

County border

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The new survey, initiated at a request by Robeson officials, indicated a long sliver of Hoke's eastern land parcels — stretching approximately 300 feet wide at its widest — may actually belong to Robeson.

Commissioners in all three counties will be provided an opportunity to review the changes that begin at a common cornerstone in Camp Rockfish in Stonewall Township in Hoke. The new lines indicated corrections that will be drawn east to Interstate 95 south of Hope Mills and south to Mill Prong in Hoke.

Sheminski said people's homes or property will not be split between two counties.

"I am sure the county commissioners will probably hold a public hearing on this matter before any decisions are reached," Sheminski said. "We will give people adequate time if the shift in boundaries will change where they pay taxes or receive other services."

"We have had some people calling to say they do not want to reside in Robeson County and want to remain in Hoke."

According to Sheminski, Camp Rockfish is tax exempt because of its religious affiliation so it will not be affected. Other parcels of land that are divided between Robeson and Hoke may actually become part of Hoke permanently.

"All we have received from the state are some straight lines that show our border is not accurate," Sheminski said. "All the counties will have to agree on the changes before it becomes law."

Sheminski said Robeson officials may have stated that Hoke is going to suffer the most, but that is not the case.

"There are big tracts right now that we do not tax that we will be getting part of it to tax in the future," Sheminski said. "It is not like we are losing three or four hundred feet for 10 miles."

Although Robeson officials have accepted the preliminary survey, Cumberland and Hoke must still review it.

Vice Chairman James A. Leach said he is optimistic all that three counties will cooperate with the findings. After the boundaries are settled, tax assessors from each county will meet and decide on how borderline property will be taxed.

"We have always had a good working relationship with the other counties," Leach said. "I think that we will work through this situation."

"We will continue to iron out any details."

Major Thomas Carlton of the Sheriff's Office said the corrected boundaries would make response times to citizens more efficient. Sometimes emergency and rescue workers

are uncertain of where their jurisdictions begin and end, he said.

Roger Barn, state surveying supervisor, said the state has spent \$14,000 surveying the Hoke-Robeson borders, and estimate the cost for the entire project will probably reach \$30,000. Hobbs, Upchurch and Associates in Southern Pines have helped the state conduct the surveying of the Hoke-Robeson portion.

"If you go along two straight lines, the said but true fact is there is not usually one person that lives on the county lines that knows where the lines really exist," Barn said. "The road signs do not even line up. Road signs will have to be changed appropriately once this plan is approved."

Barn has devoted hours combing through state archives, the legislature's law library, N.C. Secretary of State's office and talking to local people and surveyors. He said his quest has paid off.

"I have a high level of certainty that we have reestablished the county lines as set by law," Barn said. "We have not changed the county lines. We have only accurately surveyed them."

Barn said if the counties fail to disagree on the boundaries, then the only recourse is to take the case before a Superior Court judge for determination. He said the discrepancies arose because maps used since the 1850s that were never updated.

For example, a 1911 description of Hoke's county line begins, "Between Hoke and Robeson counties, it begins at the intersection of Stewart's Creek and Big Rockfish Creek; thence a direct line southwesterly to the crossing of the public roads at Graham's Mill on Mill Prong of Big Raft Swamp, and that is the point just above Red Springs. Then, a direct line nearly west to the Lumber River."

"From that kind of description, how could anyone know where the county line is within a reasonable distance or if their house is split between two counties?" Barn said. "The maps back in those times were not to scale."

"We are trying to get these maps updated because of more population in these counties."

Barn said the county lines have not moved.

"Let's get the cart before the horse," Barn said. "Since these lines were in error, the lines are just being corrected to what they really should be."

Barn and Sheminski were uncertain if boundary changes will alter voting and school district, as well as where people pay their taxes.

"It is too premature to tell at this moment," Barn said. "Once the three counties agree on the identical lines, then those things will be determined."

Candidates

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Crull said he grew up in a small town and retired after 22 years in the military. "I served my country and Hoke County is a part of that country. I chose to reside here," he said.

He told his audience they would not regret electing him sheriff. "I'm going to be here a long time and I'm going to serve a long time."

