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## Laurel Voters Oppose Precinct Division

By ROBERT KOENIG

The decision to divide the old Laurel township into two separate precincts didn't sit well with everyone in the communities effected by the change. More than 125 Laurel residents attended Monday's meeting of the Madison County Board of Commissioners to express their displeasure.

The commissioners voted unanimously to split the Laurel township into a Laurel and a newly formed Revere-Spillcorn precinct during their meeting of June 4.

Democratic precinct chairman Jerry Wallin addressed the commissioners as they opened their Monday night meeting. Wallin asked the board to reverse their decision and return the Laurel precinct to its former boundaries. Wallin then introduced Terry Gunter, third vice chairman of the Laurel Democrats.

Gunter presented copies of a petition signed by 530 Laurel residents. The petition stated:

"We the voters of the Spillcorn-Revere section of the Laurel precinct do hereby petition the Madison County Board of Commissioners to reverse its decision of June 4 to split the No. 2 township. This resolution was passed without the knowledge and consent of the majority of the voters in this area. It will increase the burden on the taxpayers of this county by causing more voting machines to be purchased, and increasing the number of paid election officials. It will discourage voters from participating in the electoral process. It will increase hard feelings and animosity toward the county commissioners.

"We are a rural community, and have traditionally had a heavy voter turnout in the elections. Laurel precinct has been an important force in the county elections. We feel that we must have one strong voice to insure that our wishes are recognized. Splitting Laurel township will not make voting easier or more convenient. It will only diminish our strength by dividing our numbers.

We therefore ask you, the commissioners, to do your legal and moral obligations, by adhering to the wishes of those that you have been elected to represent."

Gunter said that copies of the petition were circulated in the Spillcorn, Big Laurel, Guntertown, Shelton Laurel and Revere sections. The petitions, signed by 530 residents, were notarized by Gunter and his mother, Laurel registrar Fronia Gunter.

Terry Gunter told the commissioners, "We didn't know about this. We weren't told about it. It was done like a shot in the dark. The people are against it and it's just not proper."

Gunter also disputed claims that the split was made in order to cut down travel time to the polls for many voters in the far-flung precinct. Gunter told the commissioners that Laurel has traditionally had one of the largest voter turnouts in the county. He said, "We drive our kids up and down these roads five days a week to get to the school and it doesn't seem to have hurt them." Laurel voters cast their ballots at the Laurel School.

Gunter also opposed the split on economic grounds, claiming that new voting machines

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## Commissioners Approve \$5.2 Million County Budget

By ROBERT KOENIG

The Madison County Board of Commissioners approved a \$5.2 million budget for the 1984-85 fiscal year during Monday's meeting at the county courthouse. In approving the budget, the commissioners also voted to retain the county property tax rate at 85 cents per \$100 of valuation.

Approval of the budget came after the commissioners heard from disgruntled Laurel residents over the June 4 decision to split the Laurel township (see related story.)

Under the budget adopted Monday night, Madison County schools will receive \$625,000 in local money for current expenses. Earlier, the commissioners voted to give the school system an estimated \$140,000 from the additional half-cent sales tax enacted last year.

The Madison County Housing Authority, with an operating budget of \$1,166,847 is the largest single entry in the county budget. The commissioners also approved an allocation of \$566,183 for the Madison County Department of Social Services. A further breakdown of the county budget is provided below.

The budget approved Monday predicts a property tax collection rate of 90 percent, or \$1.5 million on property with an estimated valuation of \$199 million. Finance officer David Caldwell pointed out that the total value of taxable property in the county increased by \$4 million in the past year, due largely to new home construction.

State funds account for much of the county's estimated revenues. The county's share of the one cent and half-cent optional sales tax for 1984-85 is estimated at \$414,000. Madison County will also receive \$389,907 in state funds for Social Services administration costs and an additional \$21,594 in day care funding.

Federal funds also account for a large portion of the coun-

ty budget. Revenue sharing funds in the amount of \$260,000 will come into the county coffers along with \$184,796 to fund the Madison County Transportation Authority. Federal funds in the amount of \$161,395 will be used to fund the county nutrition program for senior citizens.

David Caldwell reported that county employees will receive a raise of five percent as part of the budget package.

The budget was approved unanimously on a motion made by board member James Ledford.

Before considering the budget, the board heard a report from Delba Jean Roberts, director of the Madison County Transportation Authority. Roberts asked the board to approve ten members to the county transportation advisory board.

