



HAVE A HAPPY NEW YEAR

# THE NEWS RECORD

Serving The People Of Our Communities Since 1901

Vol. 87 No. 53

Thursday, December 31, 1987

25¢

## State Recommends School Consolidation

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

State planning experts have recommended that Madison County phase out elementary and primary schools at Hot Springs, Laurel, Marshall and Walnut and build consolidated middle and elementary schools.

That was just one of several sweeping recommendations made Tuesday night by the N.C. Division of School Planning to the Madison County Board of Education.

But that recommendation did not get much support from some 50 parents who attended Tuesday night's special session.

Garland Woody of Spring Creek presented a petition signed by 408 people asking the school board to consider alternatives other than consolidation.

"I don't know whether Dr. Gullede or Dr. Spencer has ever ridden a school bus over that road, but children don't learn too well when they get to school sick and

exhausted," Woody said to Karen Gullede, school planning consultant, and Darrell Spencer, director of school planning. "It's beginning to approach child abuse, and that's illegal."

Other recommendations include renovations to the existing Mars Hill Elementary School and Madison High School, and the conversion of the Marshall Primary School into an administrative complex for county school officials.

State planners also recommended that portions of the Spring Creek Elementary School be razed and new facilities constructed, although those facilities would serve only 60 students in kindergarten through the fifth grade. Sixth-through eighth-graders from Spring Creek would attend the new consolidated middle school under the state recommendation.

The cost of implementing the recommendations has been estimated at \$15.7 million.

The recommendations were the result of a survey of Madison County

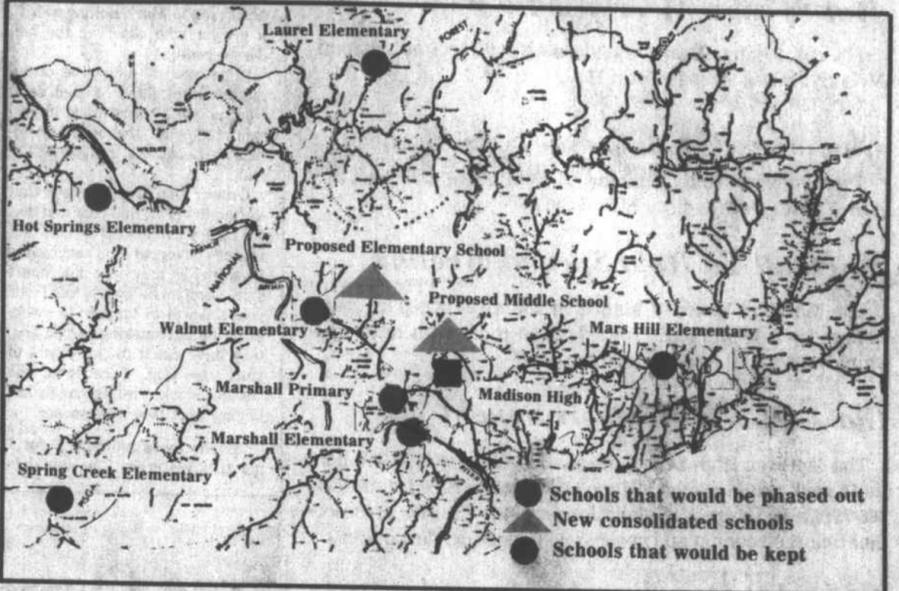
facilities by the Division of School Planning.

The survey has become even more important - Madison County school board members are expected to base their long-range plan for school repair and construction on the state's findings. A first draft of that plan must be completed by today (Thursday) and school officials planned to meet again Wednesday night to discuss the recommendations.

Some \$7.7 million is expected to become available to Madison County school officials for new school construction over the next decade.

Madison County may also be eligible for a portion of \$95 million available this year in "critical needs" money set aside by the General Assembly. Another \$10 million will be available statewide per year for the next nine years.

The Madison County school board's first step toward obtaining some of that available construction money was Tuesday night's meeting with



-Continued on Page 10

## The Year In Review

### A Look Back At 1987 From The Pages Of The News Record

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

What a long, strange trip it's been.

