

The News-Journal

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75¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, August 8, 2007

County ponders building sewer plant

BY LENORE L. MORALES

Spurred on by exponential growth in eastern Hoke County, commissioners decided as one Thursday to appoint a seven-member board whose purpose would be to study building a regional wastewater treatment plant to serve the area.

Consultant Tom McNeill gave the county board a presentation on the infrastructure needs of what is termed the "urban services area" that runs along the U.S. 401 corridor between Raeford and Fayetteville. County water is already available in the area, but wastewater there is

mostly treated by septic systems.

McNeill said current wastewater treatment allocations from both the City of Raeford and Fayetteville's Public Works Commission would soon be inadequate to handle growth in an area whose population grew 173 percent in the last decade of

the twentieth century and is steadily increasing.

Fifty percent of all future growth in Hoke County will occur in the urban services area, according to a sewer master plan by the Wooten Company.

Issues discussed at Thursday's

meeting included potential costs of upgrading Raeford's water treatment plant and improving sewer lines running to PWC's Rockfish plant, as well as potential groundwater contamination in the event of a large-scale septic system failure.

(See SEWER PLANT, page 8A)



Lashon Hayes (left) works with Jailan Oaks, who is laying down a vocal track for a worship song at the church turned studio.



Jhamal Chambers enjoys the drums.

Giving back

She did all right, now she's back to help Raeford kids

Stephanie Mayer has done all right for herself. Reared in Raeford, the daughter of Melvin and Patricia Mayer, she took up piano at age eight, and managed in later life to parse that into a career, her dream since the days of performing in Silver Grove Missionary Baptist Church. These days she's organist at a Detroit church with more than 20,000 members, and she's written a gospel song that went



Mayer

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This Week



Union honors
McPhatter
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Teen arrested
on rape charge
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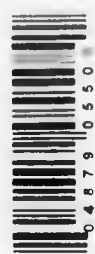
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School, Hoke officials eye new middle school

Elementary school needs cafeteria, Sandhills needs additional building too

BY LENORE L. MORALES

More students, more buildings and more money are core subjects that local school and county officials are studying these days.

County commissioners invited the Hoke County Board of Education to be special guests at their Thursday meeting, where the two bodies tackled the tough assignment of figuring out how best to meet the educational needs of the county's quickly growing population.

As part of the process, the board

of education requested funding for the county for a laundry list of needed new facilities.

Both commission Chairman James Leach and schools Superintendent Freddie Williamson expressed afterwards that the meeting went well.

"It's a great example of cooperation," Williamson said. "We are both looking to do what is right and best for all our children."

Even so, the issues that were discussed at the meeting at times may have seemed like the most ornery of

math word problems in a book with no answer key.

For example, which is more practical: to take a year to build a modular middle school with 30-40 years of estimated longevity for \$9.5 million, or for \$13 million build a brick and mortar building that takes a year and a half to erect but that could last 75 or 80 years?

Remember that the rising costs of building materials will inflate the final price tag the longer you take to decide.

And remember, you need this school right now, but permits can take months to secure before you can begin building after you actually do make your choice.

Browne Hendrix, head of new facilities for Hoke County Schools, presented this actual scenario to the county commissioners Thursday as the school system's top construction priority.

The school board awaits the commission's word on the county's help

(See NEW SCHOOL, page 6A)

County to put land transfer tax to a public vote

BY LENORE L. MORALES

Hoke County commissioners took action on several items concerning county revenues and projects in the past week at two separate meetings on Thursday and Monday. The board:

- voted Monday to add a county referendum to the November ballot in which voters

will decide whether to enact a property transfer tax of four tenths of one percent.

The tax would be paid every time real estate in the county changes hands, said County Manager Mike Wood.

Revenues from the tax would help replace the loss of sales tax income to the county

as a result of a trade-off with the state that will relieve Hoke of Medicaid costs over a three-year period, he said.

The money would primarily be used to retire county school debt and fund construction of new school buildings.

Several other counties have enacted similar taxes, includ-

ing nearby Sampson and Cumberland, Wood said.

Commissioner Jean Powell said such a tax "would tie the expense of growth to the growth itself, not spreading it over to others through sales tax increases."

- approved a resolution authorizing amendments to an incentives agreement between

Hoke County and Clean Burn Fuels, which plans to build an ethanol plant near the Duncarrach Community.

Wood said the amendments deal mainly with an expansion to the definition of ethanol, and that in essence "the inducement agreement remains as it

(See LAND TAX, page 5A)



BY KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

dark or that we might encounter rain.

We had also directed the kids to each bring a tent, and failed to consider the prospects of sorting through Taiwanese directions as varied as the tents themselves, and how long that might take, especially in the dark. You'd think each young person would be familiar with his or her own tent, but you'd be sadly wrong.

So there we were, with a group 35 kids who were exhausted from the trip and

(See OTHER STUFF, page 8A)



Back to school
Hoke High students search out class schedules as a new year began this week (Story, page 5A)