Robert Colson (R) introduced himself as a Hoke County native who has lived here his entire life. He said his family was here even before Raeford was founded.

Colson said he knows all the candidates for sheriff, and "you have five good candidates," he told the gathering. Colson reminded those present he had served as a deputy under Alex Norton, Wayne Byrd and Jim Davis, as well as Peterkin, who was formerly Davis' chief deputy.

He also told those gathered their vote is important. "Go vote, please," he said.

Joe Troxell (D) said, "I have a lot of respect for you, and you have a lot of experience to show me."

Troxell said he is the only candidate with a bachelor of arts degree in criminal justice and that he had learned to manage people and could manage 34 sworn deputies and 13 jailers.

"The sheriff's office needs to be revitalized and go after drugs," Troxell said. "I will go after drugs." He said he would also cooperate with all other agencies and be respectful and visible to citizens.

Sheriff Davis (D), who is seeking reelection, was not present. He is recovering from injuries suffered in a vehicle accident May 21.

Commissioner candidates Incumbent Cleo Bratcher (D) said each person present "has played a part in our lives."

Bratcher continued, "With or without being a commissioner, I will be here."

A commissioner for 18 years, Bratcher said he "enjoys his job." Commissioners are trying to do things for the seniors of Hoke, he said.

Bill Cameron (D) kept his remarks brief. He explained that he was born and reared in Hoke County and that he had been a teacher for 11 years and a coach for 11 years. "I am a farmer," he said. "I plan to be in Hoke County all my life. I care about Hoke County, you and the direction we are going."

Pete Camp (I) said Hoke County needs to change the way it does business and needs new leadership. The county is facing "five issues: taxes, education, law enforcement, fire protection and new business."

Camp said Hoke's budget the last fiscal year was \$22 million. A retired military officer, he said he managed a \$21 million budget his last tour in the Army. "Every nickel was accounted for. I'd like to do that for you," he said.

Pete Hathaway (R) told the seniors, "You are very, very important to every one of our lives. Never lose



Joe Troxell speaks with a resident at National Senior Living.

sight you have contributed to the happiness of each and every one of us."

Hathaway explained that voters are required to "stay with your party" during the primary, but, during the general election, "vote for the best person, use your conscience and go from there."

A retired DA for Hoke and Scotland counties, Jean Powell (D) said she chose to stay in Hoke County on retiring. "It is my adopted home and I love it," she said.

Powell said she wants to see good things happen in Hoke County and not read about bad things in the newspaper, adding, "I believe voters want

commissioners who will be as careful or more so with money."

Powell said fiscal responsibility is number one on her list of priorities.

Incumbent Tony Hunt (D) told those present Hoke County is in trouble fiscally "not by what is going on in Hoke County; there are serious problems in this state affecting Hoke County," he said. He indicated strong commissioners with influence at the state level are needed.

Hunt spoke of "mandates without revenues" and related three items that are putting Hoke County in a deficit: economy is in a downswing and investment revenues are down by

\$200,000; the state is withholding \$400,000; and Medicaid costs have exceeded \$400,000 more than expected.

Not present for the forum were incumbent Charlie Daniels (D), Harry Southerland (D), Buddy Blue (R), James Oscar Cunningham (D), Betty Hardaway (D) and Freddie McPhaul (I), who is seeking to run by petition.

Three commissioner seats are available.

Clerk of court

Clerk of court incumbent Vera Hollingsworth (D) introduced herself by telling folks she was born and reared in Hoke County and her grandfather "had a mule that would bring him in town without him even picking up the reins" — and that was how people knew him.

Hollingsworth's short talk ended with her saying, "At your age and wisdom, you need to be treated with respect."

Her opponent, Tim Hawkes (D), was not present.

House seat

James Leach (D), currently commissioner vice chair, is running for a House seat in District 48. "Hoke County has no representative in Raleigh now," he said. "I would like to be the first in years."

Leach told the gathering, "We commit ourselves for you and your service and ask that you do the same for us."

He said a lot of good people are running for office and all are trying to do good things and "make Hoke County number one, but they use different directions."

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