That line from an old Grateful Dead tune may best sum up news that made headlines in Madison and northern Buncombe counties in the year 1987.

- "Hot Springs Police Chief Totals Vehicle"
- "County Audit Uncovers Errors"
- "Jury: Chandler Guilty"
- "French Broad River Claims 1 Life In Rafting Accident"
- "Tax Collector Faces Four Charges By SBI"
- "Zeno Ponder Found Not Guilty"
- "Weaverville Police Chief Fired"
- "Sheriff Threatens To Sue Commissioners"

Those are just a few of the headlines that blazed across the front page of The News Record during the past 12 months.

1987. It was a year of revolving police chiefs in the towns of Hot Springs and Weaverville. It was a

year when Mars Hill got a new mayor, and Hot Springs, Marshall and Weaverville got new aldermen.

Court officials were certainly busy in 1987. Andrew "Junior" Chandler sat through one mistrial in Madison County before being found guilty by a Buncombe County jury of several child molestation charges. The State Bureau of Investigation filed four misdemeanor charges against Madison County Tax Collector Harold Wallin, alleging that he failed to collect interest and penalty on late tax. Those charges were later dismissed.

And Madison Democratic leader Zeno Ponder made news again as charges that he used inside information to profit on a land deal resurfaced early in 1987. Ponder was eventually acquitted.

Madison County Sheriff Dedrick Brown found himself at odds with county officials over funding for his department. Flat Creek residents banded together to oppose a proposed rock quarry. A proposal that would have brought a medium-security prison to Marshall was defeated.

And now, here's a look back at the year 1987 through the pages of The News Record:

#### JANUARY

1987 was only a few seconds old when the first big news story of the year occurred - Hot Springs Police Chief John Barrett totaled the town's only patrol car. Barrett claimed that he and former Madison County Commissioner Virginia Anderson were in the car in pursuit of a speeding vehicle, but several town residents said that Barrett was intoxicated at the time of the crash.

Later, District Attorney J. Thomas Husher called for the N.C. Attorney General's Office to conduct an investigation into those allegations.

Carl Bink of Madison County became Western North Carolina's



Junior Chandler  
...after mistrial

first fatality of the year when he lost control of his vehicle on snow-covered Grapevine Road on Jan. 1.

The Madison County Board of Commissioners learned Jan. 12 of several "improperly documented" financial transactions that occurred during the final months of office of the former commissioners.

A Madison County grand jury handed down a bill of indictment Jan. 13 charging Democratic Party leader Zeno Ponder with conspiring to make a profit using information available through his former position as a member of the N.C. Board of Transportation. Similar charges filed in federal court had been dismissed in January 1986.

The trial of Andrew "Junior" Chandler, a former driver for the Madison County Transportation Authority charged with 21 child sexual abuse offenses, got under way in a packed courtroom in Marshall on Jan. 15. Judge James A. Beatty cleared the courtroom as the children, aged 2 to 5, testified

during the first day of testimony.

Weaverville officials adopted a resolution in opposition to the construction in the Weaverville area of a replacement for aging Craggy Prison, and the Attorney General's Office agreed to investigate Hot Springs Police Chief John Barrett's New Year's Day accident.

A News Record investigation detailed many of the "improperly documented" transactions in Madison County books. Foremost among those questionable payments was a \$5,403 check that former finance officer David Caldwell wrote himself shortly before he was fired. The check was for 65 days worth of vacation, sick and holiday pay.

Two 14-year-old boys - Leroy Higgins and Fred Messer - were indicted on charges they raped a 6-year-old girl in October 1986, and Zeno Ponder blamed the latest charges against him on Republican harassment.

A snow storm dumped 16 inches of the white, wet stuff on WNC on Jan. 22, and the Junior Chandler sexual abuse trial continued.

