

The News-Journal

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50¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, June 4, 2003

No tax increase in proposed county budget

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

No tax hike was included in the proposed \$20.66 million county budget, and the "temptation" to use the reserved fund balance was also avoided, according to County Manager Mike Wood.

Wood presented his annual budget proposal to

county commissioners Monday night.

According to Wood, county employees will benefit from a pay raise this year "across the boards," costing the county approximately \$300,000 if approved by the board. However, Wood recommended a substantial decrease in the school board's proposed budget of \$4.3 million.

The Board of Education had requested an in-

crease of \$754,000 for 2003-2004 above last year's operating budget of \$3.6 million.

"The recommended school current expense remains unchanged at \$3.06 million," Wood said. "This figure includes the additional \$100,000 current expense increase approved mid-year by the commissioners."

However, School Board Chairman Russell Smith

said indications are that Wood's proposal is about \$500,000 less than the \$3.6 million that commissioners funded for the school system in the 2002-2003 fiscal year.

"It is more than a million less than we asked for," Smith said. "It would seem to be a pretty drastic cut to me."

(See COUNTY BUDGET, page 6A)

City budget: no tax hike Council passes budget

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

It took the Raeford City Council less than 20 minutes Monday night to unanimously pass a budget that keeps the tax rate at 47 cents per \$100 valuation.

After reviewing the budget for two weeks, councilmen approved changes by City Manager Mike McNeill that pared \$45,000 from the \$5 million budget he proposed May 19.

McNeill eliminated \$23,000 for the purchase of a new police car; \$2,000 was taken from a \$10,000 fire supplement; the hiring of a customer service position was changed from full-time to part-time with a savings of \$14,250 in wages and benefits; and \$5,750 was taken from contributions. The Literacy Council contribution was eliminated. Councilmen agreed with Mayor Bob Gentry's contention that Literacy's funding should fall under public education. National Guard's contribution was also eliminated; it was pointed out the National Guard is no longer located in the city limits. The Rescue Squad picked up some funds from the National Guard with a contribution of \$7,750 (\$10,000)

(See CITY BUDGET, page 8A)



Celebrating reading

Members of the Golden Knights Parachute Team help Upchurch Elementary School celebrate its accomplishments in the Accelerated Reader Program. Fourth grader Julie Sem (in center with trophy) won first place in the school with the most Accelerated Reader points. Standing behind the Golden Knights are Monica Moore, Principal Hank Richards and part of the student body at Upchurch.

This Week



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of the Year
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Pair arrested
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Sheriff turns up heat on investigation into child's murder

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The unknown killer of five-year-old Brittany Locklear is still at large after more than five years, but now a renewed hunt for his identity is underway, according to Sheriff Hubert Peterkin.

Peterkin said Brittany's murder still captures the concern of law agencies in the high profile case that shocked the Hoke community. It was the first time a Hoke child was slain after being sexually molested, and people are still very upset, he said.

"We are escalating the investigation into the unsolved murder of young Brittany," Peterkin said. "We are planning to increase the reward for the apprehension of the murderer from \$25,000 to \$30,000-\$50,000."

"The Sheriff's Office and the State Bureau of Investigation are still jointly investigating the case."



Brittany Locklear

McDuffie is making sure anything that should have been done was not left undone, Peterkin added.

"Because of the sensitivity of this young girl's murder and the time that has elapsed, we are using every available resource and volunteers from other law agencies," Peterkin said. "People are really digging now to find out who killed her. We visited the sites of her kidnapping and murder yesterday," he said.

"We still have a killer on the loose that took the life of this precious child, and that person needs to be brought to justice for

(See BRITTANY, page 9A)

Peterkin said by taking a fresh approach, the case is being worked "like it was never" investigated before. A team of detectives supervised by Chief Deputy Troy



James "Candy Rose" Stevens, grandfather of Brittany, shakes hands with Sheriff Peterkin, wishing him success in finding her killer.

The News-Journal

News Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD
General Manager

Thanks for the letters, phone calls, casseroles and the spare bedroom offers (okay, slight exaggeration), but I am NOT getting a divorce. Apparently the introduction I wrote to the article by Grettir Asmundarson about his divorce was so poor many folks thought the article was about me. At least the whole debacle was a great source of amusement for friends and family as they looked on while I received emails and phone calls, and noticed people not making eye contact with me.

Anyway, to keep from actually getting divorced I had to promise to correct things at the very beginning of this week's drivel.

(See OTHER STUFF, page 10A)



NJ photographer Hal Nunn took this photo three days before an injured eagle was found; markings indicate it is older than the injured eagle. Danny Walters' eagle eye spotted the raptor dining in a field at the intersection of Arabia and Upchurch roads.

Injured eagle found at Rockfish, sent to raptor center in Charlotte

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

A bald eagle found in eastern Hoke last Friday will probably not recover enough to be released into the wild.

The emaciated raptor, blind in both eyes and with a broken wing, was found by construction workers building a home at a site on Rockfish Road.

The construction workers — with Regency Home Development Corp. — showed compassion, said animal rehabilitator Jasmine Russell. The workers called 9-1-1 and watched after the bird until she and her husband, Mark Russell, also a rehabilitator, arrived, she added.

A dark sheet was thrown over the bird, and Mark picked it up and placed it in a carrier. Keeping the bird in the dark fooled it into thinking it was night, she explained. "They are pretty ferocious when they are threatened," Jasmine said. "We are a predator to them."

There was, however, no fight in the bird that was near death.

The bird, thought to be a male, was taken to Cross Creek Animal Hospital in Fayetteville, where triage work was done on him. Later he was taken to the Charlotte Raptor Center, where he is receiving more intensive

(See EAGLE, page 8A)