

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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Wednesday, July 4, 2001

On vacation?
Hoke's top stories
are on the web
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This week



Child care providers
go extra mile for
Hispanic charges
page 7A

Former Raleigh
policeman charged
page 5A

Gas prices
going down
page 3A

Index

Births	1B
Calendar	2B
Classifieds	7,8B
Deaths	8A
Editorials	2,3A
Engagements	1B
Legals	4-6B
Public Record	5A
Religion	4B
Social News	1B
TV Listings	2,3B
Weddings	1B

Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

I don't know what it will be like in July and August but June closed out in real summer weather. The humidity was high for the last week of June and with the thermometer registering in the middle 90s it felt like 100 degree temperatures. We got a little rain in Raeford but not like the other sections of the state.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs to be in the low 90s or high 80s. The lows will be in the 60s. There is a chance of rain on Thursday and Friday afternoons.

If you read this before you leave to celebrate the Fourth of July, remember to drive carefully and if you are at the beach, watch out for the rip tides!

As I write this on Friday, because of the July 4th early edition, many things come to mind about the Fourth. It used to be a day when you would have speakers talk about how we got our freedom and what this freedom should mean to us today. Now it is a day to go to the beach or just sit at home and rest.

I can remember going to Aberdeen Lake to celebrate the Fourth. The town usually had entertainment all day long. Then there was a fireworks display. Every year the Town (See AROUND, page 8A)

Official: Audit on E-911 Wireless funds 'questionable' State requires county justify spending

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The North Carolina Wireless 911 Board, the agency that monitors how funds are dispersed for E-911 wireless for mobile telephones, says audit findings for Hoke County are "questionable and not satisfactory," according

to Administrator Richard Taylor.

"We have found irregularities in Hoke's expenditures for E-911 funds," Taylor said. "We are investigating further."

Taylor said the county was audited in February 2001 for the period between January and June of 2000, and he estimated ap-

proximately \$50,000 worth of items purchased by Hoke could be considered a misuse of funds. Funds are specifically supposed to be used for creating or improving the E-911 system, he added.

"They (Hoke) responded back to our findings on June 20 just before the deadline we gave them,

and their explanation is not good enough for our board," Taylor said. "We are continuing to investigate the expenditures of Hoke County that were taken out of E-911 wireless funds."

"The monies collected from the monthly telephone surcharge citizens pay is only to be utilized for upgrades and repairs in computers and technology for E-911 — not for salaries outside E-911

or for other miscellaneous purchases. It is illegal to do that."

Taylor said his agency plans another site visit to Hoke to continue their inquiry. He said his agency conducted the audit after recent state legislation was enacted that required an annual audit to be completed to determine if counties are properly spending E-911 monies. He sent a letter to (See AUDIT, page 4A)

House of Raeford fetes international food festival

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Taste buds of international food brokers from Mexico to Canada were working overtime last Thursday as they flocked to The Pinehurst Hotel, an historic Sandhills' landmark, to sample gourmet delicacies or succulent turkey and chicken entrees prepared exclusively by the House of Raeford.

More than 100 brokers attended the 21st annual brokers (See HOUSE OF RAEFORD, page 6A)



Bob Johnson, chief executive officer of House of Raeford, the Johnson family business.

Firefighters' request for tax increase not received

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A letter written on June 11 by chairman Clyde Shepley of the Rockfish Volunteer Fire Department to request a tax increase was never received by the county commissioners, they say. Shepley and a group of fire chiefs — who said they are being short-changed — protested in a heated manner to the board on Monday evening. Shepley, on behalf of the other fire chiefs, questioned why their plea for more money to operate the fire departments was never addressed in the budget. One fire chief walked out in disgust when commissioners' failed to find a solution.

Commission Vice Chairman Bobby Wright and County Attorney Neil Yarborough recommended the board study if the 2-1/2 percent administrative fees

formerly charged by the county to collect the fire taxes could be advanced as a loan to each fire district to offset their expenses. The county voted not to charge fire departments the fee for next year, which frees up more money for the fire departments, Wright added.

Commissioner Tony Hunt also expressed concern.

"We are not going to let you hang out to dry," Hunt said. "We just cannot print the tax bills again. Let us contact the Institute of Government to let us know what we can do if there is a shortfall."

