

Crime rate

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drop in crime rates in North Carolina." Raeford Police Chief Mack High echoed Cooper's reasons about property crime.

"The economy is off," High said. "When people are scared and laid off from work, these types of crime are going to happen. We do not have a Berlin Wall around the city limits."

"When crime happens in the county, it can spill over into the city and vice versa. Most of the suspects we arrest are county residents so crime bleeds over into Raeford."

Major Thomas Carlton of the Sheriff's Office agreed somewhat with Cooper.

"Any time the economy is affected by business downsizing, it may cause an increase in property crime," Carlton said. "One of the places county or state leadership cannot afford to cut is law enforcement."

"With limited resources, our Sheriff's Office is trying to maximize services in spite of cutbacks from the county."

Carlton pledged the Sheriff's Office will continue its "assault on crime" and its efforts to eradicate it. He urged county leadership not to "save a dollar" that will ultimately cost more dollars in loss of property and less protection to citizens.

Carlton said his department was proud of the lower violent crime rate.

"I attribute the decrease in violent crime to the September 11 tragedy, and the efforts exerted by our department," Carlton said. "It galvanized the county and brought people together in a more caring posture."

"Victims of rapes are reporting the

crimes as they occur — especially because they know our department is giving them the service they deserve and the support from law enforcement."

Overall crime

Moore and Scotland also experienced an increase in overall crime rates in 2001. Cumberland and Robeson reported a decrease in overall crime, according to the statistics prepared by the SBI.

Hoke fared far better than neighboring Scotland, which experienced an estimated 20 percent leap above the state average in overall crime. Scotland averaged 6,061 per 100,000 of population. In spite of a climb, Moore ranked 18 percent below the state average at 3,264 per 100,000 in 2001.

Even with a decline in violent and property crime from 2000 to 2001, Cumberland still rated 6,356 per 100,000 people — 14 percent above the state average in overall crime. Robeson, ranking worse than Cumberland, was estimated at 7,278 per 100,000 people — approximately 18 percent higher than the average crime index for North Carolina.

Violent crime

Comparing violent crime only on a local level, Hoke showed a decline of approximately 25 percent in number of cases from 2000 to 2001 and a 30 percent reduction compared to the state average. Hoke dropped from 416 per 100,000 in 2000 to 339 per 100,000 in 2001.

Hoke's violent crime rate fell primarily because of a decrease in ag-

gravated assaults - 97 in 2000 and 77 in 2001. Raeford only experienced three reported assaults in 2000, dropping to only two in 2001.

Raeford reported no murders in 2000 or 2001. However, one murder occurred in the county's jurisdiction in 2001, but an arrest was made. Rapes decreased in Hoke from 12 in 2000 to eight in 2001 with only one of those reported within the city limits. Robberies edged slightly lower to 27 cases in 2001 — nine of them occurring in Raeford; this compared to 28 in 2000 of which 12 were reported in Raeford.

Property crime

In 2000, Hoke property crime was measured as 4,669 per 100,000 people. Those statistics rose to 4,962 in 2001 — higher than the state's property crime average of 4,494. Property crime comprised burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft.

The number of burglaries in Hoke soared from 644 reported in 2000 to 756 in 2001, a rise of 112 cases. In 2000, the county experienced 565 burglaries and the city reported 79. In 2001, the county burglaries rose to 610 and Raeford's increased to 146.

Larcenies decreased by 28 in the county to 606 in 2001. In Raeford, larceny incidents increased from 173 in 2000 to 214 in 2001.

Records showed a slight reduction in stolen motor vehicles with 120 vehicles stolen in 2000, and 110 stolen in 2001.

The county's stolen car rate dropped from 109 in 2000 to 99 in 2001, while Raeford's rate stayed the same. The city reported a lower rate of 11 vehicles stolen per year.



Sandhills Community College Hoke Center's Certified Nurses Assistants shown (not in order of appearance) after a recent graduation, are: Amanda J. Bohlander; Samantha R. Bullard; Chase Collins; Joseph S. Creed, Patricia T. Douglas, Lisa Ferrell, John E. Hardy, Viola J. Huskerson; John H. Kabosky; Yolanda M. McLaughlin; Mickie N. Mullins; Wendy D. Ramchand; Rhonda J. Smith; not pictured are: Shanitha L. Bullard and Jamika J. Dunlap.

Schools hire

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Community College as the dean of general education and public service programs. He will serve as the new assistant superintendent of auxiliary services — a title created to officially expand the responsibilities of the finance officer.

"Basically, Mrs. Olivarez was in charge of these responsibilities in her role with the school system," Strickland said. "We are just combining the duties."

Strickland said McFarley will supervise transportation services, child nutrition, finance, technology and plant facilities.

