

The News-Journal

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50¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, March 23, 2005

Commissioners delay land use plan approval Some citizens tell board they want more attention given to affordable housing

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

An approval by the Hoke board of commissioners on the proposed Hoke Land Use Plan was postponed until the next meeting because of questions asked

by citizens about the lack of provisions for "affordable" housing for low-income residents.

Commissioner Bill Cameron was the only board member dissenting on delaying approval on the plan.

Commission Chairman Bobby Wright

commended Raeford attorney William Fields, chairman of the Hoke Land Use Plan Committee, and other volunteers, for compiling a blueprint for future county residential and commercial development. Fields presented a brief summary of the plan at a standing-room only com-

missioners meeting. The land use study was also completed with the assistance of The Wooten Company, a Raleigh engineering firm.

"Most people supported the plan, and they thought it was time to do something one way or the other," Wright said.

"I appreciate all the hard work of the committee.

"You have done an excellent job. We know it is just a guideline for development, but it is better to direct growth rather than having it run over us."

(See LAND USE, page 6A)

Overspending found in audit Board grapples with corrections

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Raeford CPA Frank Baker, annual auditor for Hoke, told the board of commissioners on Monday night that Hoke's accounting system appeared in better shape than in the past several years. Hoke's undesignated fund balance remains at \$5.7 million, which is in line with state requirements, according to Baker.

In 2004, \$50 million more was added to the county's tax base from residential development, which could positively impact revenues this year, ac-

ording to Baker.

"The county is completely solvent and has an impressive general fund balance of over eight million dollars," Baker said. "The county's overall budget was balanced at the end of June 2004. In fact, the county actually earned a profit of more than \$330,000 from extra revenues it collected.

"Although some departments showed a deficit and moneys were taken from the general fund to cover some of those expenses, the county is not in the hole nor is it any danger of ever being bankrupt. At the end, the overall budget was balanced."

However, excess expenditures in some departments caused the county to appear to be over-extended financially in certain areas by at least \$1.7 million at the end of 2004, according to the annual audit findings. County officials are currently researching if some of these financial figures represent internal accounting errors, or uncollected revenues and grant moneys that were received at the end of the year, but not recorded.

(See AUDIT, page 7A)



Right: Museum volunteer Jim Wright and chairwoman Joyce Monroe are watched from above by William F. Schultz Jr. who is high in an oak tree to prune it (top).

Local business goes out on limb for museum to mark Arbor Day

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

One local business went out on a limb — literally — for the Raeford Hoke Museum last Friday.

In observance of National Arbor Day, staff from S & S Tree Service donated their time on the special day to prune and sculpt the aging oak trees that frame the Raeford Hoke Museum, according to Jim Wright,

a volunteer and museum board member.

With sunny skies and not a hint of March winds, the Schultz family, owners of the tree-pruning company who reside in Rockfish, meticulously trimmed and sawed off some rotting branches on the tall oak trees located on the grounds.

"We were very grateful for their contribution to the museum at no cost," Wright

(See MUSEUM, page 9A)



This Week



Drag racer burns up the tracks page 1B

Healthy kids get hands-on learning page 2B

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Citizens invited to community cookout page 5A

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Manager hires new Parks & Rec. director Wood hires Jose Yepez, keeps interim director Launder as employee in reorganization

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke Parks and Recreation Director Holly Launder was demoted by County Manager Mike Wood last Thursday without the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board or county commissioners apparently

being aware of the personnel decision.

Last Friday, county commissioners were notified in their weekly update letter from Wood — without explanation — that Launder would now be reporting to newly hired athletic director Jose Yepez. As of Tuesday afternoon, Hoke Human Resources Director Ed Crutchfield had not been advised

by Wood of a change order notice on the status of the two employees.

Hired on February 23, Yepez, formerly of Durham County, was promoted in Parks & Rec to serve dual roles, according to Wood.

Wood indicated Launder remains in the Parks & Rec department. Launder

founded the first wrestling team and adult fall softball league for the county agency, and also sponsored a 5K run for the N.C. Turkey Festival. With the commissioners' blessings, Launder also was authorized to hire college interns to help out in athletic programs.

(See PARKS & REC., page 6A)

Fayetteville police charge motorist in death of Hoke deputy

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Law officers from around the Cape Fear region paid their last respects to Hoke deputy Larry Walker last Friday in what

was described as one of the "largest funeral services" seen for a very long time in Hoke, according to Sheriff Hubert Peterkin, a life-long friend of Walker's.

Walker's call sign No. 64 was retired in tribute to a man deputies described as

"meek, compassionate, soft-spoken, and always smiling."

Fayetteville resident Janine Isenberg, driver of the Jeep Cherokee vehicle involved in the two-vehicle collision with Walker, has been charged with misde-

meanor death by motor vehicle.

A Hoke High graduate and two-year veteran of the Sheriff's Office, Walker was killed while he was test-driving a motorcycle on Bragg Boulevard on March 12. (See MOTORIST, page 3A)

Anson County authorities charge Hoke deputy with breaking, entering

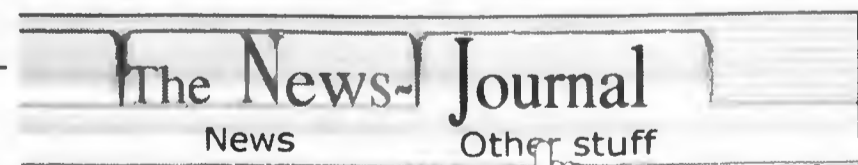
By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke deputy Linda Carol Dalton found herself on the other side of the law over the weekend when she was arrested after being charged as a suspect in a break and entering incident in Wadesboro.

Wadesboro Police Chief Bobby Usrey confirmed the 35-year-old Dalton was arrested along with her husband, Mark Todd Dalton, 38. Both Hoke residents, the Aberdeen couple was each charged on Sun-

day with felonious breaking and entering, possession of stolen goods, and felonious larceny. Although both were placed on \$5,000 secured bonds, they were released from the Anson County Jail after paying their bails. They are scheduled to appear in district court in Anson on April 5.

Hoke personnel director Ed Crutchfield said Mrs. Dalton, 35, was terminated as an employee with the Hoke Sheriff's Office on Monday. She had been employed as a deputy since August 2004. Mr. Dalton is (See DEPUTY CHARGED, page 6A)



By KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

PLEASANT GARDEN, NC (RID-DLE-LAND aka RITALIN) — "ken, i know it does,t seem like it but i have had my computer a year this monyh yes it has been a year since i was asktng you where in the hell the h on the key board was.well i am happy to report to you that i have found the h and a lot more in the last year..."

So began an email I received from my

father-in-law a couple of weeks ago. The thank-you note, uncharacteristic in its sentimentality, followed one particularly exasperating tech support call I'd received, and, as it turned out, was the last email I received from him.

At 77 years old, he had decided last February to learn how to use a computer — it was one of two goals he wished to accomplish before he died. (If I ever knew what the other was I don't remember.)

(See OTHER STUFF, page 9A)