

The News-Journal

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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Land use plan for Bragg buffer is shelved

With legislated zoning 'unlikely,' Pentagon prefers voluntary conservation easements

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The controversial plan to create a one-mile buffer around Fort Bragg by restricting development is dead. The military will instead seek to convince owners of land adjacent to the base to sell conservation easements rather than allow the land to be developed.

"The proposed Joint Land Use Study plan for Fort Bragg Pope Air Force Base will remain historical, in my opinion, but not legally enforceable," Chief Planner Jim Dougherty of The N.C. Division of Community Assistance said on Monday.

Dougherty, facilitator of the JLUS, said local criticism was heard all the way to the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. down to the governor's office in Raleigh.

"Its (JLUS) impact has come and gone," Dougherty, an employee of the N.C. Department of Commerce, said. "It was like a wave, and it crashed."

"The long and short of it is the N.C. General Assembly does what it wants, and it is highly unlikely they will do most of these things recommended in the study," he said.

"I want to reassure people this probably means that it (proposed implementation) is over."

One of the biggest stakeholders and opponents of the plan, Hoke County, risked growth restrictions on almost 21,000 acres if the study would have been endorsed by the state legislature.

Local leaders expressed concern over three of the recommendations: Limiting one dwelling per 10 acres in some

areas; prohibiting development of water and sewer infrastructure on land deemed critical or important to sustain adjacent training at Fort Bragg; and forbidding industrial or commercial growth within a one mile buffer around

the bases. With a prediction that Fort Bragg's growth will increase by 50 percent in the next 30 years, Dougherty said, military and state officials are taking a more cooperative approach to land acquisition in counties around the base.

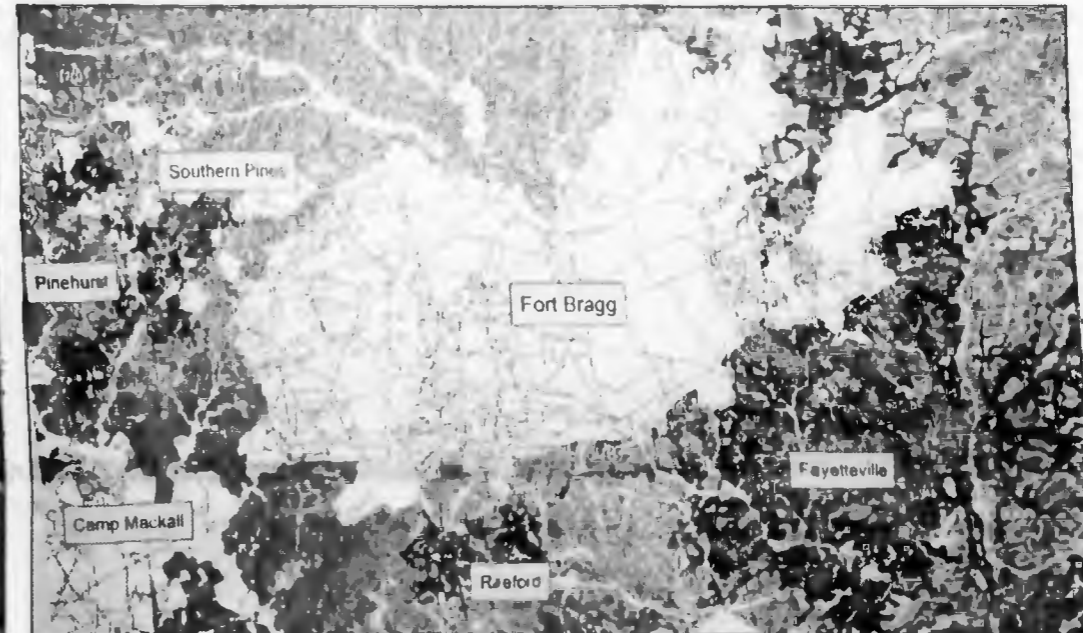
Property owners will be encouraged to voluntarily sell their development rights, and individual counties will be given the option to control local development and growth in a one-mile buffer around the bases, he added.

"It is a means to protect training around the bases and still promote the local tax base," Dougherty said.