"I am looking forward to having them here on July 1," Strickland said. "I feel very good about both of our choices. Their colleagues have had great remarks to say about them."

"Both are extremely strong in education and development."

Farley has served as assistant superintendent in Stokes for the past nine months. Strickland said Farley's salary is still under negotiation, but will fall somewhere in the \$78,000 range.

Farley formerly served as a principal at Pine Forest High School and E.E. Smith High School in Cumberland County. He has extensive experience as an elementary and high school teacher. Strickland said Farley has focused on classroom education, staffing, leadership development, and providing tools for teachers' needs.

"His philosophy coincides greatly with mine," Strickland said. "He is dedicated to building caring and orderly schools to create a safe community and environment for learning."

McFarley, whose salary is still under negotiation, brings a wide background in finance to Hoke schools, according to Strickland.

"He is accustomed to working with at-risk students, and he is a great grant writer," Strickland said. "He is eager to work with the challenges we have in our county."

"His background is also strong in the administration area and will be a tremendous asset to us."

McFarley was recently promoted to dean of education at Fayetteville Technical Community College where he has been employed for the past several years. He will graduate from

Fayetteville State University in the spring of this year with his doctorate in low wealth studies.

McFarley will be paid \$69,000 per year.

He holds a master of science degree from San Diego University and a bachelor's of science in biochemistry from Florida Southern University.

He formerly served as the director of student services at Fort Bragg for FTCC. He was also previously employed at Nichols Research, integrating the firm's computer systems.

Strickland said neither McFarley nor Farley will be required to reside in Hoke.

Strickland was promoted to superintendent in May after serving in an interim

capacity after former superintendent Mitch Tyler died in March. Olivarez resigned to work with the Wayne County School system as finance director. Her last day will be Friday.

County budget

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Next year's budget leaves the property tax at the current 74 cents per \$100 valuation. According to the tax department, this collection rate will bring in an estimated \$7.4 million in tax revenue.

However, during the recessed meeting on Monday morning, Leach and Bratcher joined Hunt, agreeing they would vote to raise taxes one or two cents if necessary. If it meant avoiding cuts to the school's education budget or laying off county personnel, they said a tax increase was "an option."

However, Commissioners Bobby Wright and Charles V. Daniels said flatly they "would not vote" to raise taxes because "poor people" could not afford to pay more. In a compromise, the board transferred money from the one-half cent sales tax capital projects reserve fund for the school system's expenses, averting a tax hike next year.

"The bottom line is that we have held the tax rate at 74 cents, and we have not taken one penny from our general fund to balance our budget," Leach said. "The school system will also be fully funded."

"I said before I was not going to cut our schools one dime, and I meant it." Commissioners unanimously

agreed to fund the current expense for Hoke Schools of \$3.4 million by transferring an additional \$500,000 from the school capital reserve fund into the general fund. If the school board requests the additional money in a resolution to the commissioners, it will be authorized. The money is already in the budget, they added.

Commissioners agreed upon a general fund appropriation of \$20.7 million, utilizing estimated revenues to balance the budget. This fund included a contingency of \$459,425 for a potential senior center and additional expansion at Rockfish Park.

A state shortfall of withheld revenue was also included as revenue in the budget, totaling \$396,000. County Manager Mike Wood said he was uncertain if this money would be reimbursed to the county since it is still frozen.

Water rates upped

Water rates were adjusted, bringing an increase to the county users. A new rate schedule is intended to encourage conservation of water because of the current drought, a water department official said.

A flat rate of \$9 per month will be assessed without providing for a minimal amount of usage. Water

users will be charged \$3.50 per 1,000 gallons above the monthly fee.

Last year, the \$12.50 minimum included the first 2,000 gallons, and each additional 1,000 gallons cost \$3.

County Manager Mike Wood commended the board for balancing the budget in light of a state shortfall and a Medicaid deficit from the current year and 2002-2003.

Wood estimated the undesignated fund balance would total approximately \$2.5 million, or 13 percent, on June 30. In the 2001-2002 fiscal year, the fund balance was at 20 percent prior to the state freezing assets from the county and Medicaid costs rising.

Among other sources of revenue estimated for next year, were: motor vehicle taxes of \$1.2 million; \$97,000 in court facility fees; \$419,600 in building permits and inspection fees; \$245,000 in Register of Deed fees; and \$52,000 in jail fees.

Fire taxes levied for fire protection services remained the same in every district except Rockfish. A one-cent tax increase, adjusting the total from 8 to 9 cents, was approved. The additional tax will be used for fire protection suits for firefighters and to purchase a new fire truck in the future. Two trucks in Rockfish are 20 years old.



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