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Community Award

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## County Hits Snag In Effort To Reduce Telephone Rate

About two dozen Madison County residents had an interview with a representative of the Public Staff of the N.C. Utilities Commission last Friday. They wanted to know why telephone users in this county must pay tolls on in-county calls, while users in nearby Yancey and Mitchell Counties can call for free.

The answer, according to the public staff's Gene Clemmons: Madison County should have thought of that years ago when the present phone system was installed. To change that system now would require installing some \$700,000 worth of new equipment.

And this, of course, is the stumbling block. The phone company is unwilling to foot the bill by itself, and Madison County voters would be almost certain to vote no in a referendum that called for even a slight increase in base rate — even if it would mean a lower monthly bill. Clemmons told the group that the Westco Telephone Co. would need a base rate increase of at least \$2.75 to recover the expense of the new equipment.

This issue has been debated through the mail for over a

year. During that time it has grown in complexity so much that Clemmons decided that a personal meeting was called for. This meeting, held in the president's conference room at Mars Hill College, was not a formal hearing, but simply an exchange of information and questions.

"It is obvious that this is a very complicated subject," said Charles Tolley, manager of French Broad EMC, at the beginning of the meeting. "So Clemmons agreed to come down and explain some of the things we don't understand."

Clemmons explained first that he was not a member of the utilities commission itself, but of its agency, the Public Staff. This agency was created in 1977 by the state legislature to give input and recommendations on questions of importance to the commission, which would then make the decisions.

"I think we're really at a crossroads," said Clemmons, "where some sense of direction needs to be developed." He cited the studies done by his office on the impact of providing expanded area service (EAS) to Madison customers. He said

that an increase in the base rate would almost certainly have to accompany EAS, and that a "reasonable" range for this increase would be between \$2.75 a month and \$5.85 a month.

Clemmons said that any rate change must be achieved in one of two ways: 1) by an agreement between the phone company and subscribers; or 2) through an adversary court proceeding. He indicated that Westco would not agree to EAS without a rate increase, but that if the subscribers went to court over the issue, the odds would be about 10 to 1 against their winning.

When Clemmons had left, the group discussed the best course to take. They agreed to wait for a more favorable time to make a formal petition. "If we lost an adversary proceeding now, which Clemmons feels certain we would," said Charles Tolley, "it would be much more difficult to try again. Likewise, the feeling among us was that even if we tried to get a 50-cent increase this year, with economic conditions the way they are, we wouldn't have a chance. So we decided to go into a holding pattern for the time being and wait."

## Utility Is Granted \$95,000 To Develop Hydro Power



CHARLES TOLLEY, manager of French Broad EMC, hopes to have the old Leffel hydro generator across the river from Marshall back in operation in two to three years.

Last week at a Southeastern Regional Small Hydro Conference in Asheville, the county's electric utility got a pleasant surprise in the form of a \$95,000 grant to reconstruct the old Capitola Dam in Marshall.

The money, according to Charles Tolley, manager of French Broad Electric Membership Corp., can be used to pay for up to 80 percent of the cost of detailed engineering and construction drawings or, if money for this job can be obtained elsewhere, to part of the actual construction.

The old Leffel turbine generator at the dam across the river from Marshall was originally installed in 1937 and produced 355 kilowatts (kw) of electricity at peak power. Tolley estimates it could produce 400 or 450 kw when renovated; it was shut down in 1959 when the construction of huge coal-fired plants and lower rates by the big utilities made it uneconomical to operate.

Tolley says that French Broad is looking at "several configurations" for producing an additional 1,000 to 1,500 kw of capacity, either by modifying the existing head race (the

concrete channel that brings water into the turbine) or by installing a new one.

"Barring any unforeseeable difficulties," said Tolley the day after the announcement on Wednesday, "we have a reasonable chance of getting the plant back into operation."

Tolley warned against expecting electricity prices actually to drop, however, even if the plant comes back on line. Even though it might be expected to produce 5 to 7 percent of French Broad's demand, the majority of the electricity used here would still have to be bought from Carolina Power & Light, whose rates continue to rise.

"If it were in our power to put the inflation rate back to 5 percent," said Tolley, "and to stop the rise in the cost of generating electricity, then we could stop rise in the cost of electricity. But that won't happen in this world."