The commissioners named Ed Morton, Maria Cox, Anita Davies, Luanne Roberts, Paul Burwell, Dr. Bobby Jean Rice, Nancy Klodt, Jerry Plemmons, Eugene Wills, Monica Teutsch and Butch Phillips to the advisory board.

The board also heard from Andrew Chandler regarding the suspension of his son, Arthur Chandler, Jr. from his position as a driver with the Transportation Authority. The young Chandler was suspended from his job after the commissioners received a complaint from the parent of a handicapped child.

After discussing the case with Ms. Roberts, the commissioners agreed to reinstate Chandler with a warning. Chandler had been accused of leaving a handicapped child unattended at the home of his babysitter on Gabriel's Creek.

Jerry Plemmons presented the commissioners with copies of the report prepared by the Madison County Planning Board and Economic Development Task Force. A complete report on the planning board's recommendations begins

below. The commissioners asked Larry Leake to study the legal steps needed to establish an Economic Development Commission, one of the main points in the report's recommendations.

The board also approved contracts with Yancey County for the operation of the IV-D

Child Support program. A.E. Leake will serve as Madison County IV-D attorney and Richard Miller will serve as Yancey County IV-D attorney.

David Caldwell reported that the Madison County tax collector took in \$25,122.12 during the past month. The

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### MADISON COUNTY 1984-85 ANNUAL BUDGET

#### ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES

|                                     |           |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Governing Body.....                 | \$15,067  |
| Bd. of Elections.....               | 32,045    |
| Accountant's Office.....            | 46,942    |
| Tax Supervisor.....                 | 47,852    |
| Tax Collection.....                 | 35,139    |
| Register of Deeds.....              | 40,805    |
| Public Buildings (Courthouse).....  | 25,516    |
| Sheriff's Department & Jail.....    | 106,264   |
| Courts.....                         | 9,252     |
| Inspections.....                    | 15,151    |
| Landfill.....                       | 238,176   |
| Health Dept. Clinic.....            | 360,561   |
| Animal Shelter.....                 | 12,944    |
| Ambulance Service.....              | 279,441   |
| Agriculture Extension Svc.....      | 58,581    |
| Social Services administration..... | 566,182   |
| Aging Services.....                 | 6,900     |
| Day Care.....                       | 505,715   |
| Library Services.....               | 83,863    |
| Non-departmental.....               | 72,900    |
| Soil Conservation District.....     | 10,723    |
| Nutrition & Transportation.....     | 216,476   |
| Transportation Grant.....           | 172,842   |
| IV-D Child Support.....             | 44,734    |
| Special Appropriations.....         | 1,010,646 |
| Rents and Concessions.....          | 4,000     |

Ed. Note: "Special Appropriations" includes \$625,000 for the Madison County school system's current expense budget, \$164,873 in Medicaid payments and lesser amounts for the Blue Ridge Mental Health Clinic, day care, rural fire departments, family planning, forest fire protection and aid to the blind, aged, disabled and homeless children.



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS VIRGINIA ANDERSON; left, and commission chairman Erwin Adams heard complaints from Laurel residents protesting the division of the old

Laurel precinct during Monday night meeting. Commissioners called for a special public hearing on the division Monday night at 7:30 p.m. in the Madison County Court House.

## Marshall Board Tables Public Drinking Decision

The Marshall Board of Aldermen voted to computerize the town's billing system, purchase a new garbage truck and provide for health insurance for town employees during their monthly meeting held Monday night at Town Hall.

The aldermen also voted to table decisions regarding the appointment of a new chief of police and town secretary and a new town ordinance barring the public consumption of alcohol.

Mayor Wild called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and asked board member Ed Niles to deliver an invocation. Following approval of the minutes, John Dodson presented a report on bids for a new garbage truck.

Dodson told the board that two bids were received on the truck from the Sannco Corp. Dodson recommended, and the board approved, the purchase of a 1984 Ford diesel with a rear loader. Marshall will make a down payment of \$11,233.33 on the truck and two yearly payments of \$12,771 for a total cost to the town of \$36,776.55. Sannco Corp. will give Marshall \$850 in trade for the town's old truck. Delivery is expected in the next 90-to-120 days.

Upon a motion made by Ed Niles, the board also approved returning garbage collection to the Monday and Thursday collection dates as was past practice.

Mayor Wild then presented a proposed resolution to ban the consumption of alcohol in public places, streets and city-owned or leased parking lots. The proposed bill would make public drinking in Marshall a misdemeanor offense punishable by a \$50 fine and or 30 days in jail.

