

The News-Journal

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50¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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School board takes second look at calendar

Teachers' protest prompts board to revisit mandatory end to year round schools

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

It's back to the blackboard with a compromise on the controversial school calendar changes for 2005-2006.

Last week, the Hoke Board of Education authorized School Superintendent

Allen Strickland to conduct a feasibility study. He will determine whether parents and teachers prefer retaining a year-round calendar or converting to a traditional calendar for Hoke's elementary and middle schools.

This reversal of the school board's mandatory position for all elementary

and middle schools to revert from a year-round calendar to a traditional one followed 28 teachers threatening to quit over the transition.

When the school board wiped out the year-round calendar in August, it did not seek the opinions of local educators. The board cited Gov. Easley's urging school

districts to start school later in the summer to help promote tourism across the state. Then the state legislature passed a bill saying no schools could start the school year before August 25 or end school later than June 10. The law did exempt year-round school, however.

Some local teachers and parents

protested the board's decision. Teachers insisted reverting to the traditional calendar would create academic challenges for schools currently using intercessions on the year-round calendar for remediation of at-risk students. Some teachers also protested that the transition from (See YEAR-ROUND, page 8A)

Fish and fishy tales abound

Mullet Roast is recipe of food, reports on business, government

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Local manufacturers and prosperous business folk enjoyed the reigning king of fish in Hoke County with the celebration of the annual Mullet Roast last evening. Sponsored by the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce, guests dined on giant mullet, gave thanks to their maker, shared jokes, and told of grand things happening economically.

The Rev. Ian Rankine, pastor of Antioch Presbyterian Church prayed in his invocation, "God, thanks for all the work being done in our county and city. We thank you for our many blessings and this celebration to share how we have grown."

Emcee Gene Shelnett welcomed everyone to share enlightenment, education, entertainment and that delicacy from the sea, the mullet. For first-timers to the ritual mullet roast which is cooked on spears over flames, Shelnett said there (See MULLET, page 6A)



Clockwise from above: Hank Richards, Hoke Board of Education member elect, digs into a massive mullet. • Derrick McArthur, area rental manager for the new Enterprise rent-a-car branch in Raeford, doubles up on mullet at the annual roast. • Talking turkey and mullet from left is Raz Autry, retired Hoke school superintendent, Marvin Johnson, owner of the House of Raeford, and an invited dignitary.

This Week

Molly Griffie of Hoke County, Miss Cumberland Carolina.



Raeford holds parade page 1B

Hoke hosts playoff game page 7A

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Coach Pecora has his day page 6A

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Turnaround in Hoke County finances praised

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

From a one-time windfall of \$1.3 million generated in 2003 to wise management practices in 2004 that kept the county afloat, Hoke County is in decent financial shape, according to Scott Edwards, Hoke finance director.

Last year, Hoke County experienced \$1.3 million in pure profit from sales taxes, residential and commercial growth, a timber harvest contract, refunds on uncollected jail fees, and an array of other revenues, Edwards said. This year, Hoke finances

remained stable without the need to raise taxes because county commissioners and the county manager worked hard to watch expenditures, he said.

At the request of county commissioners, Edwards presented a comprehensive financial report for 2004 at the Monday night meeting. Edwards' preliminary findings preceded the annual audit report that will be presented later by Raeford CPA Frank Baker after it is submitted to the Local Government Commission.

"We are toeing the line with our budget," Edwards said. "We still need to take a hard look at how we are spending money."

"We are toeing the line with our budget...we still need to take a hard look at how we are spending money."

— Scott Edwards,
finance director

"As a county, we must prioritize ourselves so that debt will not exceed our revenues. However, our collections exceeded our budget in 2004 so our finances look

good."

Edwards said his report, which is an estimate but not official, reflects \$4.6 million in undesignated funds not earmarked for projects. This indicates a slight increase in available funds of \$121,318 compared to \$4.4 million in 2003. At 20.8 percent, reserve funds for 2004 surpassed the 8 percent required by the LGC, the state agency monitoring county finances.

Hoke's general fund balance was estimated to total \$7.16 million in 2004 compared to \$6.99 million in 2003.

This steady climb for two years was in (See FINANCES, page 5A)

Superintendent says state is slow in funding

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

With Hoke students considered at-risk and socio-economically deprived, the state cannot continue to drag its feet by doling out \$22 million when \$220 million is needed for improving

education in low wealth counties such as Hoke, according to Hoke School Superintendent Allen Strickland.

"The people missing at the table are representatives of the state legislature," Strickland said. "We want to see them step up to the plate."

We are arguing that low wealth funding should continue increasing. We are only receiving \$2.1 million when our school system should be receiving \$4.2 million to be fully funded," he said.

"If we had been receiving those moneys all along for the last 10 years, we would not have been

in the situation this year where Hoke schools did not make the Adequate Yearly Progress in reading. For the End-Of-Grade tests in the third through the eighth grades, our district did not make AYP for two years in a row in reading." (See FUNDING, page 4A)

Thanksgiving meals to be delivered

Volunteers will again be delivering Thanksgiving dinners to shut-in, sick and other people who can't get out.

The meals will be delivered Thanksgiving Day by lunchtime and are free.

Call Raeford Presbyterian Church at 875-2101 before Wednesday, Nov. 24 to arrange for meals.

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News

Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

I've been having apocalyptic dreams recently. A few weeks ago, I dreamed my family stood on the side of a mountain in the wee hours of the night and watched as first a single fighter jet crossed the sky at low altitude. It was followed by another and another until the entire moonlit sky was filled with them. We watched in horror as we realized they weren't ours, and we were witnesses to the precursor of a major attack

on our country.

Over the weekend I dreamed that as our family stood on the deck of a beach house near Pinehurst (are your dreams always logical?), dozens of tornados developed across the land in every direction. Before we fled to a ground floor bathroom to hide, we saw a huge mushroom cloud among the storms.

I had been trying to figure out what it means — why all the end-of-the-world dreams? And then I picked up the daily (See OTHER STUFF, page 5A)

MacDonald named NJ publisher



Ken MacDonald

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

tor and was named general manager 10 years ago. He is the seventh publisher since the newspaper was founded 75 years ago.

"He has the experience," Dickson said. "Ken has been functioning as publisher for a number of years and he's getting the title to go along with the job."

"I'm grateful to the Dickson family for this opportunity and for the years they've dedicated to publishing a fine community newspaper," MacDonald said, "and I'm blessed to work with wonderful people in a wonderful community."

Dickson pointed out that MacDonald, (See PUBLISHER, page 5A)

editor, has been named publisher, Robert Dickson announced yesterday. Dickson is president of Dickson Press Inc. which publishes the paper. MacDonald went on to serve as edi-