"One of the first things people asked me when I came to this job four years ago," Tolley went on, "was why can't French Broad supply its own power. More particularly, they wanted to know why we

can't put the Capitola plant back into operation.

"So I started looking into supplying some of our own power. I looked at the possibility of building a coal plant and found that to do that would just about triple our rates. It is too expensive to build a new plant now, with labor and construction costs."

"So I thought about the dam. I couldn't walk up and down and look at the water and just decide on my own to go ahead and re-do it. But I knew that there was a lot of federal money floating around for hydro power, and then Jim Stokoe of the Land-of-Sky Regional Council was interested, and he started asking around. He let me know about John Warren's office at the applied ecology department of the Research Triangle Institute. John asked if I would consent to have their consulting firm do cost estimates, and I said of course; that report is due off the presses in a week or two."

A summary of the report is out, however, which concludes: "The report clearly shows that there is potential

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## N.C. Judges 'Impressed' With Marshall Tour



TOUR GUIDE LAWRENCE PONDER, mayor of Marshall, the route mapped out by organizers of the effort to win a Community of Excellence Award.

After months of preparation, Marshall at last had the chance to show itself off last Friday to the state judges for the Community of Excellence program.

And after three hours of speeches, a slide show, and a tour of the town and surrounding hills, the community leaders who have worked on this program had reason to feel proud. They had presented Marshall as not only an attractive and friendly place to live, but also as a community that would make a good home for new industries — and deserve the help of the state in finding such industries.

The judges held a closed meeting after their tour of Marshall to share their impressions. According to the leader of the group, Jack Stuart of the Department of Commerce, the committee feels there is a good chance for the town to win the award.

"I was very impressed by the hard work and positive attitude of everyone here," said Stuart after the meeting. "It's a very sincere feeling you've projected to the people who might think of coming here."

"The governor has a program to expand the state's

economic base, and that's what we're here for. In order to expand that base we want to help small communities to do whatever they can to help produce jobs. We're pledged to assist you, to help you get what you want. We'll try, with Region B, to be out here whenever we're needed, and to promote the industry recruiting effort across the United States."

Another committee member, Matthew Baconte of Asheville, who is a member of the N.C. Board of Economic Development, came away with an equally positive feeling about his half-day in Marshall. "The presentation was really excellent," he said. "Everyone seemed to believe what they were saying, and they were all very enthusiastic. They've put a lot of work and effort and time into this program, and I think that all of us were totally impressed with what they've done."

The program began Friday at 10 a.m. in the meeting room of the housing project on Walnut Creek. Marshall Mayor Lawrence Ponder welcomed the judges by introducing himself ("For those who haven't yet had the pleasure, I'm Lawrence

Ponder") and Marshall ("We don't have the resources that some of these towns have, and this might never have been possible without the help of the folks from the Land-of-Sky Regional Council").

Then came the 10 community leaders who so impressed the judges. Marshall does not have a chamber of commerce; it can't afford one. So the people of the town themselves addressed the visitors and told them why the town deserves a Community of Excellence Award.

The chairman of the board of commissioners could not attend because his daughter was ill, so Vice Chairman James Ledford greeted the judges on behalf of the county, saying that "Madison County has a good labor force — honest people who want to work for a living."

Tom Jones, regional development specialist with the Department of Commerce, then introduced the review committee, which included, in addition to Stuart and Baconte: Herman Anderson, director of area development for Blue Ridge EMC; Mac McGough, Western North Carolina Development Association; Bob Shepherd,

executive director of the Land-of-Sky Regional Council; Bill Cook, recreation consultant of the Department of Natural Resources and Community Development; Alan Lang, chief planner of the DNRCD; and Roger Scott, regional development specialist of the Department of Commerce.

Then Ed Mashburn gave a brief history of Marshall and industry ("After World War II we looked around and saw we had no industry at all. Our young people were leaving, and we had to do something"). He described the formation of the Madison County Development Commission and the Marshall Town Development Board, which are "ready" to assist industry and become holding companies to help finance new industries," said Mashburn.

Bryce Hall, manager of the First Union Bank in Marshall, then discussed the employment picture. "In 1950," he said, "65 percent of those employed worked in agriculture and forestry. By 1970 that figure had dropped to 19 percent, due to the growth of the manufacturing sector."

