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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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County's audit late, shows \$1.1 million deficit

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The Hoke County audit for the fiscal year ending last June 30 — normally presented in November — was presented to the county commissioners last night. It indicated a \$1.1 million deficit, according to auditor Ty Cox, partner in Cox, Gibbs and Thomas in Durham. His

firm was hired last year to replace Raeford CPA Frank Baker.

Cox's audit was also delivered after the deadline required by state auditors at the Local Government Commission.

"The county's audited financial statements were not received by our office until December 12, 2002, well after the due date of October 31, 2002," said Ren Wiles, assistant director of the LGC in

the Department of State Treasurer, in a letter sent to the county dated December 31, 2002. "Although late, this was a considerable improvement over the previous year's statements which were not received until February of the following year."

In last night's presentation, the tardiness of the audit was not mentioned specifically by Cox.

The report showed the deficit last year was because of the state withholding revenue reimbursements of \$396,000. Reduced investment income accounted for another \$270,000 loss. The Hoke County Sheriff's Office, under former sheriff Jim Davis, also overspent its budget by approximately \$106,000, the audit revealed.

Noted in the combined balance sheet

for Hoke, the general fund balance was listed as \$6.1 million. Of those funds, only \$3.4 million represented funds not earmarked for projects or spending.

Commissioners said after the meeting they were unaware and never advised by their administration that the audit had not complied with the state's timetable. Commission Chairman
(See *AUDIT*, page 10A)



William Glenn Barefoot (right), convicted of attempted murder, hears indictments against him for the kidnapping of Hoke businessman Richard Allen.

Felons face new charges in crime spree

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Convicted felons Timothy Lee Jordan and William Glenn Barefoot were back in court last Thursday handcuffed, wearing basic orange. After being found guilty of attempted murder last October, they appeared in a locked Hoke courtroom, without spectators, and presided over by Superior Judge B. Craig Ellis. A grand jury handed down additional criminal indictments against them relating to the robbery and kidnapping

of Richard Allen on March 13, 2001, said District Attorney Kristy M. Newton.

"Mr. Jordan and Mr. Barefoot were each brought in separately to the courtroom to hear the indictments," Newton said. "They are currently serving sentences in state prison for the shooting of Major Dan Skamperle of the Scotland County Sheriff's Office that occurred in Hoke County."

Allen, 70 at the time, was one of the first victims of the outlaws in their violent armed robberies across Hoke,

Robeson and Moore counties, where they left homes like "war zones." Allen was a key witness at Barefoot's and Jordan's trial last year. They were convicted of attempted murder following incidents Newton called a "reign of terror."

The recent charges filed against Barefoot and Jordan in connection with Allen are assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill, second-degree kidnapping, robbery with a dangerous weapon, attempting to break and enter a motor
(See *NEW CHARGES*, page 10A)

McPhatter's tax case goes to trial Monday

Embezzlement charges to be tried later

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Former Hoke County manager Bernice McPhatter's trial on four counts of income tax evasion is scheduled for Monday, according to the N.C. Revenue Dept. An October trial date was postponed in order for McPhatter's attorney to review the state's documents.

McPhatter is being prosecuted by State Attorney Rudy Renfer of the N.C. Attorney General's Office. A spokesman from the Wake clerk of court's office said Raeford Attorney Gregory Thompson remains McPhatter's attorney of record. Monday's trial will take place in Wake County Superior Court in Raleigh at 9:30 a.m.

Special investigator Jocelyn Andrews supervised the nearly six-month probe against McPhatter for the state's revenue department.

According to the criminal division of the state income tax division, McPhatter allegedly failed to disclose all of her income between 1997-2000. Contained in the indict-

ment documents are allegations that she attempted to evade payment of taxes on or about June 17, 1999; August 15, 1999; March 26, 2000; and April 15, 2000.

McPhatter, 46, resigned as county manager in October 2001 under suspicion of county embezzlement. She was served separate warrants on August 19, 2002 by the State Bureau of Investigation for allegedly embezzling \$269,000 of county funds.

District Attorney Kristy Newton announced a Hoke Grand Jury handed down two counts of felony embezzlement and 64 counts of forgery. After surrendering to the SBI on the local embezzlement charges, McPhatter paid a \$100,000 secured bond in order to remain out of jail.

She is still awaiting trial on the embezzlement case. Newton said last
(See *MCPHATTER*, page 10A)



Bernice McPhatter

This Week



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Hoke's top stories are on the web
www.thenews-journal.com



Shown from left, Sgt. Darin Bronson and Bruce Carpenter, forensic technician for the Hoke Sheriff's Office, Raeford PD Greg Thomas, and SBI agent Melissa Jeffries view a footprint impression.

Schools, volunteers devise gang presentation

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Even though gangs may be a sign of the times, Hoke School Superintendent Allen Strickland told the Board of Education the Hoke-Raeford Gang Task Force has cultivated methods to put a stop to illegal gang activity before students can be recruited. Comprised of law enforcement, parents, school administrators and volunteers, the local task force has recently completed a draft of a training presentation that will be available to the community, according to Strickland.

"This presentation will be used in our communities and our schools to heighten awareness of the

signs of gang activity, recognizing and preventing gang violence," Strickland said. "This initiative started with our late school superintendent Mitch Tyler and has continued with the Sheriff's Office and the Raeford Police Department.

"They are very much aware of the activities going on in our county. They keep up with people going and coming out of the county from areas such as California to recruit here. The Hispanic communities are also beginning to organize gang groups — particularly in Robeson County."

Strickland said for more than a year the local gang task force has been meeting. It includes members of the Hoke Juvenile Crime Prevention
(See *GANGS*, page 4A)



SBI agent Melissa Jeffries (center) displays fingerprint powder with Murdock McLaurin and John Joseph.

Officers get free training in investigative techniques

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

"Guess what comes in a pizza box that you cannot eat?" says forensics specialist Melissa Jeffries, an agent with the State Bureau of Investigation. "Paraffin paper. This stuff is great to preserve a footprint — especially if somebody kicked down a door.

"Just tape it down in a pizza box — after you get the print — to store it."

Raeford Police detective Greg Thomas responds, "Yes, but do you deliver in 30 minutes?"

Jeffries laughs then turns serious.

"You bet I can — especially if a homicide is involved," Jeffries says to a class of law officers. "Where did I go? What did I do? What did I touch? These are some of the things to remember at a crime scene."

Jeffries' cryptic comments and crime processing tips came as she conducted in-service training for law enforcement last week in Raeford. Detectives, officers and deputies from the Hoke Sheriff's Office and the Raeford Police Department participated in the introductory class.

(See *OFFICERS TRAINED*, page 7A)