

# The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

50¢

No. 23 Vol. 96

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, August 27, 2003

## Lead in Brittany case points to former resident

### Bank robbery suspect investigated in murder case

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

A former Hoke resident active in youth and community activities has not only been charged with the armed robbery of a Moore County bank in late July, he is also being investigated concerning the unsolved case of one of Hoke's most notorious crimes, according to authorities.

Bank robbery suspect Keith Douglas Londeree, 44, of Fox Run Lane in Carthage, has been questioned by State Bureau of Investigation Agent Jay Tilley and two Hoke Sheriff's detectives in connection with the murder of five-year-old Brittany Locklear, according to Carthage Police Chief Chris McKenzie.

"I do not know what the outcome of the interview



Keith D. Londeree

was," McKenzie said.

Brittany, a resident of Gainey Road, was found murdered on January 6, 1998 in south Hoke after a massive 36-hour search. Three Hoke sheriffs, including Sheriff Hubert Peterkin, have grappled with numerous leads that still have not led to an arrest.

Londeree is currently in custody at the Moore County Jail on a secured bond of \$150,000. He is charged with robbery with a dangerous weapon and assault by pointing a gun after allegedly robbing the BB&T Bank in Carthage. Additional federal charges

(See BRITTANY CASE, page 5A)

## State gives city more time to comply with grant restriction

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

The Clean Water Management Trust Fund board has granted an extension until October 31 for Raeford officials to respond to "contingency" conditions required to receive a \$296,000 storm water grant.

The decision by CWMTF to attach a special condition for Raeford to qualify — or risk losing grant funds — may have also been based on flawed information, according to records obtained by *The News-Journal*.

Raeford City Manager Mike McNeill said the city council protested the unrelated stipulation imposed by CWMTF. Clean Water's board initially

issued an ultimatum in July, requiring Raeford officials adopt the controversial Fort Bragg-Pope Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study by August 1.

After a request by McNeill, a second letter from CWMTF postponed the deadline for a response by Raeford.

"The Clean Water Management Trust Fund understands that the City of Raeford has substantial concerns about the Fort Bragg-Pope Air Force Base Joint Land Use Study recommendations and objects to adoption of the JLUS as a condition for accepting a grant from CWMTF," Bill Holman, CWMTF executive director, wrote in an August 22 response letter. "CWMTF will extend the deadline

(See STORMWATER GRANT, page 7A)



Parade marshal

James "Dan" Daniels, right, a city employee for 17 years, will lead the N.C. Turkey Festival Parade in downtown Raeford September 18. See related article, page 4A.

## Progressive bank robbed for 2nd time in 6 weeks

Progressive State Bank was robbed Thursday afternoon, the second robbery in a six-week period. Each time the thief was a lone man, but says Police Chief Mack High, different men were responsible for the robberies.

Thursday's robbery was reported at 2:30 p.m., when a slim black male, wearing glasses, presented a note to a teller with a request for money. The man implied he had a weapon, according to the chief. The man left on foot with an "insignificant" amount of cash, High said.

Progressive, located on Harris Avenue, was robbed at 9:30 a.m. July 9, also by a lone black man. The SBI and FBI are investigating both robberies and no arrests have been made. The robber was not wearing a mask in either case, High said. No injuries were reported.

Raeford-Hoke Crimestoppers is offering a reward in the robberies. Anyone with information is asked to call Detective Greg Thomas at the Raeford Police Dept. Anonymous calls are welcome, according to Thomas.

### This Week



Chuck Anglin is Kiwanis lt. governor page 2B

Hoke unemployment up page 8A

Bucks begin football season page 6A

### Index

Births	3B
Calendar	4B
Classifieds	6-7B
Deaths	3A
Editorials	2A
Engagements	3B
Legals	4-5B
Public Record	3A
Religion	8A
Schools	4B, 8A
Socials	3B
Sports	6A

Hoke's top stories are on the web; send us stories, subscribe  
www.thenews-journal.com

## Land use commission to hear counties' alternatives

### Leaders of effort to legislate buffers around Fort Bragg say they're open to possible revisions



Examining a land use study update are County Manager Mike Wood, Raeford City Manager Mike McNeill, and Commissioner Jean Powell.

