

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

50¢

No. 20 Vol. 96

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, August 6, 2003

Officials say state is blackmailing Raeford

\$296,000 grant for water project approved if the city will change its vote on Fort Bragg plan

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A written ultimatum was sent to the City of Raeford by the state's Clean Water Management Trust Fund board last week, awarding a grant for \$296,000 "with strings attached," according to Raeford City Manager Mike McNeill. "Receiving the grant is 'contingent

upon' Raeford's city council adopting the controversial Fort Bragg-Pope Air Force Base Joint Land use study," McNeill said. "This is like blackmail. We are as serious about rejecting the joint land use plan as the Clean Water board is at cramming it down our throats. "They have threatened to withdraw funds for this grant that would have benefited the Cape Fear River basin. It

would help control flooding and water pollution," he said.

"If we do not agree to their stipulation, we won't get the money. One project has nothing to do with the other."

The grant letter to McNeill was written on July 22 by deputy director Francine Durso of CWMTF, but not received by McNeill until July 29. A deadline of August 1 was set for Raeford

officials to respond agreeing to endorse the military regional land use plan. McNeill requested an extension until September 8, and asked the trust fund board the rationale in adding the special condition.

"Please note that the City (Raeford) must actually adopt the (land use) recommendations before the Clean Water Management Trust Fund will prepare a

draft contract for this grant for execution by the city," Durso wrote. "Please provide a letter to my attention confirming that the city will adopt the Fort Bragg-Pope Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study recommendations and a time frame for adoption."

Unrelated

McNeill said CWMTF's board did (See BLACKMAIL, page 6A)

Rockfish project gets mixed reviews

Development to cross county line, board tables decision on rezoning needed land

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A decision for approving a higher density zoning for a multi-million dollar Rockfish residential development was postponed by county commissioners on Monday evening after opposition from property owners.

Some Hoke residents urged support for their community to remain rural, submitting a petition signed by 95 people protesting the proposed project. The future development planned by Huff & Caviness of Fayetteville would be split, building homes in Cumberland and Hoke counties.

"They would use separate schools and law enforcement protection on each side." Commission Vice Chairman

Charles V. Daniels said after the meeting. "I think it would be very confusing."

The board voted to "table" the matter for further study after Commissioner Jean Powell, who did not vote initially, realized her not voting would count as an automatic yes against the project. She asked for her vote to be withdrawn.

"Obviously, folks are divided on the board," Powell said. "I am in favor of development. I think development is generally good in Hoke county."

"In fairness, I would like to change my vote and ask that this matter be tabled to look at the land."

Without her vote, a 2-2 split vote side. (See ROCKFISH PROJECT, page 8A)



Reba Galvan, a paralegal with National Data Access Service in South Carolina, uses the new computer software system at Hoke's Register of Deeds office.

Register of Deed's office revamped

New computers installed; next, a possible move to bigger office

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke's Register of Deed's office is becoming more user-friendly with new computer systems, and it may soon be relocated from the Hoke County Courthouse to its own building because of cramped conditions.

"We have invested in new software and computers that we are leasing to make finding records more convenient for people," Register of Deeds Onnie Dudley said.

"There is also a lack of space in our courthouse office. There is no place to store records. In two more months, we will be completely out of space," she said.

"The county has entered into an option to buy the former Purcell Funeral Home Building on Campus Avenue, and, hopefully, they will purchase it

within the next few weeks for us to move."

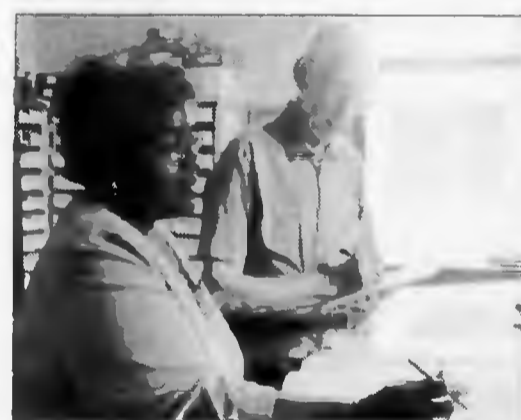
Dudley, a 25-year employee in the

top post vacated by Della Maynor-Bowen in January 2003. She is assisted by Hazel McLaughlin, assistant register of deeds, and Camille Hurst, deputy register of deeds.

As of June 30, the Deed's agency earned \$316,799.96 for the county. Last month, alone, 900 documents were processed by Dudley and her staff.

Logan System is providing software and consulting for the office's six computers, charging \$40,000 per year for the service. Innovations include clients having access to records on three new computers in the upstairs vault, and printing out documents directly instead of

copying from the larger books of documents. Three computers and copiers in the front office add convenience for (See REGISTER OF DEEDS, page 6A)



Onnie Dudley, Register of Deeds, helps Raeford historian Locke MacDonald find a document.

Deed's office, said she is pleased with improvements at the Register of Deeds. She returned out of retirement as former assistant register of deeds to accept the

This Week



Young riders compete in honor of soldiers page 1B

Men sought in drive-by shootings page 8A

Livestock agent joins Extension Service page 4A

Hoke High graduates hooked on skydiving page 6A

Index

- Births 3B
- Business/Farm 4A
- Calendar 2B
- Classifieds 6-7B
- Deaths 8A
- Editorials 2-3A
- Legals 4-5B
- Public Record 8A
- Religion 7A
- Schools 4A
- Socials 3B
- Sports 5A
- Weddings 3B

Hoke's top stories are on the web; send us stories, subscribe

www.thenews-journal.com

Six to vie for council

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Filings for Raeford's municipal election ended in the last-day registration of a newcomer after more than three weeks without political activity. Ron Scurry, Hoke's assistant finance director, filed for city council at 9 a.m. last Friday.

"I think that public service is a very high calling," Scurry said. "We all should want to become involved in public service."

The race includes three incumbents and three aspiring candidates to fill three city council seats. A campaign period of slightly less than three months remains until the November 4 election.

A flurry on opening day, July 6, resulted in three incumbents — John Jordan, Wayne (See CITY FILING, page 3A)

The News-Journal

News

Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD
General Manager

"Politics is supposed to be the second oldest profession. I have come to realize that it bears a very close resemblance to the first." — Ronald Reagan

If Raeford wants \$296,000 from the state for a water project, it's going to have to — how shall we put this delicately? — put out. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund board has sent a letter to the city saying, Hey, nice grant application! Great idea! Count us in for half! Oh wait. What's this? We hear you didn't go along with the buffers around Fort Bragg? Hmmm... [sneaky pause] We'll give you the money

you want IF you change your vote.

Incredible, huh?

Besides begging the connection of a water project to a land use issue not even geographically connected to the city, the trust fund board has taken to blackmail, and no, that's not too strong a word.

However, rather than begin a movement to secede from the state, let us take the high road and realize that the folks in Raleigh do not yet understand our objections to the Fort Bragg-Pope Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study recommendations. Let's go over them again.

It is not that we're against planning, or against Fort Bragg (See OTHER STUFF, page 8A)



Problems on the line

Sprint repairmen Jim Barton, left, and Mark Smith work at a location across from East Hoke Middle School. Excessive rain and storms have caused problems for telephone users and kept employees busy.