

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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This week



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Around Town



BY SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

The warm weather is still with us and it should be as the summer season begins next week. On June 21 summer officially starts and that will be the longest day of the year. It has been cloudy, as if it would rain about every day. Since last week we have received less than a quarter of an inch of rain. It is hard to imagine

getting 40 inches of rain like it was in Houston last week. I was amazed at the pictures that were on television. A super highway looked like the Mississippi river. Maybe we are lucky in this part of the nation!

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs during this period to be in the 90s and 80s. The lows will be around 70 degrees. We could also see a shower any day.

I am always amazed when a budget for the state, county or city appears for the upcoming year. There is always an increase in the salaries of the elected officials. During a campaign for this position about every advertisement by a candidate states why they are capable to hold the job and the service they can do for their fellowman. There is never a word about raising salaries.

I can understand why the
(See AROUND, page 9A)

Auditors: money must be returned

Grants given Hoke not handled properly

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

"The citizens of Hoke County are the victims, and they should be concerned where it ends," said Sheriff Jim Davis after learning a state audit verified his suspicions that federal grant monies targeted for the Sheriff's Office in 1999-

2000 were allegedly supplanted and misused by county authorities. "It goes to show the kind of responsibility of mismanagement that is happening in Hoke County."

The Governor's Crime Commission announced on Monday the audit they conducted at the request of the U.S. Justice Department's Inspector General's

office in Washington D.C., and also initiated by Davis, was completed after a six-month investigation. In the audit findings, state and federal agencies concluded that federal grant monies were mishandled by Hoke and they want Hoke officials to

give back the money, said Director Davis Jones of GCC.

"It goes to show the kind of responsibility of mismanagement that is happening in Hoke County." — Sheriff Jim Davis

month investigation. In the audit findings, state and federal agencies concluded that federal grant monies were mishandled by Hoke and they want Hoke officials to

According to Jones, GCC and the Justice Department are demanding Hoke return \$93,467.69 plus all accrued interest (See AUDIT, page 8A)



Onnie Dudley



J. Whiteford Jones



Jan Dial Smith

Democrats pick 3 for elections board

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The Hoke County Democratic Party voted last Thursday to nominate a "balanced, experienced team" for the elections board, said A.K. "Dooie" Leach, recently elected Hoke chairman. The nominations for two officers and an alternate, which were submitted to the State Democratic Party, did not include former chairman Willie McCaskill or former secretary Roman Jacobs.

"We had a great representation from the county of Democrats," Leach said. "Our executive committee affirmed the recommendation of a group of people that are racially and in gender diverse in accordance with the Rules of Organization of our party to represent everyone."

"We nominated an African American female, a white male, and a Native American female — all dedicated leaders and community-minded people serving our county."

By unanimous approval, the 29 members of the executive committee present at the meeting selected Democrats Onnie Dudley, Hoke assistant register of deeds, and J. Whiteford Jones, board member on the Hoke Planning Commission. If appointed, Dudley

would become the first female to ever serve on the Hoke elections board. Jan Dial Smith, a court counselor for the N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice, accepted her appointment as a substitute nominee.

The state Democratic Party will announce if these nominees are approved by party leaders by June 24. None of the candidates selected were present at last week's meeting. Every two years the Democrat Party is given the opportunity to select new board of election representatives for two seats, Leach added.

"We deemed it appropriate to put these individuals up for consideration by the state party," Leach said. "All these people are known to us and represent the best the party has to offer."

"I want to thank Mr. McCaskill and Mr. Jacobs for the job they did over the past two years. Thanks for volunteering their time for such a worthy cause for the election process that is so crucial to our democracy."

In making history, McCaskill, African American, and Jacobs, Native American, represented the first minorities ever to serve on Hoke's elections board. McCaskill, who served one term, said he is proud of his board's accomplishments and being at the helm for (See ELECTIONS, page 8A)

Six-year-old blown from back of a traveling truck

A six-year-old boy riding in the back of his father's truck was blown into the road last Wednesday morning at about 11:30.

The accident happened on Way-side Road in Eastern Hoke County. State Highway Patrol Trooper J.D. Hoover stated a 2001 Toyota was being driven northwest by George Allen Hartgrove Jr. of Cypress Drive, Raeford.

