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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, February 7, 2018

1 year later, SBI still investigating

Raid on county offices was Feb. 20, still no time frame for results offered

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Almost a year after State Bureau of Investigation agents executed search warrants at Hoke County government offices seeking information regarding alleged timecard fraud, the investigation

is still ongoing and no charges have been filed – and things have changed in how the county handles employee timekeeping.

The case is still open, Department of Public Safety spokesperson Patty McQuillan said, but due to the ongoing investigation the SBI has not released much infor-

mation about where things stand.

“The agents are doing interviews and they’re keeping the district attorney updated on their progress, so nothing really to report at this time,” McQuillan said Friday.

SBI agents executed search warrants at the Hoke County

government offices in the Pratt Building February 20, 2017 in connection with alleged timecard fraud after Hoke County Sheriff Hubert Peterkin and District Attorney Kristy Newton called for the state agency’s assistance in the case. Agents seized timecards and a computer, and later served

a search warrant at the county’s IT department to pull information from the county’s computer servers.

In response to the SBI probe the county launched its own internal investigation, hiring accounting firm Cherry Bekaert, attorney (See SBI, page 11)



Finance Officer Scott Edwards tells City Council that an audit gives Raeford high marks. (Ken MacDonald photo)

Council told financial shape is ‘excellent’

BY KEN MACDONALD

The City of Raeford is in excellent financial shape, Finance Officer Scott Edwards told city council Monday night. Hitting the highlights of an outside audit, Edwards said it found no material deficiencies in city finances. There were a few minor issues, Edwards reported, such as several staff members performing multiple duties that ideally would be

divided. He attributed the problem to a small staff.

“We simply don’t need a large staff and therefore we can’t segregate things as much as we probably hope they would be, however we have taken some precautions and mitigated this by the fact that (City Clerk) Betty reviews the many reports I do on a monthly basis; the manager gets a monthly report on finances as well.”

There was also a case in which an

expenditure exceeded the budgeted amount, but Edwards said it occurred near the end of the fiscal year and there wasn’t time to get council approval.

Edwards reported the city has assets of \$9.1 million, and \$14.6 million in areas of water and sewer. There is \$8.2 million in the General Fund.

He said the city is maintaining a fund balance of 163 percent, (See AUDIT, page 12)

Subdivisions move forward

Board approves requests of developers in east, west

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

The Hoke County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously Monday night to approve developer requests for a planned 74-lot subdivision expansion in the Riverbrooke community off of Highway 401 Business and a 19-lot subdivision planned for the Five Points area.

The 74-lot subdivision expansion, noted as Section 6 of the Riverbrooke Subdivision, is a continuation of Roanoke Drive off of Highway 401 Business. Developer Moorman Kizer and Reitzel submitted the request.

The 19-lot subdivision is planned for a parcel of land approximately half a mile south of the intersection of Montrose Road and Highway 211. Ron Huff submitted (See SUBDIVISIONS, page 12)

Hoke Schools hire new Raleigh law firm

The Hoke County Board of Education voted unanimously last week at a special called meeting to hire a law firm from Raleigh to provide legal advice to the school board.

The hire came a few weeks after longtime attorney Nick Sojka announced plans to resign to take a similar position with Cumberland County Schools. Sojka served as the Board of Education attorney for 18 years.

The Board of Education hired law firm Tharrington Smith LLP effective February 1.

The board selected the firm based on its “extensive expertise” in education law, and also thanks to their familiarity with Hoke County as the firm was a “key partner” in the construction of Sandy Grove Middle School, according to school officials.

“Representatives from the law firm provided guidance and leadership in the construction contracts, public bidding issues, and in navigating the requirements of the NC Local Government Commission,” a press statement from the school system said.

(See SCHOOLS ATTORNEY, page 12)

Quilters find that young and old, sometimes people just need a hug

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Sometimes it’s the sewing needle that’s mightier than the sword.

In just a year’s time the members

of the Hoke County Cooperative Extension’s Quilt Club sewed up more than 200 items, all stitched up with love and good wishes, to donate for people young and old who could use a “hug.”

“Hugs for Hoke” is a small group, the members numbering fewer than a dozen, but between them last year they produced

dozens of lap quilts, baby blankets, bibs for infants and the elderly and even sheets for children’s cots at the (See QUILTERS, page 11)

OTHER STUFF

BY KEN MACDONALD

If feeding your ego is your goal, don’t buy a scooter. Not that it was, when in 2012 I did just that. Mine was to find a less sweaty way to get to work than riding a bicycle, yet breathe in the Hoke County spring air and zip around, unencumbered by full-size parking spaces.

Over the weekend, nearly six years later, I pushed it back from the bed of my pickup and left it in Raleigh with a guy who knows his scooters, but I gather is much braver than I at the prospects of riding in city traffic.

Anyway, from my six years as “scooter trash,” a moniker from a helmet sticker that Shelly Wilburn gave me condescendingly, here are some scooter lessons, should you ever consider buying one:

- They are great on gas—85 miles per gallon in my case. Buying one

(See OTHER STUFF, page 12)



Vicki Crawford, Beulah Johnson, Sandi Wall and Mary Whiteside show off some of the group’s different fabric projects created to donate to local children, families and nursing home residents. (Catharin Shepard photo)



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