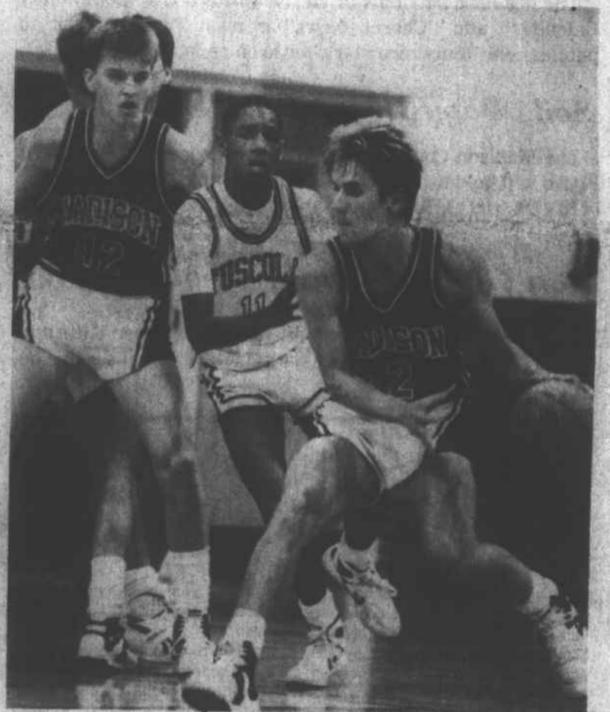
#### FEBRUARY

Superior Court Judge James A. Beatty declared a mistrial Feb. 2 in the trial of Junior Chandler when jurors announced they were hopelessly deadlocked. Later in the month Beatty would order that the retrial be moved to Buncombe County because of security problems at Madison County Courthouse.

Brigman's Store in Walnut, which served as the rural postal station in Walnut, burned in a suspicious fire Feb. 4. Knox Brigman said he would not reopen the store.

Mars Hill officials learned they could save \$100,000 on a spillway project by rerouting the spillway rather than replacing it, and Richard Kingston of Marshall suggested to town officials that they

-Continued on Page 5



MARION BULL PHOTO

### Patriot Pass

Kenneth Anderson gets ready to pass off while fellow Madison Patriot Scott Haynie screens a Tuscola player in high school basketball action Monday night. Madison is participating in a holiday tournament in Sylva-Webster, and North Buncombe is playing at Mitchell. See Page 8.

## Growers Unhappy With Burley Prices

By KATHY NANNEY

The Mountaineer  
There are times it pays to get your burley worked up early.

This may be one of those years. The Asheville market began with an average price of \$1.5885 per pound on opening day, dropped to an average of \$1.5281 by the end of the second week, then fell again to around \$1.44 to \$1.45 during week three.

Last Thursday, the last day of sales prior to the Christmas break, the average price was down to \$1.41 per pound.

During the last week of sales prior to the Christmas break, several tobacco producers turned the tickets on their burley and had more it rather than sell at the going price.

"It was down a little bit to what it had been," said Tom Shilling, "but my agent...

this year, and now wishes he had taken it all to market the first day.

"The first two weeks have been the best for the last several years," he said. "But Monday, it was down to what it had been last week... it's not right for them to drop the price on the same burley."

Ironically, this was the year it was hard for a lot of the growers to get their burley to market early, since the fall was dry and it rarely came in case until November.

Why the drop in price? Market operators in Asheville say burley quality is down this year, and growers blaming the dropping prices on lower production and a glut of burley.

In District 1,...

## Car Found Floating In French Broad

From Staff Reports

James Marshall of Marshall got a rude awakening early Tuesday morning.

That's when Marshall discovered his car, a Chevrolet Chevelle that he had parked at the Carolina Glass Factory, was no longer where he had left it.

The automobile was floating in the French Broad River.

"I left it here at about 4:30 because it wouldn't start," Marshall said as he sat in his mother, Pat Marshall, hospital bed, struggling to link his

of the mid-trunk of the French Broad. "I figured it was gone. I guess I figured it was gone."

Marshall said that his brother-in-law,...

"I guess they thought I might have been in it because I usually am going to work at about that time," she said.

The Marshall Police Department received a call about a car in the French Broad River at about 8 a.m. Tuesday, and Officer Edward Mc...

A tow truck crew worked for about two hours to retrieve the car, padding out to the car with a small boat in...

and authorities never suspected anyone was in the vehicle, McClean said.

The police are still investigating the incident, and are not sure if the car was stolen, or if someone had had a grudge against Marshall.

Marshall is known...