This sudden development was announced after more than 50 dignitaries (See *LAND BUFFER*, page 8A)



Clockwise from immediate left: Hoke Commission Chairman Bobby Wright and former Raeford resident Jimmy Teal, a member of the Fayetteville Planning Department; In the red, projected growth patterns around Fort Bragg; William Fields, founder of the Hoke Preservation Project, and Col. Greg Bean, head of the Army Environmental Center; Commissioner Jean Powell and Steve Connell of the Preservation Project.



Assistance team reports progress to Manning

Superintendent defends system, criticizes team for trying to take credit for work in progress

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

An analysis of Hoke County's school system sent to Superior Court Judge Howard Manning includes complimentary and concerned messages.

Hoke's school system was analyzed in a 90-day educational progress report by the state Department of Public Instruction on February 9.

The reports are required by a court order.

The DPI's team is assigned to Hoke until the N.C. Court of Appeals settles a

low wealth lawsuit between the county and the state after it protested the verdict in Hoke's favor.

"Ironically, the state and assistance team criticize Hoke's professional development plan on the one hand and then turn around and praise it on the other," Strickland said. "The court firmly established that teacher turnover and retention was a significant problem and challenge for Hoke County."

"Hoke's position on this has been and still is that Hoke lacks the resources, financially and otherwise, to draw highly qualified teachers to the district and to

retain teachers in the district."

Strickland's rebuke to DPI comes after Hoke and four other low wealth counties sued the state and achieved a legal victory

last year after a nine-year court battle. Manning ruled students in poorer counties, who are at risk, should receive a (See *MANNING REPORT*, page 7A)

Report urges more certified teachers

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Despite problems in Hoke's school system, the state Department of Public Instruction said the system is showing evidence of improvements — "impressive and hopeful." The local educators

were commended for utilizing existing resources. But DPI officials said it was vital to hire more certified teachers.

A primary objective published by DPI is to ensure the ninth grade class of 2004 will experience 100 percent of its students graduating from Hoke High. While the (See *CERTIFIED TEACHERS*, page 7A)

N.C. Bar delays trial seeking disbarment of Raeford attorney

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The N.C. State Bar postponed a trial scheduled for last Friday by its disciplinary hearing committee, pressing for disbarment of Raeford attorney Harry Southerland.

At the request of his recently hired defense attorney, Southerland was granted a temporary reprieve from appearing. He

hired Fayetteville lawyer Glenn Adams to represent him, according to Root Edmonson, legal counsel for the Bar.

A new trial date has not been set yet, Edmonson said.

In a civil complaint filed against Southerland on October 8, the Bar alleged he engaged in "dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, and numerous criminal acts."

The State Bar, consisting of legal peers,

regulates the conduct and ethics of North Carolina lawyers, issuing their licenses to practice law. The agency alleged Southerland breached the Revised Rules of Professional

Conduct by allegedly misrepresenting clients and misappropriating their moneys.

Southerland denied the allegations.

The State Bureau of Investigation, in a separate criminal probe, is also investi-

gating Southerland.

A member of the Hoke Board of Education and former part-time foreclosure attorney for Hoke County, Southerland said he has not done anything wrong. He insists the Bar's allegations are invalid and not researched accurately. He did not comment on the SBI inquiry.

Southerland responded in a November 12 rebuttal to the Bar, denying all the (See *TRIAL DELAYED*, page 6A)

They turn cans into homes

By LAWREN
SHEPARD
Staff writer



Robert Hawker

You can't turn an aluminum can into a home for a family of four. Unless, that is, you work for the Aluminum Cans Build

Habitat for Humanity Homes program, a Habitat for Humanity project organized and funded by the aluminum industry.

Since 1976, Habitat for Humanity has worked to build more than 150,000 houses in 89 countries around the world, accord-

ing to the program's website. Habitat has constructed two homes in Hoke County and plans to build more.

"We could do a lot better if we had funds," said Robert Hawker, one of the ACBHHH volunteers in the county. Robert and Janet Hawker have donated their time and money to the Hoke program for several years.

"It's been very rewarding," said Robert Hawker. "It seemed to bring the community closer."

As part of the ACBHHH program, the Hawkers collect aluminum beverage cans in a trailer that they purchased and donated. The trailer is parked on Central (See *CANS INTO HOMES*, page 6A)



Western Hoke has unique ecosystem

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School chief appeals case to Hayes

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Legislators cautiously optimistic

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