

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

No. 6 Vol. 94

50 cents

Wednesday, May 9, 2001

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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

Some of the people that came by the office Monday morning were commenting on how nice the weather was. This was more like the spring days that you would expect in May. I am hoping that it will not get cold enough again to turn the heat back on at the house. This spring I have already changed from heat to air conditioning three times. I can't remember ever doing this before. What we need for the weather to do is to bring in some rain.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs Wednesday and Thursday to be in the 70s and the lows in the 50s. Friday and Saturday the highs will be in the 80s and the lows in the 60s. There is a chance of rain for Wednesday.

For a few weeks I ran letters from people who had included a check for the City of Raeford Museum. Then last week I received a letter and check from Mary Virginia McFadyen of Southern Pines. The letter follows: "Dear Sam, enclosed in my check for the museum. Please get it to its destination."

"I still look forward to your column in The News-Journal. "Best regards to you and Mary Alice. Sincerely, Mary Virginia."

Thanks Mary Virginia for your nice letter and check. I (See AROUND, page 4A)

City considers leasing to boat maker

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

The city of Raeford is negotiating a lease-to-own agreement with a manufacturer of boats that would allow the com-

pany to occupy the former Unifi building that was given to the city after the company closed down operations here.

City councilmen met in executive session, and a resolution was adopted when the city returned to regular session. Con-

ditions of the lease with option to purchase require that the factory employ no less than 50 full-time employees and that they be paid an average of \$8.50 per hour.

The city is asking for \$52,000 monthly for five years at which time the factory's

owners may buy the building for \$500,000. The factory would receive credit for rental payments made during the five years minus insurance costs to the city.

The current market value of the building (See LEASE, page 10A)

Relay for Life



Relay for Life draws hundreds of walkers

Above: Hailey Evington, 2, let her dad, Brian and her mom, Denise, do the walking during the Relay for Life held at Raz Autry Stadium over the weekend. The Evingtons walked for Galilee Baptist Church of Red Springs.

At right, survivors of cancer walk — everyone except a one-year-old survivor who is carried by Tom Squier and Wendy Parvi. Hundreds of participants from dozens of teams raised over \$70,000 for the American Cancer Society.



DA conducts inquiry on death, disappearance of John Butler

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Even though the N.C. Medical Examiner's office in Chapel Hill indicated the remains of 52-year-old missing man Johnny Edward Butler Jr. showed no signs of trauma last November, his sister Linda Rose wonders if Butler could have been stabbed and left to die where he was found in the woods near Rockfish Road.

Rose said she also blames Sheriff Jim Davis for her brother's death because of his alleged lack of adequately searching for him. Butler's family reported him missing early on the morning of July 28, 1999 when temperatures were soaring above 100 degrees. His remains were discovered 16 months later less than one mile from his Pittman

Grove Church Road home.

District Attorney Kristy McMillan Newton announced recently she is officially conducting an inquiry about Butler.

"Our inquiry into the death of John Butler was initiated at the request of Sheriff Jim Davis and the family of the deceased man," Newton said. "Our purposes are first and foremost to find out if there is any evidence that the deceased may have been murdered, and if a request should be made for a coroner's inquest to determine the facts surrounding his death."

Attorney Andy Dempster of Smith Dickey Smith Hasty & Dempster law firm in Fayetteville also announced on Friday his firm has been contacted by the Butler family. He confirmed the Butlers are (See BUTLER, page 8A)

Curtain goes up on Centennial play May 18

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A prominent Raeford playwright has written a musical drama to commemorate Raeford's upcoming Centennial Celebration, unveiling a rare glimpse into one hundred years of living history that leads up to the 21st century. Delving into the lives and accomplishments "way back" of Raeford's citizens, Dr. Ray Harris, retired director of music at Raeford Presbyterian Church, has devised 12 "living pictures."

Local actors will portray historical events in Hoke County that contributed to Raeford's heritage in the play that opens at 8 p.m. on May 18. The play will be performed on the stage at Turlington School.

Sharing a series of past vignettes, Harris, also a historian, said he has combined music, dance and

drama into almost a two-hour play with a narration presented by six actors who attend Hoke County High School. They are among a cast of 30 Raeford actors — most of whom pantomime the historical scenes recalled by the students. The plot unfolds as these teens become fascinated with contributions their ancestors made to create the city of Raeford. Harris is re-creating actual vintage photographs frozen into life-sized tableaux with statuary actors. Suddenly, the still actors come alive to intertwine scenes about real people that will transport the audience into another era, he added.