Wild said the ordinance was needed because, "We have had a problem with people, both young and old, drinking on the streets. We've had a lot of complaints about drinking on the streets and we're trying to do something about it. Right now, we have no teeth."

Former Marshall police chief Faye Reid told Wild that such a law was already on the town's books. Wild said a check of the town's ordinance book would be made to determine if such a law already is in effect.

Speedy Rector volunteered that the law was placed on the books when Marshall outlawed the sale of alcohol in 1946.

Alderman Sammy Lunsford said that he needed time to consider the proposed or-

inance and wanted to consult with his attorney, Larry Leake, before voting on the proposal.

Mayor Wild said the proposed ordinance was prepared by the town attorney, Charles Mashburn after consultation with the League of Municipalities.

The board then voted to table a decision on the proposed alcohol ban.

The town board approved a five-year contract with Frank and Cecilia Ward to put the town's tax, water and sewer billing on a computer operated by the Wards. The town will pay the Wards \$3,300 a year for a terminal in Town Hall connected to the Wards' computer. The Wards will train town personnel to operate the terminal.

Mayor Wild also asked the board to consider hiring a new chief of police and part-time secretary. Wild has functioned as the town's police chief since taking office last December. In asking the board to consider hiring a new chief, Wild said that she wasn't qualified for the post.

The mayor then asked for an executive session to discuss appointing a new police chief. Wild withdrew her request for a closed session when asked

why the meeting should be held behind closed doors.

The mayor then asked the aldermen to consider Herschel Cox for the police chief position. Wild told the board that Cox was a six-year veteran of the U.S. Army and had served as a policeman in Stelacou, Wash. and as chief of the DuPont, Wash. police. The 29-year old Cox is a native of Mars Hill.

Wild said she had expected Cox to attend the Monday night meeting, but he did not appear.

Alderman Sammy Lunsford opposed naming Cox during the meeting. Lunsford told the meeting, "I think our police should be local people that knows the people here. In an emergency, knowing your way around could save somebody's life. I think we should table this until an investigation is made of our present police department."

Both Ed Niles and John Dodson said they did not know the proposed police chief and asked to meet with him before making a decision. After a motion to table the decision was passed, the board agreed to call a special meeting for Thursday at 8:30 a.m. in Town Hall to meet with Cox.

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## Development Report Presented

EDITOR'S NOTE: In May, 1983, the Madison County Planning Board prepared a document entitled, 'Madison County: Plans For The Future; 1983-1990' which identified economic development goals and provided a framework for further economic development analysis in the county. Later in 1983, the board, with the approval of the Madison County Board of Commissioners, appointed the Madison County Economic Development Task Force to further study economic development issues and prepare a comprehensive economic development strategy for the county.

The task force was comprised of more than 80 Madison County farmers, businessmen, civic leaders, senior citizens and agricultural and forestry experts. The task force was assisted by the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources and Community Development, the Land of the Sky Regional Council and the Tennessee Valley Authority.

At the initial meeting of the Economic Development Task Force, the entire committee was divided into three subcommittees: the Development subcommittee, the Quality of Life subcommittee and the Agricultural/Forestry subcommittee. A summary of each subcommittee's recommendations follows.

### SUMMARY OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The county must strive for a 'balanced economy'. There is a need for the county to take a balanced approach to economic development by equally emphasizing industrial recruitment, existing industry expansions, expansion of commercial-retail services, promoting and assisting small businesses and providing support for the agricultural sector.

The county Board of Commissioners should establish and appoint an Economic Development Commission responsible for promoting and coordinating the various aspects of economic development in Madison County. An economic development director should be hired and there should be at least a three-year funding commitment to the economic development director's office financed through a cooperative effort of local governments and business.

Industrial plant expansion should be encouraged, and the Economic Development Com-

mission can enhance such possibilities by providing advice, information and assistance pertaining to alternative financing methods. An existing industries program should be established by Economic Development Commission. The commission should encourage existing industry representatives and plant managers to serve on the county's Industrial Recruitment Sales Team.

The Economic Development Commission should concentrate on the recruitment of 'support-type industries to sites in the Marshall, Mars Hill and Hot Springs areas.

A target industry and survey should be conducted to identify specific support-type industries which might be interested in locating in Madison County.

Upon determining the county's very best industrial sites, detailed engineering site plans should be prepared for these sites to improve the marketability of such sites. Site plans should be prepared for at least the Marshall industrial park site area, at least one site in the vicinity of