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Interim Chief Of Police In Weaverville Resigns

BY BILL STUDENC
Editor

Sgt. J.D. Ray has announced his resignation from the Weaverville police force, just a week after being named acting police chief following the firing of the former chief.

Ray informed Weaverville Town Manager Charles Horne of his resignation last Friday. The resignation is effective Sept. 25.

Ray, contacted this week by The News Record, refused to comment on his reasons for leaving the Weaverville police force.

"I'd just as soon not make any comments on that," he said Tuesday. Ray also refused to comment on

whether his resignation is related to the Aug. 28 firing of Darrell Rathburn, who had served as Weaverville police chief for slightly more than one year, or to the recent resignation of two other Weaverville police officers.

Town officials say they don't know if the firing or resignations played any part in Ray's decision to quit.

"I have no idea if it's related to the others," Weaverville Mayor Reese Lasher said.

"To my knowledge, this has nothing to do with the others. I believe he's just tired of law enforcement and wants to get into another field," Horne said.

"He basically told me that he was

getting out of law enforcement altogether," he said.

Lasher voiced disappointment at the recent rate of turnover on the police force.

"I'm disappointed because I don't like turnover to begin with, and we've had an unusual amount in the police department," he said. "I like to believe we treat our people right."

Currently, Weaverville's police department, usually a five-man organization (including the chief) consists of three officers - Ray, Roger Webb and Gerald Scott.

Rathburn, the fifth police chief in Weaverville since a 1983 departmental reorganization, was fired by

Horne for undisclosed reasons. Officers Tom Banks and Ron Benson turned in their resignations last month, citing personal reasons and general job dissatisfaction.

Town officials have refused to comment on the termination until after a yet-to-be-scheduled grievance hearing can be held.

Rathburn, 30, has also refused to comment on the firing until the grievance hearing.

Rathburn has requested that a grievance hearing be held, but a date for the hearing has not yet been set.

Weaverville officials say that hearing should be held late this week

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Madison County Commissioners Warn Sheriff About Overspending

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

Madison County officials have warned Sheriff Dedrick Brown that if he continues spending at his current rate, his department will be out of money by April.

During Tuesday's meeting of the Madison County Board of Commissioners, county finance officer Ralph Rice told Brown that he has spent more money than budgeted for the months of July and August.

The commissioners had asked Rice to keep a tab on all county depart-

ments and to inform them if a department head spends more than one-twelfth of a department's budget during one month.

Based on a total departmental budget of \$189,129, the sheriff's department should be spending at the rate of about \$15,760.75 per month, Rice said.

According to Rice's figures, the sheriff's department spent \$17,025.68 in July - \$1,864 above projected expenditures - and \$18,230 in August, roughly \$2,469 overbudget.

"The biggest concern I have is

when we come into next spring, if we continue to spend at this rate we'll be out of money," Rice said.

"We will need another \$24,000 to meet expenses at the current rate," he said. "Our only option is to somehow cut expenditures back so we can be within the budget."

The commissioners' meeting with the sheriff comes after Brown issued a statement last month criticizing county officials for failing to provide his department with adequate funding.

Although the total department

budget is some \$50,000 more than last year's amount, most of that money is from sources other than the county, amounting to no increase, Brown has said.

County officials also said last year that the sheriff's department was spending more money than budgeted, and later amended the sheriff's budget.

During Tuesday's meeting, the commissioners suggested ways that Brown might be able to cut expenses.

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ELIZABETH D. SQUIRE PHOTO

Rain At Last

Western North Carolina skies opened up over the weekend, washing out Labor Day plans but providing some much-needed rainfall. The weekend rains brought forth the first umbrellas seen in Marshall in a long while. Alana Haynes, daughter of Ted and Renee Haynes of N.C. 212, protects her family's basket of books borrowed from the Madison County Public Library in Marshall.

North Buncombe School Plans Have Supporters, Opponents

By ELIZABETH D. SQUIRE
Feature Writer

North Buncombe County parents, teachers and school principals are in general sympathy this week with a proposal by the State Department of Public Instruction to merge the Barnardville, Red Oak and Flat Creek elementary schools and close the French Broad school in Alexander.

Need for such a plan arose from the opening of the new North Buncombe High School on Salem Church Road north of Weaverville and the consequent conversion of the old high school to a new North Buncombe Middle School, officials said.

Drastic cuts in enrollment at the

four affected elementary schools has resulted from the opening of the new middle school, with 100 pupils leaving Barnardville (along with an already existing decline in school-age population), 85 leaving Red Oak, 121 leaving Flat Creek and with French Broad losing a third of its 215 enrollment to the middle school.

Barnardville principal Robert Nesbitt said it is his understanding that the plan, to take effect in two to three school years, will be broadly based on the arrangement of the West Buncombe Elementary School.

Red Oak principal William Brigman expressed no surprise at the decision and said meetings with parents have been taken place on the

idea for several years. Most parents supported the idea then, he said, but some parents now are cool to the idea.

A disadvantage to the creation of the new Middle School, Brigman said, is the need for more combination grades. A few more pupils in kindergarten would mean creation of a combined K-1 grade, and consequently, if this results in too large a class, a combined 1-2 grade would be needed, he said.

