave, but has been back at work since January at the sheriff's office. He has not returned to patrol duty since the shooting.

## Justice Department agrees to investigate complaint

By KNIGHT CHAMBERLAIN  
Editor

The U.S. Justice Department is investigating a complaint of racial discrimination against the Hoke County Sheriff's Department by a Native American whose nightclubs were shut down in 1991 and again in 1997 for repeated reports of illegal drug use and violence.

Elisha Dial filed the complaint despite the fact that he signed consent orders admitting that he was aware of and permitted the illegal activities, including the illegal possession, sale and consumption of alcohol by minors; the possession sale and use of drugs; and violent conduct.

Despite the admission, Dial claims it was inaction by the Sheriff's Department that caused his businesses — the "Countryside Recreation Nightclub" on John Road, and "Cousins" off N.C. 211 — to be characterized as nuisances by state Alcohol Law Enforcement officials in the first place.

The inaction, Dial said, led to his filing the complaint.

But Sheriff Wayne Byrd, in a March 12, 1997 interview, said his department was being criticized for doing its job.

"Our deputies have charged

people at (the Countryside Recreation Nightclub) with possession of drugs and concealed weapons," he said in the interview. "This place has just been a problem in the community."

In fact, Alcohol Law Enforcement agents investigated more than 80 service calls reported on the club between April 1993 and January 1997.

Dial defended his actions and said he was being discriminated against by the Sheriff's Department for trying to give kids a place to go and have fun.

"How could I be considered a public nuisance," Dial said in a June 18, 1997 newspaper article about his Countryside Recreation Nightclub being shut down. "I was out to give the young people a place to go and get them out of those places, the drug places, the booze places."

A previous nuisance investigation led to the closing of Cousins in 1991.

Dial is a supporter of Jim Davis, the Democrat nominee for Hoke County Sheriff. Davis ran for sheriff, in part, because he claimed the Sheriff's Department is soft on drugs and allows drug activity to flourish in Hoke County.



This picture postcard depicts the Hotel Raeford in its heyday.

## Hotel Raeford in double trouble

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Staff writer

It appears the Hotel Raeford is in double jeopardy. Notices of both foreclosure and condemnation proceedings are posted on the deteriorated building located at the corner of Central Avenue and Main Street.

Action on the condemnation process is on hold, however. Mary Robinson, code enforcement officer for the City of Raeford, said the City is stopping its proceedings until other matters are worked out. "Ownership could change," she said.

There are also tax liens against the property, Robinson said.

Fayetteville residents Earlise and Mary E. Jones bought the property on May 4, 1993 for \$120,000. United National Bank, which holds the note, is foreclosing. Mrs. Jones is now deceased.

A picture post card, made in 1940 or shortly thereafter, said the hotel was under new ownership, new management and completely renovated. It offered "50 (fireproof) clean, comfortable rooms with or without a bath." A coffee shop featured home cooking and was managed by "Miss Minnie Worwick, dietitian, formerly with Jeans Dining Room of Laurinburg."

W.E. Street Jr. was manager and proprietor. He offered single

rooms at \$1.25 up and double rooms for \$2 up.

Prior to that, the Hotel Bluemont served as headquarters for the Williamsport Baseball Club's spring training and teachers resided there during the school year. Business activity in downtown Raeford was thriving.

Today, the condemnation notice calls the hotel "unsafe, in dangerous condition and a fire hazard by structural defects and general state of decay, deterioration and disrepair."

The hotel's lone tenant, a barber shop, recently moved to a new location across Central Avenue.