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Budget holds Hoke tax rate Employees would get raise, schools' request mixed

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

The proposed 2014-15 Hoke County budget keeps the property tax rate unchanged at 73 cents, and adds a raise for employees, although the county lost tax income from several sources in the last

year. The Hoke County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on the budget ordinance at the regularly scheduled meeting Monday. No one spoke about the budget during the public hearing. The total proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year totals

\$51,180,046, an increase of about \$3.1 million over last year's \$47.6 million budget.

As the FirstHealth and Cape Fear Valley healthcare facilities open to serve citizens, the county can no longer collect property tax revenue from the two companies. Nonprofit hospitals are exempt

from paying property taxes, depending on certain specific guidelines. The county previously collected taxes on the properties until the medical facilities opened and, in the case of the in-progress Cape Fear Valley hospital, officially started construction.

Additionally, the county com-

missioners voted to lower the tax valuation on the Dundarrach ethanol plant for the tax year after hearing a request from the holdings group that owned the plant. In December of 2013, the board voted unanimously to lower the plant's personal property tax (See TAXES, page 4A)



Hoke High graduating seniors enter Raz Autry Stadium Friday for the commencement ceremony. At left, an interpreter aids the hearing impaired.

Class of nearly 400 seniors graduates from Hoke High

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Cheers and applause greeted the Hoke High School Class of 2014 Friday as the seniors received their diplomas and turned their tassels.

The class of nearly 400 students said farewell to high school at the graduation service held at 6 p.m. in Raz Autry Stadium on the Hoke

High campus. The large graduating class not only packed the field, but their friends and family members packed the stands on either side of the football field until the event was nearly standing-room only. The class is one of the largest in the school's history.

Principal Roger Edwards commended the students for making it (See GRADUATION, page 3A)



Man shot at party for grads

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

A man was shot and seriously injured Saturday night at a graduation party in Raeford in what may have been a gang-related incident, according to the Hoke County Sheriff's Office.

Authorities are searching for suspects in the shooting of Jawan Shakor Sturdivant, 20, who suffered a life-threatening gunshot wound to the stomach, officials said.

Deputies with the sheriff's office were called around 10:45 p.m. Saturday night to the 2100 block of O'Brien Drive in Raeford to investigate a report that a shooting that had just occurred. Officers reportedly arrived to find a crowd of about 30 people crowding around Sturdivant, who had been shot once in the abdomen. Emergency medical services "began life saving efforts," according to a release, and transported Sturdivant to Cape Fear Valley Hospital in Fayetteville for treatment of what officials described as a life-threatening injury. (See SHOT, page 6A)

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Some question, some support gun ordinance

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

One person spoke against a proposed county gunfire ordinance while several others questioned commis-

sioners about details of the plan during an open public hearing Monday night.

John Harry, a candidate running for a seat on the board of commissioners, displayed a map of his prop-

erty on McPhaul Road and explained his concern about the part of the ordinance banning gunfire within 1,000 feet of a dwelling.

"The 1,000 foot rule smacks on the use of a lot of

people's property. I understand about safety, I understand about the issue ... I don't think the ordinance smacks on the Second Amendment. That will be tested in court if the people

of Hoke County decide to go that way. What I'm looking at is common law," he said. "Common law states my ability to use my personal property. Right now, (See GUNS, page 4A)

OTHER STUFF

By KEN MACDONALD

If you'd like to smell honeysuckle on your way to work and feel the summer air wash over you, and if you'd like to get 86 miles per gallon, I invite you to try a scooter. Don't do it for the respect or admiration, however, because you won't get any.

On my way to Sunday School, dressed in my Sunday best (which maxes out at a tie), I passed my wife who was out for a morning walk. Later, she said I looked "eccentric."

"I didn't look European?" I asked. "I mean, scooters and motorcycles are very popular over there."

"No, you looked like a praying mantis." Wow. That hurts. I responded that there's no vehicle, two or four wheels, that fits a 6'5" bald (but extremely good-looking) guy. "I look sooo sophisticated," I said (See OTHER STUFF, page 3A)

Four arrested after fights at high school

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Four Hoke High School students were charged last week in two fights that broke out on the high school campus on the last day of classes.

Sheriff's deputies and police officers responding to the scene last Wednesday charged three students as adults and cited one juvenile, according to reports. Police charged Jacob Allen Hunt, 17, with disorderly conduct at school and sim-

ple affray; Steven Merrell McBryde, 17, with disorderly conduct, fighting (affray) and resisting an officer; and Daylon James Brewington, 18, with fighting (affray), resisting an officer and disorderly conduct (See FIGHTS, page 4A)

Hoke's Relay For Life begins Friday

Hoke County Relay For Life volunteers will light up the night Friday at Raz Autry Stadium to raise money for the American Cancer Society. This year's Relay is set

for June 20-21 at the stadium on the Hoke County High School campus. The all-night event features activities, live music, food vendors and more as volunteers walk laps around the

track as part of the fundraising efforts. Churches, schools, companies, and friends and family of people battling the cancer are just a few of the (See RELAY, page 4A)