

# The News-Journal

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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## Task force wants Hoke to transform itself

### Fields tells board county needs to be forceful in having voices heard on proposed buffer

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Raeford City Attorney Williams Fields said that the first step has been taken in "a hundred-mile journey" to ensure Hoke controls its own future. That, after county commissioners recently joined Raeford's city council in formation of a Hoke

Raeford Land Use Task Force.

Named the Hoke Preservation Project, the unity movement is intended to develop a blueprint for growth. The group will speak as "one voice" to prevent the military or The Nature Conservancy from restricting the use of approximately 7,500 acres of Hoke land without compensation.

During a one-hour presentation, Fields told

commissioners "severe" regulations proposed by state and military officials could establish a one-mile buffer in northwest Hoke between Pope Air Force Base-Fort Bragg, threatening Hoke's growth. Recommendations from the Joint Land Use Advisory Committee included allowing only one home per 10 acres, and not installing water or sewer in the zone.

"I do not think they (state, military officials) had Raeford and Hoke County in mind when they said this would be a 'win-win' situation," Fields said.

"We need to transform this county ourselves. We need to work on our own plan regardless of what folks are trying to do to us."

He said what was entered into by counties (See **TASK FORCE**, page 5A)

## Contracts signed on 800-home 'Westgate' project

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Fayetteville developer Ralph Huff, III has entered into a contract to build 800 homes off U.S. 401 east of Raeford in a \$132 million planned, residential community — the largest to ever be constructed in Hoke.

"We hope to attract active military families, military retirees and Hoke professionals and their families to this community," said Huff, a Hoke native. "My legacy will be twenty years from now that this development puts Hoke 'on the map.'"

"I envision a town being incorporated some day, a town similar to Rockfish."

Westgate will be located at the intersection of Lindsay and Adcox roads. It will encompass 368 acres of farmland purchased for \$10,000 per acre. Westgate also includes preserved wetlands that will be retained as a natural amenity, according to Huff.

"I want to develop nice homes for nice families where every one has a place to live," Huff said. "I want it to also look nice forever. There will be a berm of ornamental landscaping at the grand entrance and a streetscape theme in the community."

"We will also be discussing the possibility with the N.C. Department of Transportation (See **WESTGATE**, page 4A)



From left: Ralph Huff, president of H&H Constructors, Inc.; wife Linda, general manager; brother, Ron Huff, vice president-partner.

### This Week



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## Hoke High security plan criticized by fired guards

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Editor

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

Five security guards at Hoke County High School recently lost their jobs after an enhanced School Resource Program was established for next year. Two of the guards, Richard Blue and John Carthens, said they are upset they were not given notice of being fired, or even told why.

"I think it would be better to have a combination of both SROs and security guards," Blue said. "We may not have been trained except on the job, but we got the job done."

"I think we did a real, good job."

Hoke School Superintendent Allen Strickland announced last month that the

Sheriff's Office would provide certified school resource officers paid by a federal grant, joining more than 80 percent of the counties in North Carolina who already employ SROs. He said he met with the security guards to explain the situation.

"We are beefing up the security, and parents will feel more secure," Strickland said. "The work we are doing with our crisis revisions and updates of our crisis management plan, and the work we are doing with various agencies in the county that handle emergencies can only enhance what we are doing."

It will improve safety and security at the high school."

Hoke Assistant School Superintendent George McFarley said the school board's decision was no reflection on the caliber of service provided by the former security



John Carthens



Richard Blue

guards. He denied the security guards, who were contract employees, were not adequately informed.

"I personally met with all five of the security guards and briefed them of the situation," McFarley said. I also sent them

a follow-up letter, offering them alternative employment.

"We felt we had a moral obligation to offer them some other job in our school system, which we did."

(See **SECURITY GUARDS**, page 4A)

## Alleged smuggling smoochers arrested after drugs found

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

A local child care substitute teacher and her friend never got to kiss their boyfriends, both inmates at Hoke Correctional Institution at McCain, on Sunday as planned. In a "bizarre scheme," the two, Hoke women were arrested before they could allegedly smuggle drugs "mouth-to-mouth" by kissing the inmates, said

Chief Deputy Troy McDuffie of the Sheriff's Department.

"They were quite surprised when our narcotics detective and a detective from The Raeford Police Department showed up," McDuffie said. "We seized seven grams of marijuana. Someone tipped us off they might possibly be in possession of drugs."

"They admitted they planned to kiss the inmates and each transfer two, deflated

balloons containing marijuana. The inmates would swallow the balloons, passing the sealed substance through their digestive systems.

"They would retrieve it later on to use. We apprehended them before the kisses transpired."

Gertrude Grimsley Batton, 52, of East Fifth Avenue, and Janice Riddle, 51, of Red Springs Road, were each charged with three felony counts of intent to de-

liver and sell marijuana, possession of a controlled substance in a prison facility, and conspiracy.

Batton, who was allegedly in possession of the drugs, was placed on a \$3,500 secured bond, and Riddle was given a \$2,500 secured bond. Both were still in the custody of Hoke County Jail on Monday.

McDuffie said Batton is a substitute (See **KISSING**, page 4A)

## Attorney, former legislator Charles A. Hostetler dies

Former State House Representative and local attorney Charles Anderson Hostetler, 78, of Raeford died Tuesday at Open Arms Retirement Home after a long illness.

He was a two-term legislator from 1957 to 1961 and was Chief Deputy Insurance Commissioner in the early

1950s. He was later a partner in the law firm Gore and Hostetler, and then senior partner in Hostetler and McNeill of Raeford. He was attorney for the Hoke County Commissioners and Board of Education, and retired in 1990. During his career he served on the N.C. (See **HOSTETLER**, page 5A)



Charles A. Hostetler

## 25 pounds of marijuana seized in morning raid

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

A Raeford man was apprehended during a pre-dawn narcotics raid conducted this morning in a joint undercover operation by the Raeford Police Department and the Sheriff's Office.

At least 25 pounds of marijuana were seized in the heart of a Raeford residential neighborhood (See **RAID**, page 4A)



Raeford police detective Greg Thomas displays confiscated items.