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First phase of \$2 million streetscape on go Raeford to get new look as City Council approves downtown renovations

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Downtown Raeford is to have a new look in the future. City councilmen approved the first phase of a streetscape project for the revitalization of Main Street Monday night.

Members of the Redevelopment Commission of the City of Raeford, who presented the plan,

"We've talked about it for 20 to 30 years. I feel like it's time to move forward." —
City Councilman
Eddie McNeill

applauded after the action was taken. Commission Chairman Steve Connell told councilmen, "We're ready to get to work immediately."

At Connell's request, the council authorized the commissioning of a design study by an engineering firm, The Wooten Company, at a cost of \$38,000. The city would pay \$28,000, as Hoke County has already committed \$10,000, Connell said.

Councilmen also committed to half a million in funding for Phase I, with short-term financing/line-of-credit bidding taken from local financial agencies followed by application for long-term financing from USDA Ru-

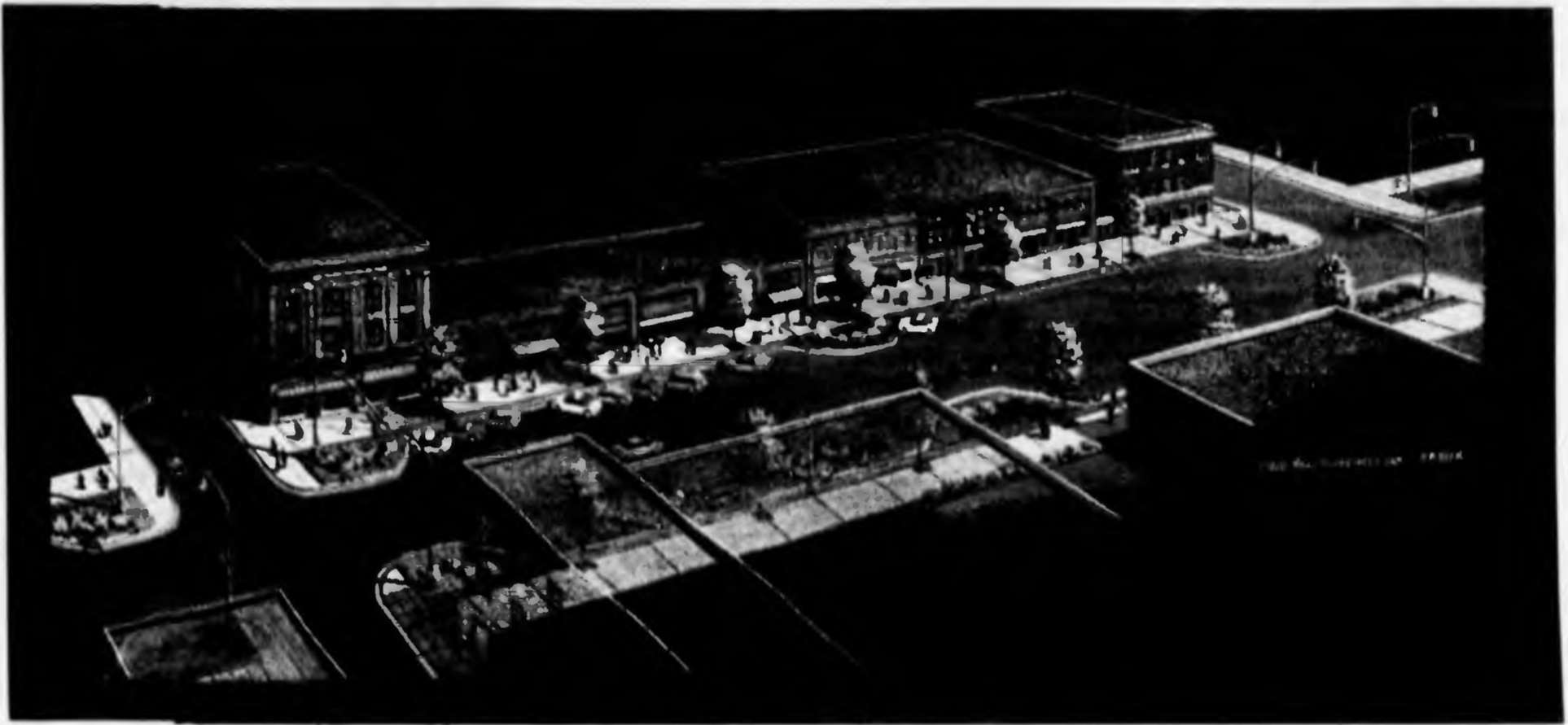
ral Development.

Cost of the entire streetscape project — planned in three phases — is estimated at \$2 million. Cost of the Phase I is estimated at \$1.1 million but expenses to the city will amount to half a million because of \$255,000 in grants

garnered for downtown revitalization. It is hoped Raeford will receive more grants. Revitalization is a top priority for the community under the 21st Century Community program, and, as a 21st Century Community, Raeford has first dibs on state grants.

