

PEOPLE & PLACES



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THE NEWS & OBSERVER  
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Losing a great talent

This newspaper's readers have lost a loyal friend and a smart, hardworking reporter in Sarah Lindenfeld Hall, who has left us to tend to her growing family.

Now she'll have only one full-time job, instead of two.

Sarah, 35, made the hard decision to leave after the recent birth of her second child.

EDITOR



Matthew Eisley



Sarah Lindenfeld Hall

The North Raleigh News and Midtown Raleigh News have lost a great deal of talent these past two years: editor Dan Holly, assistant editor Michelle Valenzuela, and reporters Sam LaGrone and Kinea White Epps — all of whose absences we feel.

Losing Sarah is a gut punch. Like me, she eschewed a power career in investigative reporting. And I doubt that she loved covering Raleigh City Hall several years back.

But Sarah was simply a superb community journalist.

As an editor, I could always count on Sarah to be diligent, thorough and fair in her reporting, and conscientious in her writing. Her aim was to give readers the best possible information about their community, and she succeeded.

"I've sat through more City Council, Planning Commission and committee meetings than I care to remember," Sarah told me. "I know way more than I ever expected to about wastewater treatment."

Her article most popular among readers was about dog walkers who refuse to scoop their pooches' poop. That's community news for you.

Sarah cared about the people she covered, and she had a friendly manner with them.

Fans of the TriangleMom 2Mom blog Sarah launched and managed have enjoyed her commitment to informing fellow parents about subjects and events vital to them.

For the first time since her teen years in Syracuse, N.Y., Sarah isn't a newswoman.

I'm sure she misses it. I'm even surer that newspapers will miss her. I know I will.

Thank you, Sarah. If you'd like to drop Sarah a note, you can send an e-mail to slindenfeldhall@gmail.com.

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Volunteer firefighter Jeremy Strickland, right, gets the equipment ready last week at Falls Fire Department, which has served North Raleigh and rural Wake County for almost four decades.

TAKA AKI IWABU - TIWABU@NEWSOBSERVER.COM

After fighting fires 39 years, Falls station might close

County looks to trim costs, shift coverage to town fire crews

By RAY MARTIN  
STAFF WRITER

**RALEIGH** — Wake County could extinguish a volunteer fire station that has battled blazes in northern Wake for almost 40 years.

A recent evaluation of the county's fire system found that The Falls Volunteer Fire Department on Falls of Neuse Road is one of four the county could close to save money and better use equipment by contracting more of its services to nearby municipal fire departments.

County officials say population growth and increasing departmental operating costs sparked the evaluation. The county

won't discontinue fire stations in areas where municipal stations can't respond within the county's required response time of nine minutes for 90 percent of calls.

"We would love to put a fire station between every house in the county so everyone gets the same response time, but that's not practical or affordable," said Wake County Fire Marshal Ray Echevarria. "We're trying to determine what is most efficient."

Wake's 12 municipalities have annexed more than 74 square miles in the last decade. As the towns grow, they add fire stations, and county coverage areas



need to be re-evaluated, Echevarria said.

"The demand changes over time," he said. "We're

making sure our resources are meeting those changing demands."

But Falls firefighters and some nearby residents argue that removing the department would do a disservice to the surrounding community, which the station has served since 1970.

"It's just a bad idea," said Paul Colucci, who has lived in the Bedford at Falls River subdivision for three years. "It's critical. And most people here are upset."

Residents of Bedford at Falls River collected donations for the fire department two weeks ago at a neighborhood fall festival.

SEE FIRE, PAGE 4M

WF growth votes prove costly

By RAY MARTIN  
STAFF WRITER

**WAKE FOREST** — Three companies that were denied special-use building permits have sued the town of Wake Forest, which has racked up more than \$140,000 in legal fees in the process.

About a year ago the town's planning board recommended that the town Board of Commissioners approve permits for a car wash and two shopping centers. The board rejected the permits, one unanimously, because they didn't meet the town's standards.

"They were making a decision that they thought was

consistent with the proper growth of the town," Town Manager Mark Williams said of the board.

Two of the lawsuits were recently settled, and those companies were granted the permits with a few additional conditions.

The third lawsuit, which involves a shopping center that would go on Capital Boulevard, is pending. The board rejected it unanimously because of traffic concerns on Capital Boulevard.

The legal fees have irked some in Wake Forest, including the three challengers who ran unsuccessfully for two board seats Nov. 3.

The fees led William "Watt" Jones, who received the fewest votes of the five candidates, to start a Facebook Group to gather support for the Wake Forest Civic Association, which will oppose wasteful spending and fiscal irresponsibility.

Williams, however, says the fees haven't strained the town's budget. Though fighting three lawsuits at once is uncommon, he said, occasional lawsuits are a necessary cost of trying to manage growth. "It's part of the game," he said.

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Deluge nearly floods Crabtree

By RAY MARTIN  
STAFF WRITER

**RALEIGH** — Creek levels reached the flood mark at several Midtown Raleigh locations last week, causing businesses to take precautions in what the National Weather Service deemed the city's most significant rain in "quite some time."

Crabtree Valley Mall officials closed a parking lot behind the mall, and car dealerships along Wake Forest Road took their cars off the lots during several days of

continuous rain that ended Thursday night.

Officials say about 4 or 5 inches of rain soaked most of Raleigh. In areas surrounding Crabtree Creek — which runs from western Wake County to the Neuse River in east Raleigh, and through many of Raleigh's most developed areas — that much rain in a two-day period is cause for concern.

"With so much development, the water runs into the

SEE CREEK, PAGE 4M

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