

The News-Journal

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75¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, July 4, 2007

County approves ethanol plant inducements

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke commissioners unanimously approved an inducement agreement on Monday night that would put the proposed ethanol plant on the county map.

Commissioner Bobby Wright, who was instrumental in the initial negotiations with Clean Burn, LLC to bring the ethanol plant to Hoke, issued the recommendation to approve the plant at the county's mega site.

Commissioner Jean Powell and commission Chairman James A. Leach were also part of the team that attracted the plant to Hoke.

This was followed by recent support from commission Vice Chairman Tony Hunt and Commissioner Ellen McNeill.

At the beginning of the meeting, Hunt moved to postpone public input to the end of the meeting. A closed session to discuss economic development was held prior to the public input.

A packed room of more than 50 citizens remained, hoping the board might rescind eliminating the positions of five of six employees that were terminated on June 22 in a 3-2 vote.

The sixth position, that of Parks and Recreation Director David Jackson, was reinstated

Friday (see related story below).

But the board did not reverse its decision, nor did it discuss the topic on its agenda Monday night.

After a 50-minute closed session, the board reconvened to vote on the issue that has been pending for at least two years to bring an ethanol plant to Hoke.

In the audience to hear the approval on inducements were Clean Burn CEO Jack Carlisle; his son Greg Carlisle, project manager; Hoke economic developer Col. (retired) Don Porter; and A.K. "Dooie" Leach, chairman of the Hoke Economic Development Commission.

"This is what this county needs," Porter said after the meeting. "That is what is great about our county."

"We will have an industry in Hoke County that is producing ethanol, an American product that is an alternative to gasoline," he said.

"Our great American flag will also be flying above this building in an industry that will help this county prosper."

The Carlisles estimated Clean Burn's groundbreaking could occur within weeks.

Once Clean Burn also signs the inducement agreement after its attorneys review it, commissioners and Carlisle would sign a
(See ETHANOL, page 5A)

Jackson's job is swiftly restored

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Supporters of David Jackson, Hoke County Parks and Recreation department director, celebrated on Friday after county commissioners all voted to retain his position — just days after it was suddenly cut by the same board in a split vote.

After a controversial dismissal of Jackson when next year's budget was already set, a united Hoke board of commissioners voted Friday to reinstate the directorship

in the Parks and Recreation department during a special meeting.

This reversal in the board's earlier decision came on the very day Jackson was scheduled to exit his position.

A group of supporters was on hand at Friday's meeting, backing Parks and Recreation chairman Ilissa Epps.

She was selected to request that Jackson's position be re-established by the board of commissioners. However, Epps never received the op-
(See JOB, page 3A)



Jordan Virgil winds up for a pitch against West Robeson in the Dixie AAA Regional tournament held at Burlington Park. See story inside on page 7A.

This Week



South Hoke school is renamed Hawkeye
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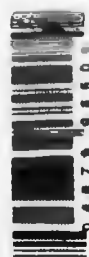
Hoke school nutrition worker elected to state post
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Wrestling to come to middle schools
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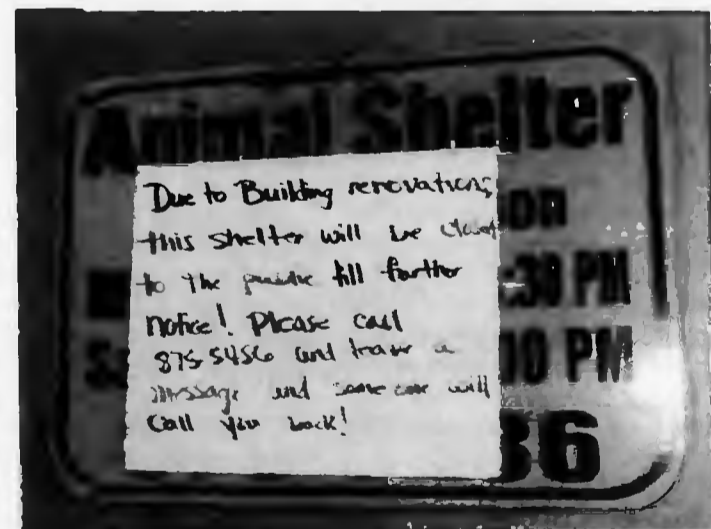
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Jury selection continues in murder case

By BILL LINDAU
Freelance Writer

Jury selections for the trial of the young man charged in connection the 2005 death of April Pate continued into Monday afternoon in Superior Criminal Court. The selection process began Monday, June
(See JURY, page 3A)



A sign indicates temporary closure of the Hoke Raeford Humane Society that was reopened on Monday.

Hoke plans new animal shelter

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke County's animal shelter was shut down temporarily by its director for two days last week because of health concerns over rodents.

This unscheduled closure occurred just four days before the facility's management was to be transferred from the Hoke Raeford Humane Society to the county, according to County Manager Mike Wood.

Following the unauthorized closure, Hoke's board of commissioners unanimously approved a new \$250,000 shelter on Monday night at

their meeting.

Wood said the new facility would be located at the landfill on the opposite side of the driveway from the existing animal shelter.

Wood estimated it would likely take less than six months for the new shelter to be constructed. However, repairs on the current building would be completed to avoid any further health issues, he added.

Shelter director Michelle Queja officially became a county employee on Sunday, when the 2007-08 budget took effect.

She said while the shelter was not under the county's
(See SHELTER, page 6A)

Tape of closed session may not be released

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A controversial tape-recording of a closed session conducted during a recessed commissioners' meeting may not be released by the county board unless County Attorney William Fields reconsiders his legal opinion.

The News-Journal has requested the right to hear the tape of the June 22 meeting on workforce cutbacks.

So far the board has not acted on whether to heed Fields's initial recommenda-

tion not to release the tape-recording.

In a 3-2 vote during that meeting, commission chairman James A. Leach, commission vice chairman Tony Hunt and commissioner Ellen McNeill voted in favor of eliminating four county positions.

This action was taken after the budget ordinance for 2007-08 had already been passed.

However, commissioners Jean Powell and Bobby Wright opposed elimination or firing of the four employ-

ees. They said the budget was already balanced, with Leach's recommendation creating what they think were "unnecessary" cutbacks.

Among those in Hoke's workforce reduction were Risk Management director Ed Crutchfield, the only employee in his department, Code Enforcement inspector Johnny Scott, Thomson and Jackson.

Powell and Wright indicated they believe the tape in question could potentially determine whether now-
(See TAPE, page 6A)

NC State Wolfpack gets its Wolff Hoke County's Earl Wolff commits to NC State

By HAL NUNN
Sports writer

It was a chance that had to be taken. It was a chance that paid off.

Upcoming Hoke County high school senior football and track athlete Earl Wolff went to camp at NC State in June and completely wowed the coaches so much they offered him a scholarship.

"I knew I was doing real good up there at camp," said Wolff. "There were even some players out there from NC State calling me Randy Moss when I was at receiver during seven-on-sevens."

(See WOLFF, page 6A)



Earl Wolff, an upcoming senior at Hoke High, committed to N.C. State University at a recent football camp in Raleigh. (Photo courtesy PackPride.com)