

# The News-Journal

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If it happened, it's news to us



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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

## 211 widening advancing 65 homes, 30 businesses in right-of-way discussions

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

The North Carolina Department of Transportation is due to start negotiating land purchases with some property owners as the state agency takes steps toward widening N.C. 211.

The long-planned project will turn N.C. 211 from Raeford to Aberdeen into a four-lane road. The project, designated R-5709 in the state's transportation improvement plan, is due to start construction in 2024. About 15.4 miles of road will become four-lane, from West Hoke Middle School to U.S.

15/501 in Aberdeen.

Bill Scholl, right-of-way agent for Division 8 of the North Carolina Department of Transportation, confirmed in an email last week that the right-of-way acquisition is due to start soon.

"We are planning on starting right of way acquisition within the

next month," Scholl wrote.

The state will need to acquire "some type of easement" on approximately 519 parcels of land along the road planned for widening.

"There will be 65 residential relocations and 30 business relocations," Scholl wrote.

The first buyout negotiations were meant to start last year, but were slightly postponed. A "sharp decline in revenue" due to COVID-19 depleted the NCDOT cash reserve funds to below the required statutory minimum, and the agency put a temporary hold (See NC211 WIDENING, page 3)

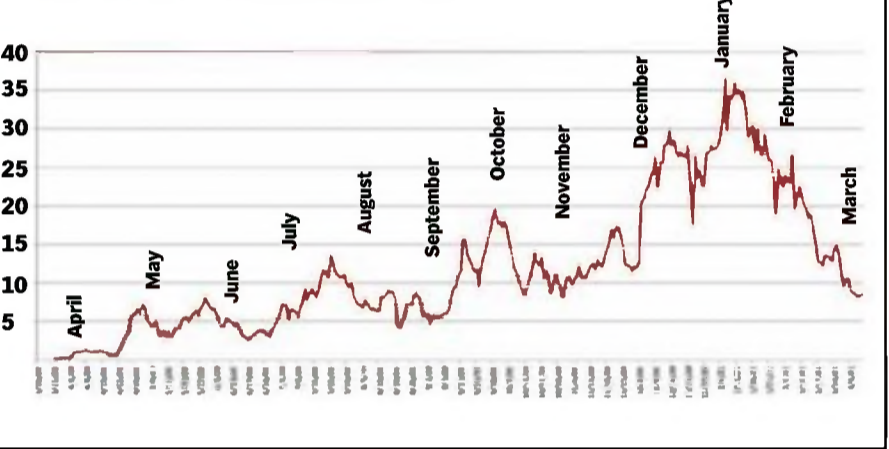


### Fatal crash

A collision between a car and tractor on Old Wire Road at John Road on Tuesday apparently killed at least one person. The car burned after the crash, and a helicopter was called in to transport a victim. Details weren't available at press time. (Ken MacDonald photos)

### The Rise & Fall of COVID-19 in Hoke County

7-day Average of New Cases Reported for Entire Year of Pandemic



## COVID numbers declining in Hoke

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

For the first time since the state introduced its COVID-19 County Alert System in November 2020, Hoke County is no longer in the red zone for new coronavirus infections.

In the latest update from the

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), Hoke finally went from having a "critical" community spread of the virus, to a "substantial" community spread. The change reflected an overall decrease statewide in the number of new cases of (See COVID NUMBERS, page 6)



Timothy Dial



Robert Blue



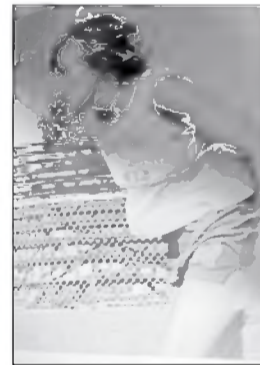
Bill Upchurch



Benny McLeod



Frank Williamson



Tondea Jackson



Paul Jackson



Sharon McMillan

## 6 named to Hoke Athletic Hall of Fame, 2 get Legacy Awards

Six former standout athletes from their years at Hoke County High School were inducted into the school's Athletic Hall of Fame over the weekend. Two others, Robert Blue, an Upchurch High

School graduate, and Benny McLeod, a Hoke County High School graduate, were honored with Legacy Awards for their athletic accomplishments in the days before Hoke High was

integrated. Athletic Director Gary Brigman says a Hawkeye High School graduate will be honored next year.

Brigman inducted athletes Paul Jackson, Tondea Jackson, Timothy

Dial, Sharon McMillan and Frank Williamson Saturday afternoon in a ceremony attended only by a few family members of the recipients. He says a more fitting event will be held in the fall after

COVID-19 concerns diminish. Profiles of the athletes follow:

### Robert Blue

Robert Alexander Blue, a (See ATHLETES, page 4)

## OTHERSTUFF

BY KEN MACDONALD

Say you're five years old and you can have anything you want for your birthday. You'd pick being in the newspaper, right?

Well, Rory Oelbracht did. Right there on her list, fifth from the top—right after (See OTHER STUFF, page 8)



Rory with her list.

## New Board of Elections member picked

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

A new member of the Hoke County Board of Elections was set to be sworn in Tuesday at a board meeting.

Emily Weidner is the first Republican woman chosen to join the county elections board, according to the local GOP.

Weidner has served as an Election Day precinct judge, chief judge and a one-stop voting site worker in Hoke County for many years, the group said in a newsletter.

Weidner was chosen by the local GOP to step in for John Harry, one of the two Republican board members. Harry previously announced his inten-

tion to resign from the position once another member was selected to step in. Weidner was chosen by the local Republican Party to serve on the elections board, and her appointment was confirmed by the state.

Harry did not specifically explain his reasons for choosing to depart. In a letter to the (See ELECTIONS, page 8)

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