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If it happened, it's news to us



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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, September 22, 2021

County considers homeless shelter Also on the table is a facility for domestic violence victims

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Hoke County officials plan to investigate using part of about \$5 million in federal funds to build shelters for the homeless and those escaping domestic violence.

The county commissioners voted Monday to consider a

proposed plan for how to use the money Hoke has received from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) allocation. County Manager Letitia Edens and her staff worked to offer recommendations for ways to use the funding. The plan will direct the funding toward multiple projects.

The county will set aside about

\$1.1 million of the ARP funds for potentially building a shelter or shelters. Another \$2.5 million will go toward two water and sewer projects in the county. The remaining \$1.4 million will go toward paying back county funds used to battle the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional options on the table

for using the money included improving broadband internet access, and pursuing low-income housing. The county will also receive another \$5 million next year from the funding package.

Hoke currently doesn't have a homeless shelter or a domestic violence shelter. When a person who is homeless or escaping do-

mestic violence seeks help from a local agency, those agencies have to send them to a shelter outside of the county.

Commission Chairman Harry Southerland said homelessness is "a national crisis, not only in Hoke County."

Southerland said he spoke with (See *SHELTERS*, page 10)



Hit and run

Police were searching for a vehicle that collided with this bus marked Southeastern Community Action Partnership Tuesday afternoon. No injuries were reported in the collision at US 401 South and Palmer Street. (Ken MacDonald photo)

COVID numbers improving here

Vaccine for younger kids on the way

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

Although new case numbers and hospitalizations remain higher than health officials want to see, the current spike due to the Delta variant of COVID-19 appears to potentially be on a decline, according to state numbers.

Hoke County Health Department Director Helene Edwards reported Tuesday that Hoke saw 129 new positive cases of COVID-19 last week. The county has seen 69 people die after testing positive for the virus since the start of the pandemic, including multiple recent deaths in the months of August and September.

The county is seeing about 10 percent of all COVID-19 tests return a positive result, Edwards said. State health officials set a goal of keeping that percentage to 5 percent or less of all tests.

Still, the number of new confirmed cases has declined slightly in the past few weeks in Hoke County.

Hoke County Schools reported having 32 cases of COVID-19 among students and staff for the week ending Friday, September 17. That includes 22 students who were reported positive, and 10 staff members reportedly with the virus. The cases were spread across the entire school system, with only (See *COVID*, page 8)

Water conservation in county now voluntary

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer

The Hoke County Board of Commissioners changed gears Monday, lowering the county's stage two water restriction to a stage one voluntary water conservation.

Residents on the county water service are asked to take steps to conserve water,

but the conservation measures are not mandatory.

The board previously voted two weeks ago to implement a water restriction and have county citizens water their lawns on an even/odd basis according to their street address. A dry period over the last several weeks, as well as warm temperatures meant the county's water well pumps were

running more than the state-recommended amount of time, county officials clarified in a statement last week.

The water system also reportedly experienced a problem in August with the pump at one of the county's wells on Vass Road, which added to the strain.

Under the voluntary conservation efforts, customers were asked to consider

take steps such as taking short showers, limiting outdoor watering and operating clothes washers and dishwashers only when fully loaded.

Park gets new cameras, free WiFi

Following an apparently drug-related shooting at the county park on Red Springs (See *SECURITY*, page 8)

Sen. Clark says he won't seek new term

BY CATHARIN SHEPARD
Staff writer



Clark

Hoke County's incumbent state senator won't seek another term in office when his current term is up in 2022.

Sen. Ben Clark III, a Democrat who represents both Hoke County and part of Cumberland County in North Carolina's state

Senate District 21, said Monday he won't run for re-election next year.

In the announcement about his intent not to seek office again, Clark said that representing the citizens of Hoke and Cumberland counties has been "the blessing and honor of his life."

Clark was first elected in 2012 and will (See *CLARK*, page 4)

Southerland named to optometry board

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper has appointed Hoke County Board of Commissioners Chairman Harry Southerland to the North Carolina State Board of Examiners in Optometry.

As one of two "civilian" members appointed to the board, Southerland will work ("See" *SOUTHERLAND*, page 5)

Police search for driver

Raeford police are looking for a driver who flipped a car, escaped the vehicle and left the scene before authorities arrived.

Investigators said Timothy Dwayne Smith, 38, of Raeford

was driving his mother's car Friday night when the accident happened. Smith allegedly left the Food Lion parking lot on Cole Avenue at a high rate of (See *DRIVER*, page 8)



The wreck scene at College and Cole. (Catharin Shepard photo)

OTHER STUFF

BY KEN MACDONALD

Mid-book Sunday afternoon, I got to the part where a very frightened mama took her first plane ride in the early 1900s. Reminded me of a story, more recent, but similar, that happened right here in Raeford. Feeling a need to get this in the official record, yet unconstrained by the need for journalistic accuracy I will relay the tale as it was (See *OTHER STUFF*, page 8)

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