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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, July 22, 2015

County prepares for audit, reports progress

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

County officials are finalizing the paperwork from the 2014-15 budget and getting ready for a yearly visit from the auditors, Interim County Manager Letitia Edens said.

The county will undergo its annual audit starting in August, she reported.

As of July 14, Edens and other county staff were still working with representatives from the Local Government Commission on addressing issues with how the county has handled its finances in

the past. So far, the LGC has approved of the steps Hoke commissioners have taken to improve the situation, Edens said.

The LGC asked to see any new policies that the county passed for the new budget year, and the county shared that information with the group, Edens said.

"They liked our new policies. We sent up our purchasing policy. They liked that we incorporated that we would encumber contract in the new fiscal year, so that was part of our purchasing policy. They liked that," she said.

The LGC also approved of the county raising taxes by two cents,

spending less money and adjusting its revenue estimates for 2015-16 to be more conservative, Edens said.

"Our budget, all in all, they seem to be pleased with it," she said.

Other procedures the county (See *AUDIT*, page 4)



Emily Johns, a sophomore at Hoke County High School, climbs behind the wheel with All-The-Way Driving School instructor Carol Locklear pointing out the controls. (Catharin Shepard photo)

Funding for driver's ed runs out Who should pay? Parents? Schools? The state?

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

State funding ran out this year for driver's education classes that teens must take before testing for their license, leaving school systems and parents looking for ways to get student drivers safely

behind the wheel.

The driver's education program costs Hoke Schools between \$125,000 and \$145,000 each year. Typically, freshmen in high school take the course, which is taught by All-The-Way Driving School.

In some counties, parents are responsible for paying a fee to cover part of the

cost for their child's driver's education lessons. In Hoke County, where most schools have a high number of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, educators have avoided putting the financial burden on families, according to finance director Wannaa Chavis.

(See *DRIVER'S ED*, page 7)

3 challengers now in race for council

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Six people have filed to run for three seats on the Raeford City Council in this year's municipal election, including three incumbents and three new candidates.

Candidates Shirley Hart, Jeremy Hollingsworth and Jackie McLean filed to run for election to the board, while incumbents Robert "Bobby" Conoly, John Jordan and Mary Neil King are seeking reelection to their positions.

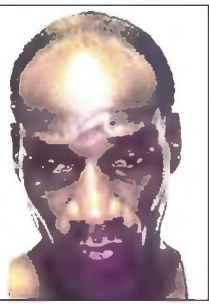
The filing period ended Friday at noon. The city council is nonpartisan, so there was no primary election.

The representatives elected to the board this November will serve four-year terms. The five- (See *COUNCIL RACE*, page 4)

Sex offender jailed under \$1 million bond

The United States Marshals and the Hoke County Sheriff's Office tracked a convicted sex offender down and arrested him after he spent months on the run from law enforcement by hiding in abandoned buildings and sheds in the Robeson County area, according to officials.

(See *SEX OFFENDER*, page 7)



Graham

This Week

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Get your t-shirt now at Poultry Festival store

By MELISSA PITTMAN

The official store for the N.C. Turkey Festival opened the first time 31 years ago with shirts that were donated by Faberge, known today as Unilever, which, by the way, is still a (See *SHIRTS*, page 10)



OTHER STUFF

By KEN MACDONALD

As we walked up the 45-degree driveway in the pitch-black dark, I heard a cry of "Aaiiii" and a loud thump from behind the house. On the walk home from evening worship, I'd sent our sole boy—Ramon—on ahead in the dark to circle the mountainside house and pop out at the front door where several of our girls were waiting for us, because they'd gone ahead and I had the key. A little friendly prank to get the blood going; just another night in the life of a youth group on retreat in the mountains. When we reached the front door, there were no girls—it was apparent they'd found another way in the house, (See *OTHER STUFF*, page 2)

Teaching assistant funding uncertain, clock ticking

By CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

The North Carolina General Assembly is still debating the state budget, leaving school leaders trying to plan for the upcoming school year without knowing how much money they'll have for paying teacher assistants.

State legislators are considering a plan that over the next two years would add about 2,000 teacher positions to public schools, but cut about 5,000 teacher assistant positions. Supporters of the plan believe that the change would help reduce class sizes by putting more teachers in schools, with the ultimate goal of having one teacher (See *ASSISTANTS*, page 10)



A barn in the backyard of a home on the 300 block of Brewer Drive, just off of Cope Road, burned to the ground Monday afternoon, as the heat index topped 110. The building was fully engulfed in flames when firefighters arrived. No one was injured, according to responders at the scene. (Catharin Shepard photo)