He said that the county had gained 946 jobs in textiles, apparel, electrical equipment, and electrical supplies. In 1970 there were 390 jobs in manufacturing; in 1974, 810 jobs; and in August 1979 there were 1,200 jobs, both wage and salary. In Marshall itself, five industries now employ 285 workers, who make gloves, tubular products, stoves, precious metal contact points and harpsichords. Three of the five plants have plans to expand, possibly adding 140 employees to the work force.

James Allen then spoke about the Marshall Planning Board, first established several years ago to obtain the federal housing units now in place. Allen listed four goals of the board for the next year: 1) To review all town ordinances; 2) To review county and regional land use, leading to an updated plan; 3) To assist the four aldermen in capital budgeting; and 4) To attend planning meetings and use the expertise of professional planners.

Bill Stump of Arbee Manufacturing Co. talked about the advantages of North Carolina for industry, such as a workmen's compensation insurance tax six times cheaper than that in Michigan, where Stump came from; low electric power rates; and low shipping rates. Helen Rudisill of National 5&10, representing the Marshall Merchants' Association, described the satisfactions of living in Marshall and the association's plans for the future, including a covered walkway for shoppers and "unified townscape."

The main event of the pro-

gram was a well-produced slide show, put together largely by Becky Williams of Land-of-Sky. "We've come up with a kind of slogan for Marshall," she said: "A town with pride in its heritage and a vision for its future. Right now a lot of this vision is in the mind, but I think it is real even so. Marshall is a small town that can't afford a chamber of commerce, but it does have these fine people who put this program together and many others. For example, this slide program wasn't narrated by an outside professional, but by Marshall's own Randy Houston. Marshall can do things itself when it tries."

The judges' recommendation on the award will be passed along to the governor, who will announce his decision in approximately two weeks.



STATE JUDGES Roger Scott, left, and Jack Stuart look over statistical information provided by the town of Marshall during a tour of the area.

## "Pop" Lance Dies; Was Mars Hill Dean

Harvey Newton "Pop" Lance, 84, of Route 3 Hendersonville, died Sept. 19 in a Hendersonville hospital after a period of declining health.

A native of Henderson County, he was a son of the late John W. and Lula Byers Lance. He was a veteran of World War I and was a member of Barracks 742 of the World War I Veterans. He was a member and former chaplain of both American Legion Post 77 and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5206.

He received his M.A. degree from Furman University of Greenville and had attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Georgia. A member of Furman University's All-State team in football, he had coached freshman football at Furman from 1925 to 1927.

He had been a member of the faculty at Edisto Academy of Columbia, S.C., Pleasant Hill Academy of Tennessee, Alexander Schools of Union Mills and Fruitland Baptist Institute in Hendersonville.

Lance had retired from Mars Hill College in 1965 after 21 years as coach. Dean of Men and mathematics instructor. Two scholarships are given in his name yearly at Mars Hill College.

He had been named VFW Man-of-the-Year and was elected to the Hendersonville Chapter Second-Wind Hall of

Fame. Surviving are his wife, Florence Justus Lance, to whom he had been married for 56 years; a half sister, Christine Sams of Asheville; and a half brother, John W. Lance of Daytona Beach, Fla.

Services were held at 4 p.m. Sept. 21 in Hendersonville First Baptist Church of which he was a life deacon, member and Sunday School teacher. The Rev. Allen Jewett and the Rev. rich Linder officiated. Burial was in Oakdale Cemetery, with military graveside rites.



"POP" LANCE

## Hot Springs Awarded \$89,900 Grant

The town of Hot Springs has been awarded an \$89,900 community development block grant by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's Small Cities Program, congressman Lamar Gudgeon announced this week.

The town will use the funds for housing rehabilitation. HUD officials invited Hot Springs to apply for the funds after the pre-application for the project was approved in April.

The Community Development Block Grant Program helps to develop viable urban communities through the provision of decent housing, suitable living environments and expanding economic opportunities. The program principally benefits persons of low and moderate income.

## Don Harrell Leaves Post At Social Agency

Don Harrell, director of the Department of Social Services for Madison County, has requested a leave of absence for medical reasons, according to the Board of Commissioners.

The commissioners were given a certificate from a doctor stating that a leave was desirable, although no specific reason was given. The leave has been granted for an indefinite period, without pay. Anita Dervey has been named acting director during Harrell's absence.