"I am very honored that I was asked by the (See CENTENNIAL, page 8A)



Dr. Ray Harris

Bratcher elected board chairman

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Two weeks after Commissioner Cleo Bratcher Jr. took the oath of office to replace the late Commissioner L.E. McLaughlin Jr., he was unanimously voted in as chairman on Monday evening — also a distinction held by his predecessor. The re-structuring of the board was supervised by county attorney Neil Yarbrough while a filled group of citizens observed.

Commissioners briskly approved Bratcher as chairman for the next six months of McLaughlin's term without any discussion. Commissioner Charles V. Daniels recommended Bratcher as chairman, a motion that remained unopposed by any other nominations. His request was seconded by Commission Vice Chairman Bobby Wright by acclamation.

(See CHAIRMAN, page 9A)

City budget plan is \$3.57 million Tax rate remains the same

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Raeford City Council members had their first look at a \$3,575,745 budget proposed for the upcoming fiscal year. The planned budget calls for no tax hike and no increases in water and sewer rates. The property tax rate will remain at 47 cents per \$100 valuation.

However, leaders are concerned that a tax increase is in the city's future, and they also expressed worries about taking money from the general fund balance. "If we keep taking out of the fund balance, it will be gone in two more years," said Councilman Eddie McNeill. "Somewhere along the line we are going to have a tax increase," said Mayor Bob Gentry, adding that he does not want Raeford "to get in the condition the state is in."

A workshop was held after the regularly scheduled meeting Monday night. Councilmen went over the proposed budget page by page and will hold a more intensive workshop on May 21 when a public hearing is scheduled.

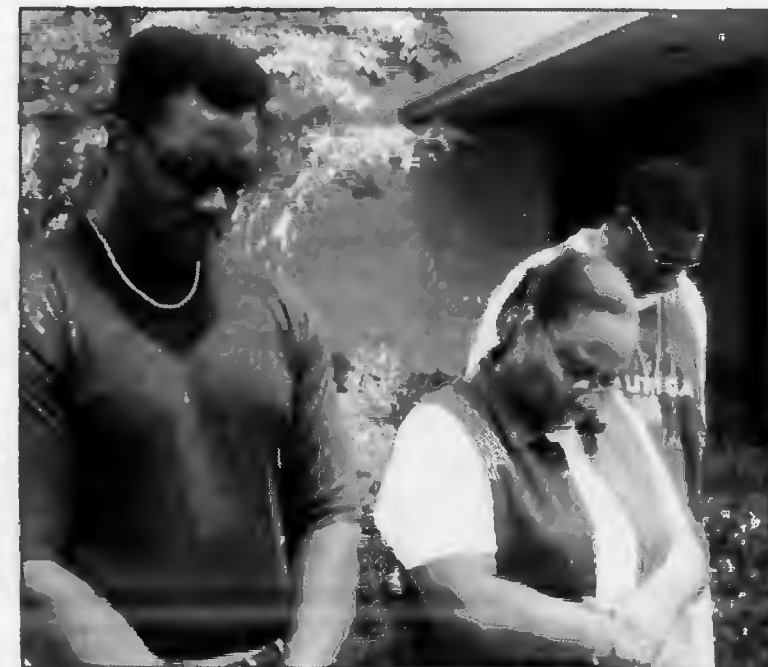
The proposed budget is a \$103,259 increase over last year's fiscal year budget. It projects a 27 percent general fund balance, and (See CITY BUDGET, page 10A)

19 elementary students won't switch districts

By KRISTIN GUTHRIE
STAFF WRITER

After hearing from concerned parent Charles Crowder and seeing that the room was full of other interested parents, the Hoke Board of Education decided last night to rescind an earlier motion to redistrict some 19 students from Upchurch Elementary School.

The initial motion made at last month's meeting was to redistrict sibling students who began at Upchurch when it opened as a year-round school. This motion applied only to students who were younger than rising fifth graders. The initial motion stated that the (See DISTRICTS, page 10A)



Prayer

Members of the Hoke community gather to support America with prayer last week during the National Day of Prayer observance held at the downtown stage.