

The News-Journal

Hoke County's newspaper since 1905

75¢

No. 50 Vol. 108

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, February 19, 2014

Move of voting site brings storm

Leach alleges elections board wants to hurt voting

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Hoke County commission Chairman James Leach spoke out Monday against the county board of elections' decision to relocate the one-stop voting site in Raeford from the county office building to the public library.

Leach called the move "a disgrace" and questioned whether the board of elections was trying to discourage people from voting. He brought up the issue Monday night at the board's regularly scheduled meeting. The item was not on the agenda but was discussed at the end of usual business.

Leach said that the commissioners had not approved or been approached about using the library as a one-stop site. Taking up space in the library for the entire one-stop voting period would not be good for other groups that use the meeting room, he said.

"Folks use that meeting room all the time and it's good
(See VOTING, page 4A)

Two not running: McNeill, McIlwain



BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

A county commissioner and a long-time Hoke County judge announced last week that they will not seek reelection this year.

Hoke Board of Commissioners Vice Chairwoman Ellen McNeill's and Chief District Court Judge William McIlwain's most recent terms come to an end this year and both chose not to run again, they said Saturday at the annual legislative breakfast organized by the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce.

McNeill confirmed Saturday that she is serving the last year of her two terms in office.

"Serving on the board of commissioners is interesting and challenging. However, it requires an enormous amount of time. Some days I may have three or more meetings and/or events. I would like to spend more time with my family and doing some volunteer work," she said.
(See NOT RUNNING, page 6A)

Woman assaulted at club

A woman sustained injuries Saturday at a local club after two people assaulted her, including one woman who allegedly hit her with a beer bottle, according to the Raeford Police Department.

A police officer on special detail at the Bucktown Lounge on Harris Avenue reported that he saw the se-

curity team forcing several women to leave the club around 1:39 a.m. Saturday. One woman, Cora Pettiford, tried to push past the officer to enter the club when the officer noticed Pettiford was bleeding from her right arm and the left side of her face.

Additional officers
(See ASSAULT, page 6A)



The Conoly family members in front of their ancestral home, which burned last week. (Catharin Shepard photo)

House believed 200 years old burns

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

An electrical fire likely started by a heater destroyed a 200-year-old house in Shannon last week, leaving a woman and her two young children in need of help.

The house at 1476 Shankle Road was in Juanita Salinas' family ever since it was built, which was about two centuries ago—but they're not entirely sure just how old it was, she said. Another family rented it at the time of the fire.

"It was a very old home with a lot

of history behind it, some we were actually unable to locate, since Raeford was formed in 1911," she said. "Our ancestors had lived there even before then."

In the twentieth century the house belonged to Charles Clark McMillian and Cora Jane Conoly McMillian, after passing down to them from their family members. The house passed to Louise Scott, their daughter, after their deaths. The family currently includes Scott, Smokey McMillian, Salinas and Roger "Bunky" Oldham Jr.

"It was always a home of love and

we will all be left with wonderful priceless memories," Salinas said. The molasses cookies her family made in the old kitchen were one special memory she recalled during a visit to the charred house.

While the building was still partially standing, one side of the house was completely blackened and falling down. The roof collapsed and there was little left inside, but an old tablecloth left on a table somehow made it through without any kind of damage, Salinas said.

Salinas' mother grew up in the
(See HOUSE BURNS, page 6A)

Board sorts teacher tenure changes

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

There are many changes coming to the North Carolina teacher tenure system as it's phased out, with lots of questions still unanswered, Hoke County Board of Education Attorney Nick Sojka told board members during their meeting Monday.

Sojka addressed the board at the meeting, which was rescheduled from the previous week due to the weather, to discuss the schedule for the phasing out of teacher tenure across the state.

The changes to school employment laws are a "whole new world" for school systems as the new laws have teacher contracts replacing tenure, which opponents argue removes some

of the due process for teachers, the attorney said.

Tenure created a due process system for teachers when they faced demotion or firing. Proponents of phasing out the tenure system supported getting rid of it on the basis that doing so would lead to better teacher and student performance, as it would be easier for schools to fire low-performing teachers.

Under the new law, school systems have until June 30 of this year to select and approve proficient teachers eligible for four-year contracts. During that time, the old due process and non-renewal laws remain in place.

"There are many, many unanswered questions in all of this. One of the biggest, for the teachers, the statute

doesn't say what happens after 2018," Sojka said.

From July 1 through June 30, 2018, teachers on four-year contracts get \$500 annual raises but lose tenure if they previously had it. Previously tenured teachers who didn't go under four-year contracts retain their tenure. All other teachers work on one-year contracts.

On July 1, 2018, all tenure goes away and teachers will work on one, two, or four-year contracts, Sojka said. As of August 1, 2013, it's no longer possible for any teacher in North Carolina to attain career status (tenure) if they didn't already have it, he said.

School systems are now approaching the new laws for selecting
(See TENURE, page 4A)

This Week

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Hoke woman wins \$250,000



Wendy Gibson, a medical coder from Raeford, plans to use the \$250,000 prize she won playing the \$250,000 Cash Money game to save for the future.

Gibson purchased her lucky \$5 ticket on

Monday at the ALCO on Rockfish Road in Raeford. She and her husband learned of their big win while sitting at their kitchen table.

"My husband scratched it off and threw the penny on the ground," Gibson said as she collected her winnings. "I knew it must have been a big one. Then we looked at it together and it was real."

After state and federal taxes were withheld, Gibson received \$173,001. She said she may use a portion of her winnings to buy a new outfit and take a beach vacation.

"It's nice to know we have this as a nest egg," Gibson added.

"It's not going to change who we are, but it's going to give us a lot less to worry about."

Four more top prizes remain to be claimed in the \$250,000 Cash Money game.

Fifth man arrested in case of prescription fraud

Investigators with the Hoke County Sheriff's Office last week arrested another suspect in connection with an ongoing prescription drug fraud case.

Deputies with the sheriff's office arrested Shawn Baker, 30, of the 800 block of Alex Baker Road on two counts of trafficking opium and two counts of obtaining a controlled substance by fraud. He was held under a \$1 million bond, according to Hoke County Sheriff Hubert Peterkin.

Baker is the fifth person arrested in connection with the case. Previously, investigators arrested James Sturdivant, 29, of the 300 block of Poole Road;

Wynona Locklear, 29, of the 300 block of Poole Road; Tabitha Michaelis, 36, of the 300 block of New Lane; and Christian Locklear, 25, of the 300 block of Poole Road. All were charged with trafficking opiates and obtaining a controlled substance by fraud. A magistrate issued
(See FRAUD, page 6A)

