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If it happened, it's news to us



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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Hoke students will mask up

Return to school this month is amid lowest vaccination rates

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

When students attending Hoke County Schools return to classrooms later this month, they and their teachers will need to wear masks indoors even if they're fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Following updated guidance from state and federal agencies, the Hoke County Board of Education voted last week to

implement pandemic precautions for the upcoming school year, including the mask requirement.

Most Hoke students and staff will return to in-person instruction five days a week for grades prek-12 beginning August 23. Sand-Hoke Early College High School follows the Sandhills Community College schedule.

The school system will use a "layered approach of prevention strategies" to minimize the spread of COVID-19, school ad-

ministrators discussed during the meeting.

The state updated its Strong Schools NC Toolkit to include new strategies and recommendations, based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Masking up indoors regardless of whether or not a child or teacher is vaccinated was part of the update. The CDC now recommends even fully vaccinated people start wearing a mask in indoor public settings again if they're in an area with high

COVID-19 transmission rates, like Hoke County.

"With rapidly accelerating viral transmission and the increased contagiousness of the Delta variant, on July 27, 2021, CDC updated the guidance to include recommendations for universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status," the Strong Schools NC Toolkit stated.

(See MASK UP, page 6)



The Hoke High School Class of 1996 and the Tia Hart Community Recovery Program got together to hand out food boxes Saturday—the Class's 25-year reunion. (Catharin Shepard photo)

Tia Hart Center, Bucks Class of '96 celebrate

The Tia Hart Community Recovery Program and the Hoke County High School Class of 1996 gave out more than 100 food boxes Saturday while celebrating the Bucks' 25-year class reunion.

The two groups joined forces to

hold the community event July 31 in honor of the class reunion. Shirley Hart, Founder of Tia Hart Community Recovery Program, said she was grateful to the Class of 1996 and looks forward to working with them in the future on more events.

"Recovery works! Coming together with the Class of 1996 was a pleasure and a huge step in the right direction as a community!" she said.

The Hoke County Health Department and Dr. Karen Smith's Office
(See REUNION, page 6)



Lewis Pratt won the 'Millionaire Maker.'

Raeford man wins \$1 million in lottery

A man from Raeford who just got married won a \$1 million prize last week in the North Carolina Education Lottery.

Lewis Pratt of Raeford has a lot to celebrate. "I just got married," Pratt said in a statement. "So, me and my wife are just going to relax a little bit, pay some bills, and get ahead."

Pratt bought the winning Millionaire Maker ticket from
(See LOTTERY WINNER, page 6)

Mayor candidate's residency challenged

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

A Raeford City Council member filed a challenge last Thursday against a candidate running for the city mayor's office, questioning whether he meets one of the requirements to seek election.

Council member Wayne Willis filed a challenge July 29 against Raeford mayoral candidate Chris Parker, who announced his campaign for the office last month.

"The challenge is a question to his residency," Hoke County Board of Elections Director Towanna Dixon wrote in an email.

Parker filed to run against incumbent Raeford Mayor John K. McNeill, who is seeking his fifth four-year term in office this year in the municipal elections.

Parker said Monday that he plans to respond to the challenge.

"Absolutely, without question I meet the requirements," he said.

His legal address is in Raeford, but his wife and children live elsewhere in Hoke County, Parker said.

When Parker filed with the Board of Elections to run for mayor, he provided the address of 418 West Sixth Avenue in Raeford. That address is the location of a building owned by Abundant Life Ministries, according to the Hoke County tax office map system.

(See CHALLENGE, page 6)



Parker Willis

Bowling alley, children's center coming

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

A "classy" bowling alley and a kids' entertainment center are coming to Hoke County and will be built next to the James A. Leach Aquatics and Recreation Center on U.S. 401, a project representative said Monday.

"What we're going to put there, and you're going to be so proud of it, is a

classy bowling alley," Steve Phillips of J&K General Contractors said. "I mean upscale, nice family entertainment center. And then adjacent to that will be a children's entertainment center for children's activities, video games and stuff like that."

The entertainment center will be like a kid-friendly version of the popular Dave and Buster's, Phillips said.

"It will really be an asset to our

county, especially out in that area where we've had explosive population growth," Phillips said.

The topic came up as part of a public hearing held Monday night at the Hoke Board of Commissioners' meeting. J&K General Contractors submitted a rezoning request to rezone an approximately 6.25-acre unaddressed parcel of land from Residential

(See BOWLING ALLEY, page 4)

Subdivisions set off controversy in West Hoke

'They just **** on us,' resident says after Commission vote

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

The Hoke County Board of Commissioners Monday approved two major subdivision plats set for construction on Horace Walters Road in the Five Points area.

The decision was against the wishes of a number of residents who protested the development. Two commissioners said they felt their hands were tied by the requirements of state law, and one said he was personally against the development but legally had to approve it.

The plats submitted by Double D Engineering proposed to build a 64-lot major subdivision named Carolina Crossing located on a 40-acre parcel at 1685 North Horace Walters Road, and a 67-lot major subdivision named Walters Meadow located on a

(See SUBDIVISIONS, page 3)

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