According to Shepley, The budget was passed prior to June 30 without including any fire tax increase for seven out of 10 districts that were requesting more money. Rockfish is asking for a step up to 10 cents rather than the current 8 cents it received last

year. "We need some help and we are appealing to you," Shepley said. "We do not feel we had a forum for us to ask you for a fire rate increase. We missed our budget by \$46,000 last year, which was about 36 percent. That is big money."

"Five years ago we got 12 cents and now we are only getting 8 cents."

Rockfish's letter requested the county raise their district to 10 cents to adequately cover the operating expenses in their rapidly-growing community. County Manager Bernice McPhatter said she never saw the letter. Linda Revels, clerk of the board, said she included the letter in the commissioners' packet on June 18. However, no one could provide a satisfactory explanation regarding why the (See FIREFIGHTERS, page 6A)

Health center planned Will accommodate new programs

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

With a Hispanic population increase of 143 percent, the Hoke County Health Department is moving forward with a plan for the county to construct a new \$3.5 million health building on the 20-acre tract of land already owned by the county on Palmer Street, said Don Womble, health director.

"I came here to Hoke County to make this a good health department for the citizens, to bring in primary care and doctors, and

to get a new building started," Womble said. "So far, those things are on track."

"The health department is used as a safety net for our citizens that are not insured or under insured."

Overcrowded administrative offices with "people on top of each other," and lack of space to expand health services were other reasons cited by Womble in proposing a new building.

"We have had encouragement from the county commissioners, County Manager Bernice (See HEALTH CENTER, page 4A)

City returns rezoning request to planning board

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

City councilmen sent a controversial zoning request back to the Raeford Planning Board at the request of City Manager Mike McNeill, who said surrounding property owners were not properly notified of the public hearing held at the June 19 planning board meeting.

Franklin and Dayne Crumpler's request to have 1.88 acres at the intersection of East Prospect Avenue and U.S. Business 401 rezoned from R-12 (residential) to Highway Commercial will be presented at a special planning board meeting held Tuesday, July 24 at 6 p.m.

City ordinance requires that property owners adjacent to a particular rezoning request be notified; however, it is the city's policy to notify owners within 500 feet as determined by county tax registration.

Numerous residents near the property, at 1213 East Prospect Avenue showed up in protest. One resident asked to present a

petition on behalf of 31 residents in opposition to the rezoning but was told by Mayor Bob Gentry to deliver it to the planning board.

At their June 19 meeting, the planning board had unanimously recommended that the city council approval of the request although there was some opposition voiced by neighbors. Michael Baker, who lives in the area, told the planning board that "allowing businesses on the lot would cause other commercial activities to enter right into the residential area."

The Crumplers have been unsuccessfully attempting to get the property rezoned for 16 years, Mr. Crumpler said. He told the planning board that he could build low-income apartments on the corner lot but it is not desirable for apartment living. He said the only suitable use for the property is for business.

Some of the permitted uses under the Highway Commercial zone are auto sales and services; other vehicle and equipment sales and services; bus stations; ve- (See CITY, page 7A)

Unilever charts new course

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Guests at Unilever manufacturing plant in Raeford — one of the world's largest producers of deodorant — were smelling the sweet aroma of success and deodorant as they toured the facility on Friday to celebrate the kickoff of TPM, a Total Productive Maintenance plan designed to achieve business goals. TPM is a culture change; it includes all aspects of manufacturing from production lines to administrative offices serving as a compass in the path to world class performance, said Steve Kullberg, Unilever's Plant manager.

Raeford's Unilever plant is one of only three in North America where the parent firm utilizes TPM. Plants in Cartersville, Georgia and Toronto, Canada also participate in TPM.

A motivational day included

an opening ceremony to explain the purpose of TPM to employees and guests, which is already established at more than 100 Unilever plants worldwide, and tours of the facility by visiting dignitaries. Full-sized racing cars were on display to signify a race for high performance is underway, and team leaders held checkered flags as groups of 10 toured the departments.

"It was a very inspirational event," said Kullberg, who hosted the tours. "It has been a great day."

According to Charles Miller, local TPM leader, TPM serves as a compass to success. He said it originated in the United States after World War II, and then it was later utilized by Japanese manufacturers to enhance productivity.

Miller said Unilever initiated TPM at some of its plants in 1989. Many of Unilever's facili- (See UNILEVER, page 4A)



Unilever's Plant Manager Steve Kullberg (far right) chats with staff at the TPM kickoff on Friday.