A surprising state ruling has stalled efforts by Pinehurst-based Firsthealth Of The Carolinas to build a hospital for neighboring Hoke County. Firsthealth has been notified that a closer examination of its certificate of need application failed to satisfactorily demonstrate a genuine need for a a hundred-million dollar 65-bed hospital to be located in Raeford. In a statement released this week, Firsthealth Chief Executive Officer David Kilarski said he was disappointed by the state's latest decision, but that the health system would 'continue to pursue efforts to build a much-needed hospital in Hoke County." Complicating those efforts has been a Johnny-Come-lately effort by Cape Fear Health System ot virtually duplicate Firsthealth's initiative. The state controls the number of beds within a given medical services region as a way to prevent the duplication of expensive services. The two hospitals would be less than three miles apart. Although legal maneuvering by both sides has frustrated efforts to reach a compromise solution, the state's rejection of the Cape Fear Application is believed more closely connected to its "Immediate jeopardy status." The Center For Medicare And Medicaid Services issued the punitive ruling after Cape Fear involuntarily released a terminally ill cancer patient from the hospital. It is also possible that Firsthealth could end its efforts to build a 65-bed hospital and settle for an eight-bed facility, one the state is more likely to approve. Hoke is the largest county in the state without its own hospital.