

THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY

On the Inside . . .
Many Different Views
Expressed, Yours Also
Welcome See 'Letters To
The Editor' Page 3 . . .

80th Year No. 2

PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN THE COUNTY SEAT AT MARSHALL, N.C.

THURSDAY, January 8, 1981

15¢ Per Copy

County School Board Meeting

Budget Cuts To Hike School Meal Prices

By CATHY LIVESAY

They may not know exactly when or by how much but the Madison County Board of Education members were told Monday that school lunch prices will go up.

Debbie Baker, director of school food services for Madison County, told board members that because of budget cuts in the Child Nutrition Program all children's school lunches and breakfasts are going to cost parents more.

The nearly 500 children in the county who are currently getting reduced priced lunches will be paying ten cents more. Other increases, she said, are not known yet and the time of the increase is not known. The increases are necessary because the state is cutting its reimbursement rate to the school system, she said.

In addition, the eligibility requirements for free and reduced price lunches will be changed, she told members. Current applications at the school will be "reclassified" by the new guidelines which are not yet out and then parents will be notified by letter.

The county had about 1,000

children receiving free lunches and 701 students paying for their lunches in October, she said.

September figures show 87 percent of county school students eat lunch at school and 56 percent eat breakfast at school.

The changes, she said, are for a one year period.

On another financial matter, board member Gerald Young suggested to the board that they publish in the newspaper a quarterly report of school finances, "every penny — where it comes from and where it goes." The idea was not well received by the chairman of the board, Bobby Ponder, or member Ed Gentry. Gentry said, "I'm not sitting here defending a good record... I won't go out here and defend a myth."

Young, who said he was thinking in long range terms, indicated that negative suspicions about the board could have helped kill off a recent school bond issue, while those opposing the publication suggestion said the bond issue died "because we failed... failed to get the vote out."

Ponder also said, "You're fixing to open a whole can of worms," adding that competi-

tion may exist among schools and that some people will be critical no matter how the money is spent.

In one of many reports, J. Bertram King, an architect from Asheville, showed "design development" plans for the proposed Marshall-Walnut Elementary School just west of the high school. He said the new plans are revised downward with 900 square feet taken from corridors, but still the same number of classrooms. He said the plans, which have been approved by the Division of School Planning in Raleigh, include the use of a passive solar heating system in addition to regular heating.

King said final plans will be ready mid-February, bids should be advertised in March, with a construction start aimed for the first of April.

In a discussion of the proposed statewide bond issue, R.L. Edwards, superintendent of Madison County Schools, said that he had assessed the needs of Madison County at \$9,730,000, a figure which he had sent to the State Board of Education. He said the county's share of the \$600 million statewide bond, if held, has

been assessed at \$2,102,234.

He said the \$9 million figure was derived by figuring the cost of replacing all schools in the county built before 1956.

The General Assembly has yet to vote whether or not the statewide bond will come before the people.

The board approved the hiring of Green, Skidmore and Smith to do the yearly audit. The cost will be \$6,900 and the renewal is subject to approval of the Local Government Commission. Green, Skidmore and Smith also serve as auditors for the county.

Edwards reported to the board that they have \$154,651 left from the 1973 bond issue, according to Lacy Presnell, of the Division of School Planning. He said after the meeting that the money was earmarked for the Marshall-Walnut School along with state funds

and money from flood damage to the old Marshall School. He said that eventually the new school will have some 800 students.

The board discussed purchasing a work truck for Aaron Ponder, supervisor of maintenance for the schools'

buildings, and a car to replace an older car for Vernon Ponder, principal at Laurel Elementary School. The board decided that Vernon Ponder could purchase a car the board currently has for "what

(Continued On Page 3)

Day Care Director Praises Parents

By KEVIN MORLEY

Wanda Allen, director of the Marshall Day Care Center, has one word to describe the parents of the children who attend her center — "fantastic."

Sitting in her office at the new center on Long Branch Road she described their efforts as above and beyond the call of duty, significantly adding to the quality of the program. For example; parents raised \$600 through bake sales, rummage sales, and raffles, spent \$225 on Christmas gifts for each child at the center, raised money to install an air conditioner donated by French Broad EMC, and filled in as substitute teachers on a purely voluntary basis saving the center over \$300.

"We're not a free day care center" Wanda pointed out, "parents pay on a sliding scale according to income" and the fact that they do so much for the center impresses her greatly. "They've come through when needed" she said, and she's "proud of the parents."

All parents are involved in one way or another but their efforts are coordinated by a fund raising committee. Those on the committee include Betty Bridges, chairman, who, Wanda pointed out, personally made 50 Christmas stockings that were given to the youngsters at the center. Debbie Williams is the secretary, Julia Williams is the treasurer, and members are Kim Davis, Linda Dodson, Darlene Evans, Edwina Mintz, and Cheri Henderson.

Beyond raising money, parents volunteer their time in the classrooms and recently five parents took over teacher's duties so that the Day Care Center staff could have a little Christmas Party.

