

# The News-Journal

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75¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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## Officials fear new tax may be hard sell

### County needs land transfer tax to recoup money lost from sales tax, officials say

By JASON BECK  
Staff Writer

In about a month, citizens of Hoke County will vote on a controversial real estate transfer tax that has drawn the ire of Realtors and land

developers across the area. The referendum will be on the November 6 ballot.

Hoke officials are in favor of the proposed .4 percent tax on the sale of land and homes, which would generate about \$800,000 a year in additional

revenue for the county. The county commissioners voted Monday to use any money received from the tax to help pay off capital projects such as schools, and parks and recreation facilities.

Still, County Manager

Mike Wood knows not to count his chickens before they hatch.

"It's not going to be a slam dunk by any means," Wood said. "It's going to be a difficult election, but I think it's going to be a great thing for

Hoke County."

However, those in the real estate business see the tax as an attack on their profession. Don Randol, founder of Hallmark Realty in Raeford said the tax would hurt business.

"Any tax or charges for

people to pay just to sell their home is not fair," Randol said. "There are already lots of other fees."

Proposed legislation to adopt a statewide one percent tax on all real estate (See *NEW TAX*, page 4A)



Not so fast, big boy. Dexter Jimmerson, Number 60, makes a tackle for the Hoke County High School Bucks. But it was not enough; the Bucks fell to Jack Britt 28-0. This Friday, they're on the road to Westover. Story, page 6A. (Dan Magid photo)

## Board suspends Hoke's auditor

### State CPA board finds errors, deficiencies in county audit

By JASON BECK  
Staff Writer

James Franklin Baker, a Raeford accountant, performed many audits for the county over the past decade. Now, he has been suspended by the North Carolina State Board of Public Accountant Examiners from participating in governmental audits for the next five years.

According to Robert Brooks, executive director of the board overseeing the state's accountants, Baker is being disciplined for errors, deficiencies and improperly submitted financial statements found in his audit report for the county. Baker was contracted to perform Hoke

County's audit as recently as last year and has reviewed the county's finances six out of the last seven years.

Yesterday, Baker talked about the situation, explaining he is still allowed to do private accountant work, just no work for government agencies.

"They found some discrepancies, weaknesses and controls and we are correcting that and having a review," he said. "All of our work now is being reviewed on governmentals. It was, just basically, like a documentation on our work papers."

Baker had no other comments on the decision, in which there is no (See *AUDITOR*, page 5A)

### This Week



Hoke High takes part in Band Bash page 3A

Arrest made in ATM theft page 8A

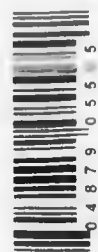
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## Fiery Lumber Bridge wreck kills 3, hurts 3

By JASON BECK  
Staff Writer

Three people are dead after a fiery crash in Lumber Bridge involving a Hoke County woman and her young son.

Karen Oliphant, of Raeford and her 12-year-old son Marcus survived the accident, which unfolded in front of them on N.C. 20 just over the county line on Sunday night.

"It was hard," Oliphant said. "It could have been us."

According to Joel Siles of the North Carolina Highway Patrol, a 1990 Mazda

and a 1997 Ford Crown Victoria collided head-on at high speed on the two-lane stretch of highway in Robeson County.

Two occupants in the Ford, Sheila Gaddy, 44, and Mel-ezon Burden, 42, both of St. Pauls, were killed instantly in the crash. The driver of the Mazda, an unidentified male, also died upon impact.

Derrick Regan, 42, of Red

Springs, who was in the back seat of the Ford, was critically injured in the crash and airlifted to UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill.

Siles said the man driving the Mazda was traveling east at a speed of about 70 mph when he allegedly caused the violent wreck.

"The Mazda crossed the centerline and struck the (See *WRECK*, page 4A)



A Lumber Bridge fireman hoses down a Mazda that crashed Sunday. (Steve Humbert photo)

## Grant writer can stay, but only as contractor

By JASON BECK  
Staff Writer

Popular grant writer Linda Teal may still do some work for Hoke County, but there is a catch — she's no longer an official employee. The board of commissioners voted unanimously last night to offer Teal a professional service contract to write grants on a case-by-case basis.

Teal, whose last official day as a county employee was Monday, drew a crowd

of supporters at the meeting for the second straight month, all of whom asked county commissioners to retain the full-time grant writer position. In the end, however, County Manager Mike Wood said the new arrangement is wiser financially.

"We can control the amount of money we spend and can control the grants we go after," he said. "Hopefully she will accept the contract and continue to write grants." (See *TEAL*, page 4A)

## Two more arrested for drugs

By JASON BECK  
Staff Writer

The Hoke County Sheriff's Office made more felony drug arrests last week, continuing a trend the sheriff hopes will make drug dealers think before advertising their product in the area. Authorities hope more arrests on connected

charges are pending.

Elvira Guadalupe Lopez, 28, of 413 Martin Drive, Triple J Mobile Home Park, was arrested last Wednesday and charged with trafficking cocaine, maintaining a dwelling for a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia.

(See *DRUGS*, page 5A)

### The News-Journal

News Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD  
Publisher

them can be a challenge, but what a glorious deluge when they find their mark.

Last week, I shared a piece of vital shopping information, and it occurred to me that maybe there is more. So what follows is first a recap, and then some recommendations that are sure to change your life, and a few maybe *try so much*.

Best water balloons in Hoke County — CVS, 25 for \$1.49. These babies blow up to the size of a watermelon before they burst. Throwing

Best coffee — It was French Roast, roasted by Coffeepartners.biz in Asheville until the company apparently closed recently, and did not send me my five-pound bag. Please get back to work! A somewhat distant second is Starbucks Verona Café, unfortunately already ground, but available in supermarkets everywhere. Best local place to buy brewed, piping hot coffee ... still searching.

(See *OTHER STUFF*, page 8A)