The report says the vehicle was transporting an inflatable pool and a child in the open cargo area when the pool and the child were blown out.

The truck's traveling speed was

estimated at 25 mph.

The pool landed in the middle of the road with the child alongside it, according to Hoover's report.

The six-year-old child was taken to Cape Fear Valley Medical Center, where a spokesperson said yesterday there was no record that he had been admitted to the hospital.

Hoover's report indicates there were two passengers, Austin Hartgrove, 6, and Payton Hartgrove, 4, both of Cypress Drive.

The elder Hartgrove was cited for a child restraint violation and failure to secure a load.

Money's tight, county, agencies debate budget

Commissioners again discuss building offices

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

While deciding whether to move Senior Services into Sandhills Community College's building on Elwood after it is vacated by the college staff, the old topic of building a new county government complex was abruptly discussed at the recessed county commissioners' meeting that resumed on Monday morning.

The planned \$2.6 million project to move county offices from downtown Raeford was shot down last year after local residents protested that relocating county employees from downtown would negatively impact Raeford's future down-

town growth. Commissioners also changed their minds after hearing negative feedback from Hoke citizens who were worried about taxes being raised in order to fund the future complex.

"Space is still an issue," said County Manager Bernice McPhatter after commissioners were tallying up county leases paid for space at the Southerland and Locklear buildings, and the former Bank of Raeford.

Commissioner James A. Leach, who was previously a supporter of constructing a new county office building, still expressed support of planning to build a complex on West Palmer Street. The county purchased the 20-acre campus, which is still undeveloped, for approximately \$200,000 in 2000 prior to discontinuing plans for the Hoke County Administrative Facility.

"That building would have paid for itself," Leach said.

Commission Vice Chairman Bobby Wright demonstrated concern over diminishing space for expanding county facilities.

"I do not think it is a matter of if, but when," Wright said of constructing a county complex. "We have to look for

Sheriff predicts budget cuts could impact public safety

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A concerned Sheriff Jim Davis told county commissioners on Monday he understood the necessity to balance the county's new budget that begins July 1. However, Davis said every dime he had requested for the Sheriff's Office to operate was justified and did not warrant any cutbacks. Davis cited a "dramatic increase" has occurred in property crimes and money being spent by Hoke citizens to replace losses.

County commissioners took no im-

mediate action to fully fund his requested budget for next year. Davis initially asked commissioners to fund a \$1.94 million budget, but County Manager Bernice McPhatter has allocated \$1.48 million. It also represents a reduction of \$100,000 from last year's budget.

"I am protesting cutting the budget from last year's allocation to this year," Davis said. "My responsibility is to preserve and secure the resources to protect this county."

"I am asking you to put the cuts back into the sheriff's budget. Take a hard

(See SHERIFF, page 8A)

School Board offers resolution

KRISTIN GUTHRIE
Staff writer

In an effort to resolve some budget issues with the Hoke County Commissioners, board of education members drafted a budget resolution spelling out the details of an acceptable agreement.

"The budget resolution... is a request to move dollars from the half cent sales tax to the current expense fund as a mechanism to help us both (the school board and county commissioners) resolve this budget challenge," the board resolution stated.

Further, the resolution spelled out the board's understanding of the agreement as to avoid any confusion in the future. It stated, "We (the board) understand that

the capital outlay budget will be fully funded at \$362,500. We also understand that the current expense funds will be increased \$101,000 from the 2000/2001 appropriation for a funding amount of \$3,236,248. Additionally, we understand that the school maintenance dollars funded from the half cent sales tax will remain at \$99,500."

In conclusion, the resolution said, "If the commissioners find that additional dollars are available from the half cent sales tax, we would appreciate your considerations of funding an additional \$127,000. This would bring the additional funding request from the half cent sales tax to \$227,000 and the current expense funding amount after the trans- (See SCHOOL BOARD, page 8A)



Help for Sammy coming in

Ashley Vaughn, 21 months, holds a can her parents, James and Lora Vaughn, are hoping to fill with money to help buy prosthetic eyes for little Sammy Sosa, who lost his to malignant tumors. See related story, page 4A.