The three phases of the streetscape would encompass Main Street from Campbell to Donaldson avenues and calls for new sidewalks, new street lighting, new landscaping, benches, new traffic signals and crosswalks. The N.C. Dept. of Transportation will also re-

pave Main Street, a project that was put on hold awaiting the city council's decision on the streetscape plan. DOT did not want newly resurfaced streets dug up for utility lines to be relocated from overhead to underground.
(See *STREETSCAPE*, page 10A)



A concept of what downtown Raeford might look like after renovations. The former Raeford Hotel, shown at the corner of Main and Central, will be demolished with a turn lane widening the intersection.

County may partner with PWC to spur growth

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke commissioners are planning to pursue a sewer service agreement with the Fayetteville Public Works Commission to accommodate the eastern part of the county. A hub of commercial and residential development is expected to percolate urban growth from Rockfish to U.S. 401, according to Commission Chair-

man Bobby Wright.

Coinciding with the push for infrastructure to increase development, the

use plan. "The land use study, which we plan to contract with The Wooten Company for, will entirely encompass the

move forward with it."

County Manager Mike Wood said the board would also need to enact supporting "legislation" to accompany land use objectives in the future.

"On top of the land use plan and designations, policies become critical," Wood said.

The board voted unanimously at the retreat to allow Linda Revels, current
(See *PARTNERSHIP*, page 4A)

"You are going to have much more population to the east. You are looking literally at new towns." — PWC representative Tom McNeill

board is also currently advertising for a professional planner to implement a land

county, beginning probably in the eastern region," Wright said. "I think we need to

Process of hiring new Parks & Rec director under fire

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke County commissioners will likely decide at their first meeting in April who will be the successor of former Hoke Parks and Recreation director Elgin Blue, who resigned suddenly on February 20. At least one of the job applicants from among 12 has criticized county officials' delay in hiring a replacement for Blue.

"The application period should never have been opened twice," Holly Lauder said. She applied in the first go-round and now faces competition from four other candidates.

Her concern over the ethics of the hiring process was echoed by Commission Vice Chairman Charles V. Daniels, but for a different reason. He questioned if the position was merely reopened by County Manager Mike Wood to solicit at least

one application from a personal friend. "I know the name of the individual who was approached, a local resident, but I do not want to reveal his name, because of confidentiality," Daniels said. "I am concerned that we treat everyone fairly and equally in the hiring process without playing favorites."

County Manager Mike Wood, serving as interim Parks and Rec director, said there was no basis for concern, and he was

"not even aware" four more applicants had applied in the second go-round. It was his decision to reopen the filing period between March 3 and 11 after the first one ended on February 27.

"The county justifiably reopened the position to provide an opportunity for applicants to apply when the snow storm struck," Wood said. "We did not want to exclude someone who may have planned
(See *PARKS AND REC*, page 4A)

Crull found not guilty of assaulting Hoke High student

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Former Hoke school safety resource officer Robert Wayne Crull was found not guilty



Robert Crull

of assaulting a Hoke High School student in an incident in the school cafeteria one year ago. Judge James Gregory Bell, a Robeson County district court judge, presided over the trial, which lasted for more than two hours.

Fayetteville attorney Larry McGlothlin successfully defended Crull, exonerating him from the misdemeanor charge of as-

saulting student Lamar Crawford. Hoke Assistant District Attorney Gregg Illikainen prosecuted the case. The trial had been postponed at Crull's request for more than seven months, pending arrangements for a defense attorney.

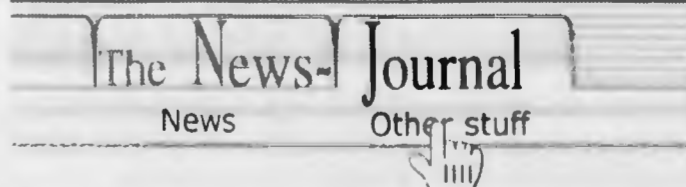
"I am pleased with the turnout of the verdict," Crull said. "I feel like justice was served."

"I feel just great after this pending for one year."

Crull testified on his behalf, as did former Hoke High assistant principal Mary Calhoun, currently employed in another county. Crawford testified for the prosecution along with a Hoke High teacher and at least one student.
(See *ACQUITTED*, page 7A)



Candidate stumps in Raeford
Senate Republican Leader Patrick Ballantine made a swing through Raeford in his bid for governor. The story is on page 4A.



By KEN MACDONALD
General Manager

Like the flowers that are beginning to bloom, the children here in Lake Wobegon press on to maturity. "Momma, don't kiss me in front of anybody anymore," a grandchild of one of our staff asked his mother over the weekend.

Last week I watched as a teenager at a school event walked by an adult from his neighborhood. She enthusiastically greeted the student, but as he walked by

with both arms firmly at his side, he only poked one hand about an inch out in such a discreet motion the best auctioneer would have missed it. It was more of a twitch than a wave. "Are you his mother?" I joked. She had taken no offense and just laughed.

The shrinkologists call it *individuation*, a normal stage of adolescent development when kids see their parents as dorks, their friends as gods and themselves as unfortunate wards of their families.
(See *OTHER STUFF*, page 7A)

This Week



Andrea Myagi
is UNCP
homecoming queen
page 3B

Deadbeat parent
house arrest on hold
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Maynor, Fairley make
All-Conference
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Hoke Winterguards
compete for AIA
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