

Hoke County has officially thrown its considerable weight behind Firsthealth Of The Carolinas and its efforts to build a hospital in Raeford. Tony Hunt is Chairman of the Hoke County Board Of Commissioners and last month he took Cape Fear Valley Health System to task for blocking efforts by Pinehurst-based Firsthealth to get started on construction of a hundred-million dollar 65-bed hospital between Raeford and the Cumberland County Line. This week the five-member Hoke County Board Of Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution demanding that Cape Fear drop its legal appeals against Firsthealth. The resolution was a stern reaction to Cape Fear's latest refusal to end a legal process which has effectively blocked construction of not one but two hospitals in Hoke County. Cape Fear, a Johnny-come-lately, proposes to build a 41-bed hospital to serve Hoke, the largest county in North Carolina without its own hospital. Originally, each competing side blocked the other by legal maneuvering, but last month Firsthealth offered to drop its appeal in exchange for a promise by Cape Fear to do the same. Cape Fear declined. The Hoke County resolution accused Cape Fear of "unreasonably blocking the progress of improving the state of health care for the citizens of Hoke County. The resolution is expected to find its way to the state agency which controls the application process. Says Commissioner Hunt "Hoke County is just sick and tired of all the legal maneuvering."