

The News-Journal

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50¢

No. 50 Vol. 95

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, March 5, 2003

Council votes to raze vacant Raeford hotel

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

With negotiations with those who have expressed an interest in the old Raeford Hotel broken down, councilmen voted Monday night to have it torn down — if the demolition cost is reasonable.

Mayor Bob Gentry said an Atlanta firm interested in developing the dilapidated downtown hotel into an assisted living facility had not produced anything in writing. He also said a Raeford man was interested in purchasing the building, located at the intersection of Main and Central.

However, Councilman Eddie McNeill moved to have the hotel demolished, expressing concern about liability since the city owns the building. "If



From a postcard, the old Raeford hotel in its heyday.

a kid sets it on fire, it could burn down half of Raeford," he said. "This has been going on for four years."

Although he joined other councilmen who

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Ruling against Leach stands Moore judge dismisses appeal of Hoke commissioner

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Raeford attorney Harry L. Southerland and his clients. Hoke County Commissioner James Leach and his wife, Valerie, were "no shows" in Moore County Superior Court last Thursday. Initially seeking to reverse a court decision that adversely affected them, Leach said this week they changed their minds. "We decided not to pursue the appeal to prevent the estate of my parishioner, Dorothy Dawkins Allen, from being reopened," Leach said.



Dorothy Allen

in a court order that declared Leach "breached" his duties as executor, and Mrs. Leach "acted

"We have done nothing wrong," he said.

The Leachs face civil litigation concerning allegations by Allen's family that they misappropriated the estate of Mrs. Allen, who died of cancer at age 83 in January 2001. They were removed as personal representatives of Allen's estate last year

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A smiling face of a child is seen as she adopts a pet from The Haven.

Rescuers seek better treatment of animals 700 animals abandoned here last year

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Three animal-rescuers say mistreatment of animals in Hoke is rampant. They cite several cases in a 48-hour period as typical, and say more than two animals are abandoned in Hoke each day.

"We have witnessed the abandonment of more than 700 dogs

and cats in Hoke this past year," said Linden Spears, executive director of The Haven, a rescue, no-kill pet sanctuary in western Hoke. "People have got to take the blinders off," Spears said, "We want to make them aware. They have to have the courage to get involved and start seeing," she said.

"We see terrible things done to animals every day, and we get

numb to it."

One pet owner left a crate of kittens at The Haven recently unbeknownst to Spears until the next day. Finding a vague note attached to the box, Spears presumed the felines were permanently abandoned. However, there were no explicit instructions, she said.

The owner wrote: "Dear Angels, (to kitties) Hope I can see you in one soon."

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Hoke's top stories
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Sandhills Community College reaccredited, commended

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Sandhills Community College Hoke Center has something to brag about. In an era when kudus to colleges are practically extinct, SCC in Southern Pines and its satellite Hoke Center in Raeford have been recognized with a superior commendation. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools has reaccredited Sandhills Community College with honors, culminating years of work by staff, faculty, the board of trustees, foundation board, and community leaders, said SCC President John Dempsey.

"Our college is 40 years old this year,"

Dempsey said. "Obviously, we are thrilled that the visiting committee from the association thought highly enough of us to only issue six recommendations out of 485 requirements — none of which had to do with Hoke County," Dempsey said. "I have only known of one college in my 30 years of experience that I am familiar with having fewer than six recommendations."

Dempsey said Hoke Center ranked high based on the report.

"They were completely pleased with the operations of Hoke Center," Dempsey said. "There were no suggestions or recommendations for it at all."

Dempsey said it is "very unusual" for an off-campus facility such as Hoke's to

attain a similar level as an on-campus site. He said the accreditation committee takes a closer look at satellite facilities, ensuring standards are equal to that of its main campus.

Dempsey also praised SCC Hoke Center's director, Anna McPhatter, for her achievements in the success of the local college.

"I think the fact that Sandhills' Hoke Center was commended is a real tribute not only to Anna and her staff, but to the commitment of all of the people of Hoke County," Dempsey said. "We are very proud of the work Anna and her staff have achieved in Hoke."

According to Dempsey, reaffirming ac-

creditation is a complicated process, and each college in the region must undergo it every 10 years. SCC staff has been preparing several years for the scrutiny by the association. The caliber of classes, services and programs are measured against strict standards, he said.

"This is sort of the ultimate examination paper your colleagues subject you to pass," Dempsey said. "To pass it means a great deal to faculty and, ultimately, to our students."

"We are extremely pleased."

Dempsey addressed an assembly of college employees two weeks ago, relating the accolades. He told them SCC was

(See SANDHILLS, page 3A)

Sheriff convinces commissioners to purchase eight patrol cars

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The board of commissioners unanimously approved on Monday night the purchase of two used patrol cars for the Sheriff's Office in what County Attorney Neil Yarborough described as a "make it so" recommendation. The board also paved the way for Sheriff Hubert Peterkin to immediately order six, new patrol cruisers with equipment. The board agreed the Sheriff's Office would not take

possession of the vehicles until the budget year is over on June 30, according to Commission Chairman Bobby Wright.

"The sheriff was very persuasive of the need for these vehicles," Wright.

Peterkin told the board he would actually be asking the board to acquire 10 new vehicles in the upcoming 2003-2004 budget cycle — six coinciding with the annual rotation policy. He said it is one of the most critical issues and largest expenses facing the operating budget.

(See PATROL CARS, page 7A)

Most missing county equipment found

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Finance Director Scott Edwards told commissioners on Monday night that he and finance technician Ron Scurry searched every county department from broom closets to the county's surplus storage, attempting to trace the county-owned equipment that was thought to be missing. Out of more than \$100,000 of equipment listed in an inventory audit conducted last November, at least 55 to 60 percent of the total items reported missing were located intact, Edwards said.

"Most of the other equipment still unaccounted for was older than five years," Edwards said. "Even if we knew where it was, it would be deemed obsolete and sold by the county as surplus."

Edwards said \$68,369.25 worth of the \$117,776.25 in equipment allegedly missing was found in the departments — "some in plain view" or in other storage areas.

Edwards presented the board with a new policy manual for fixed assets he and Scurry prepared. Scurry will handle the tracking of future fixed assets. He will maintain an inven-

(See EQUIPMENT, page 7A)



Flag donation

Local VFW post 7930 has donated a flag to the National Senior Living assisted care facility. Present for the first raising of the flag are Richard Ferguson (Post commander), Sally Woods (president of the Ladies Auxiliary), Sandra Claggett (commander over District 8) Harold Evans (chief of staff), Jackie Snapp (junior vice-commander), Willie Wood (judge advocate) Reheha Harimon, Thelma McAllister (guard), Charlie "Airborne Willie" Williams, Jack Riley, (a resident of the facility), Susan Baxley (activities director), Penny Pusey (administrator) and Jill Snow (office manager).