

The News-Journal

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50¢

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Revaluation on horizon, tax bills may go up

Senior citizens may see lower bills under state program, some others' may go down too

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Capital improvement projects planned in Hoke County are continuing to stack up debt. Yet projects such as a pending jail expansion and school additions plus a new health building soon to be completed will provide more safety, human, educational, recreational, and health services for citizens and their children, according to Commission Chair-

man Bobby Wright.

To pay for many of the loans on these projects, some county officials indicated they are counting on an increase in revenue generated from the upcoming 2006 property revaluation. The revaluation could increase some taxpayers' bills by as much as 20 to 25 percent, according to the Hoke tax assessor's office, but some programs for senior citizens could reduce their tax rates.

"People should not swim the

river until they get to it when it comes to concerns about the property revaluation for next year," Wright said. "We will cross that bridge when we come to it.

"Some of our landowners who own property without road frontage have property valuations reduced by at least one-third," he said.

"Not everyone will see an increase on their tax bill. I think we have been very fortunate in Hoke not to have raised taxes for 10 years."

However, Commission Vice Chairman Charles V. Daniels said he wants to be sure taxpayers do "not sink" from the (See REVALUATION, page 7A)

Road trip set to get scoop on ethanol plant

Board to tour similar plant, talk to locals

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The Hoke board of commissioners and County Manager Mike Wood are flying to Palestine, Illinois on Monday to tour an ethanol plant of a similar design to the one proposed by Clean Burn Fuels, LLC in Hoke County.

"If we are investing money in this ethanol plant, we need to do our homework," Commissioner Chairman Bobby Wright said of the exploratory trip. "We must have guarantees for our taxpayers, and Mr. (Jack) Carlisle, co-partner of Clean Burn Fuels, recognizes that."

Planned as a day trip, commissioners will receive a tour conducted by an engineering team. Hoke's board will also informally interview neighbors of the out-of-state plant, asking their opinions on any problems associated with odor or noise.

The plant is located on the Illinois-Indiana border, according to Wright.

The board approved the trip in a Tuesday meeting, continued from the regularly-scheduled session on Monday night.

Hoke officials plan to initially invest \$3 million in a 500-acre site for Clean Burn Fuels at the Hoke County Regional Industrial Park, transferring land to the firm. Investing a proposed \$80,000 into the enterprise, Clean Burn Fuels' co-partners Carlisle and Philip Kohl say Hoke is centrally located and its rural environment is ideal for the first ethanol plant to be built on the East Coast. Ethanol plants, deriving their product from corn, have tradition- (See ETHANOL, page 6A)



Turkey Festival color

Above: Jordan Saunders tries a giant inflatable slide at the N.C. Turkey Festival's Saturday events in McLauchlin Park. Top right: Wonder Woman, played by Darlene Frisby of Auryville. Bottom right: A Native American family in regalia. See more photos inside.



This Week



Turkey Bowl trophy home again
page 5A

Festival goers liked the park
page 3A

Kershaw, Gaddis meet on gridiron
page 4A

Podiatrist gets the boot
page 6A

Index

Births3B
Calendar3B
Classifieds7-8B
Deaths8A
Editorials2A
Legals5-6B
Religion2B
Schools5B
Socials3B
Sports4-5A
Weddings3B

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South Hoke couple yearn for safe 'decent' home

Help may come from grant

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer



Essie Mae Stevens and son Charles show Commissioner James Leach (center) the collapsed back porch of her old farmhouse.



Brianna Chavis shows rotten boards.

Essie Mae and James "Candy Rose" Stevens have been married for more than 30 years, residing in their wooden ramshackle home in South Hoke that reportedly dates back to the 1700s. Without hot water or kitchen facilities, an indoor toilet or air-conditioning, the couple has survived for years in near-poverty circumstances.

Under the gnarled oak trees that shade the house, the Stevens home appears to be on the point of collapse. They say they are praying God will bring them a decent home to live in for the future.

"In the winter, we just have an old wood-burning stove inside," Essie Mae said. "I put up plastic and heavy draperies on the windows to try and keep out the drafts and leaks, but it does not work very well.

(See HOME REPAIRS, page 6A)

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News

Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

Man, was I exhausted after the 10K Turkey Festival foot race Saturday. Even at 8 a.m. the temperature was approaching 90, and it was just a hard race to watch.

As I stood at the intersection of Main Street and Sixth Avenue observing all those runners who are used to the festival's five K try to cope with what this year was changed to a ten K run, I was almost feeling guilty

kicked back in the shade and all.

But then this woman sprinted by, pushing a loaded baby carriage, and she was out front, near the lead.

Something welled up from within me. "All right, all right!" I wanted to yell, "What's wrong with you? Are you nuts?"

People like her make people like me feel like ::places hand to forehead in shape of an L:: losers. Oh yeah, I hike occasionally, (See OTHER STUFF, page 4A)

County commissioners okay two meter readers, inspector

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The board of county commissioners approved three positions last week: for one environmental health specialist and two water meter readers, with total salaries of almost \$100,000 not in this year's budget. The board also requested the sheriff economize on gasoline for deputies patrolling the county so Hoke would not be over budget by the end of

the year.

Based on the conservation request, deputies are roving less and remaining stationary in their patrol zones. Sheriff Hubert Peterkin told the board he has doubled up deputies in one vehicle during peak times in patrol zones in the county when possible.

"That way if they called for backup the backup deputy would already be in the patrol car," Peterkin said afterward. "I do (See NEW WORKERS, page 6A)