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

The Fort Bragg-Pope Air Force Base Regional Land Use Advisory Commission voted last week to give opposing counties or cities a chance to present alternatives for compatible land use rather than "splintering off" without an agreement, according to retired General Clint Willis, a Scotland commissioner and chairman of the commission.

"If there has ever been a question that we need a land use plan, the resounding answer is yes," Willis told the commission last Thursday. "We are getting a lot of players in this act."

"I do think there is a real significant need to tie these things together. We are a friendly military state, and we are going to stay that way."

This, before final recommendations on a Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) will be presented to the N.C. Generally Assembly next year. The JLUS commission is

urging passage of compatible land use around North Carolina's military bases such as Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base. The plan will be open for possible revision after an October meeting is scheduled.

JLUS vice chairman Don Porter, Hoke's executive director of economic development, was instrumental in arranging a fall meeting to discuss options to the plan. He represents Hoke as a voting member of the commission.

"The City of Raeford's council and Hoke commissioners met on Monday night, and they discussed some talking points about this study," Portersaid. "They have done some great work."

Willis said he would like to see a resolution from Hoke and Raeford on their ideas, along with Cumberland's. Even though 17 recommendations were approved by the commission in May, Willis said he was aware that the City of Raeford, Hoke and Cumberland counties have re-

(See BRAGG BUFFER, page 7A)

## Judge scheduled, preparations continue for trial of McPhatter

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

District Attorney Kristy M. Newton is busily preparing for the upcoming trial of former county manager Bernice McPhatter on allegations that she embezzled \$269,347.90 of county funds.

With less than six weeks left until the October 6 trial, Newton announced that a Hoke-based judge will not be presiding over the trial.

"Superior Court Judge Jack Thompson of Cumberland County has been assigned to the bench from July until December," Newton said. "He will be the judge for the Bernice McPhatter trial."

McPhatter, who simultaneously served as Hoke county manager and finance director, is charged with four counts of embezzlement for allegedly stealing county moneys between July 1994 and

November 2000, and 64 counts of forgery and uttering.

Between December 1998 and October 2001, close to the time of her resignation, McPhatter is accused of embezzling, "corruptly" using and misapplying travel stipends of \$23,100. This amount is included in the embezzlement charges.

A difference of opinion on whether McPhatter's case should be tried in Hoke, or relocated to another county seems to exist between defense attorney Gregory Thompson and Newton. However, neither one is commenting on the possibility of a change of venue.

A marketing survey was conducted by Focus Group Inc., a Chapel Hill-based research firm in the beginning of August. Final statistics have been completed by the surveyors after they randomly contacted Hoke citizens, asking their reactions and opinions about the McPhatter

embezzlement case.

Newton would not reveal the outcome of the findings, or if she had hired the company.

"This is an issue critical to the case," Newton said. "It would not be proper for me to comment outside of a courtroom."

"All hearings are open to the public, and my comments will be restricted to the courtroom."

Thompson has declined commenting on the case or issuing any statement from McPhatter. Thus far, no plea bargaining request has reportedly occurred.

In a separate criminal case, Newton said the N.C. State Attorney's office will be handling a N.C. Department of Revenue income tax evasion trial regarding McPhatter. It had been postponed. The trial was switched from the state's jurisdiction to the Wake County District Attorney's office earlier this year after

State attorney Rudy Renfer resigned from the State Attorney's staff.

"Rudy Renfer has returned," Newton said. "I understand he has taken back the Bernice McPhatter income tax case from the Wake DA's office."

"I anticipate we will probably go to trial before they prosecute her for the other allegations."

### Witnesses

Newton's staff has already subpoenaed most witnesses for the prosecution.

"We have issued approximately 40 subpoenas — many of them already served," Newton said. "Our staff is directly serving them with assistance from the Hoke Sheriff's Office."

"All commissioners during the time Mrs. McPhatter was county manager have been served."

They include Commission Chairman

(See MCPHATTER TRIAL, page 7A)