Nesbitt said parents in Barnardville were generally pleased when they were in on the planning. Barnardville's school was built in 1928, he said, and the time has come

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School Board Member Resigns, Then Reconsiders Decision

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

Jimmy Dean Hensley, one of three Republican members of the Madison County Board of Education, announced his resignation from the board Tuesday night, but has since had a change of heart.

Hensley, contacted by The News Record on Wednesday, said he has had second thoughts about leaving the school board, and now is hoping that he can withdraw the resignation.

"Now I'm having second thoughts about it," he said. "I'd like to withdraw my resignation, but I'm not sure if it's too late to do that or not."

Hensley, in a letter given at

about 11:45 p.m. Tuesday to James Baker, school board chairman, said that his duties as a school board member were taking too much of his time away from his family.

"I feel that in order to be an effective board member, one should be able to devote more time and energy than I'm willing to give," he said in the letter. "My church and my family must come first in my life. Anything less would be falling short on my part as a Christian and as a father."

The issues faced by the school board "were constantly bearing on my mind," Hensley said.

"I refuse to allow this position to make me become a defensive and

bitter person. Life is too short, my family, my church and my business too important to be constantly interrupted by the Board of Education," he said.

Hensley said that since becoming a school board member, he has spent all of his spare time dealing with school issues.

"If I had not put the Board of Education first all of the time, I might not have gotten so burned out so soon," he said. "I got burned out before I really got started."

But, after sleeping on his decision overnight, Hensley said he now would like to remain on the school board.

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Wolf Laurel Residents Help Out Area VFD

By ELIZABETH D. SQUIRE
Feature Writer

The Wolf Laurel Property Owners Association has donated \$5,000 toward the cost of outfitting an ambulance for the Ebbs Chapel Volunteer Fire Department.

"We are all part of the same neighborhood and we need to work together," said John Baggett, president of the association.

Bill Ward, who serves as liaison between the association and the fire company because he serves on both boards, told The News Record about the ambulance project.

The Madison County Board of Commissioners gave the fire company two old ambulances, with the idea of cannibalizing one to put the other in running order. This has now been done, reports Ward, but the resulting ambulance is still a shell except for a single stretcher.

Equipping the ambulance can cost up to \$10,000, says Ward, with radio equipment alone likely to cost \$2,500.

In addition to the Wolf Laurel grant, the Ebbs Chapel company has also received \$5,000 raised by Mountain View Realty and other members of the community. Mountain View installed a bathroom



ELIZABETH D. SQUIRE PHOTO

Union Valley Missionary Baptist Church was the scene of an alleged confrontation last week in connection to the conviction of Andrew "Junior" Chandler.

Parents Of Molested Children Say They've Been Threatened

By CHICK SQUIRE
Contributing Editor

A confrontation at a Revere church apparently occurred last week between supporters of Andrew "Junior" Chandler and parents of children he was convicted earlier this year of molesting.

Chandler is currently in State Prison in Raleigh serving two consecutive life sentences plus 21 years after a Buncombe County jury found him guilty in March of charges of molesting several Madison County day care center pupils.

Accounts vary on what happened a week ago Sunday at the Union Valley Baptist Church in Revere church, but

witnesses say that Chandler's uncle, Jeter Chandler, and another member of the family rose up to speak in church toward the end of services.

Some members of the congregation, which included parents of the molested children, asserted that members of the Chandler family had threatened the others because of a belief that Mrs. Willard Norton, wife of the pastor, was hiding evidence that could have resulted in Junior Chandler's acquittal.

Mrs. Norton told The News Record she knows of no such evidence.

"I know nothing that would get him out of prison," she said. "God in heaven knows I don't."

After a commotion in the church and a confrontation outside the church later that day, a witness called the Madison County Sheriff's Department.

Mrs. Norton said her niece, Nancy Burgess (mother of one of the children), and the niece's husband reported being threatened by members of the Chandler family, one of whom reported she had a gun in her purse.

Members of the Chandler family interviewed by a local television station have denied such threats were made.

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Hot Springs Community Rallies Around Man Injured In Accident

From Staff Reports

A hot-dog sale at the Hot Springs Community Center on Friday, with lunch servings from noon to 1 p.m. and supper from 5 to 8 p.m., will benefit Jerry Parker of Hot Springs.

Parker is in the hospital for leg surgery as a result of injuries he sustained in a motorcycle accident.

The hot-dog sale will help the Parker family cover medical bills,

and neighbors report that the family is also in need of firewood.

Mrs. Parker, whose legs were amputated recently as a result of diabetes, was in the hospital at the time of Parker's accident. Friends speculate that worry about his wife's condition led him to be less alert to danger.

Parker was driving his motorcycle to work when he suddenly came upon

a tree toppled by a storm. Both his legs were injured in the accident, according to Cecilia Champion, head of the Hot Springs Entertainment Committee, which is arranging the benefit.

She said Parker's medical expenses were covered by workmen's compensation, but she says it was not job-related. She left the job for six weeks last month.

Madison Man Dies In Weekend Crash

A Madison County man was one of several North Carolinians killed during the long Labor Day weekend.

Burns Calvin Cook of Cedar City Road, Marshall, died early Saturday morning when his car slammed head-on into a tree, according to the N.C. Highway Patrol.

Cook, 44, was traveling on Quarterway Road at the time

Saturday when he lost control of his vehicle and struck a tree inside the roadway.

Authorities said that Cook may have been drinking at the time of the crash. The crash occurred on a curve in the road.

Cook was traveling at 45 mph at the time of the crash.

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