In what many consider to be an age of non-involvement the parents of the Marshall Day Care kids prove that not to be so. Wanda Allen and the staff of the center can't say enough good things about them.



Marshall Day Care Center

Rough Ride Ahead For 'Good Roads State' / Road Program In Jeopardy

By KEVIN MORLEY

The report and recommendations of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Study Commission on Transportation Needs and Financing are in and the outlook is bleak.

Former Governor Dan Moore, chairman of the Commission, stated that the members of the Commission "were genuinely surprised by the extent and the urgency of the financial problems that have placed out state's road-building programs and hence our state's future economic prosperity and general well-being in jeopardy."

Moore added that "the problem stems from the one-two punch being dealt by the energy crunch and declining state highway revenues and sharply rising prices caused by inflation."

Upkeep and maintenance of already existing roads is seen to be the number one priority of the state and without an increase in revenue the minimum amount of repair work cannot be done.

"And, unless we find the money to do an adequate maintenance job... we stand to lose many of those roads, or pay a staggering sum to rebuild them," Moore said.

Moore's group recently approved three alternatives for raising additional funds and formally presented them to

Governor Hunt on Dec. 16. Each of the alternatives calls for a gas tax increase and either of them would finance estimated maintenance budgets of more than \$300 million in fiscal 1981-82 and 1982-83. The maintenance budget this year is about \$170 million. Moore's statement said it should be "a minimum of \$300 million a year over the next several years, including about \$118 million just for resurfacing."

Moore said resurfacing "to protect the public's investment in highways had to be cut in half — to about 1,300 miles a year — in recent years as the financial pinch got worse. Last year, the Department of Transportation (DOT) had the funds to resurface only about 930 miles. And, this

fiscal year, it looks like the department will only be able to resurface 740 miles."

He said the \$118 million a year "would get us back to the 2,600 mile level per year and reduce the backlog of critical needs by resurfacing an estimated 1,000 miles a year, or a total of 3,600 miles."

When resurfacing needs are neglected, Moore said, erosion eventually damages roadbeds and "pretty soon the road begins to completely break up. When this happens, resurfacing would be like slapping a band-aid on a cancer..."

Then "much more drastic and expensive treatment — actual reconstruction of disintegrated sections of highway... is required," Moore said. Reconstruction normally costs four to five

times as much as resurfacing.

Governor Hunt praised the work of the commission but said, "I will be devoting the next several weeks to a detailed study of the document... I will make a recommendation to the coming General Assembly in the Spring on what we ought to do... but before I act on the report of the Moore Commission, I am going to satisfy myself that we are saving every nickel we possibly can."

The Governor went on to point out the money and energy saving steps the DOT had taken so far while stating that a continued analysis of systems operation would continue to insure that "we are saving every nickel possible."

Hunt invited the public to come forth with their ideas

about the situation and announced a toll-free number that they can call to present their suggestions. (That number is 1-800-662-7952).

On the local level, Jack Buckner of the Marshall office of the DOT reported that their offices are heated by wood, a fact that he hopes will save the tax payer's money. He commented that inflation was a problem but that this year has been "excellent, with lots of work." Spring time will see the resurfacing of the Marshall by-pass and the paving of Cutshall Town Road (3.7 miles) and a section of Long Branch Road (1.9 miles). Of the 644 miles of state roads in Madison County 323.7 are paved and a lot of them need resurfacing. But, Buckner said, the heaviest traveled get

the first attention and that only so much can be done with available funds.

The governor and the legislature will have to take a hard look at "available funds" and all indications point to an increase in the state gasoline tax which hasn't been raised in 12 years. In 1969 the 9 1/2 cent tax on a gallon of gas represented a 29 percent tax rate. Today it represents less than 8 percent of the retail price.

The irony of the situation is that fuel conservation efforts resulting in lower gas sales also reduces the amount of revenue available to the state for highway repair and improvement, not to mention efforts towards improving mass transit.

N.C. Ranks 27th In Taxes On Gasoline

24 States Rank Lower

Twenty-five of the nation's 50 states and the District of Columbia impose higher taxes on the average price of a gallon of gasoline than North Carolina, according to a recently completed survey.

Among the higher-tax states are South Carolina and Virginia, which border North Carolina to the south and north, and several other states in the South.

North Carolina has the largest state-maintained highway system in the nation with more than 75,000 miles.

Michigan has the highest effective state gas tax — 15.3 cents per gallon — followed by Mississippi, 14.3 cents;

Nebraska, 13.6 cents; Hawaii and Indiana, 12.5 cents; New York, 12.1 cents; California, 12.1 cents; South Dakota and Washington, 12 cents; Illinois, 11.8 cents; Minnesota, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Connecticut, South Carolina and Alabama, 11 cents; Georgia, 10.7 cents; West Virginia, 10.5 cents;

Massachusetts, 9.8 cents; Kentucky, 9.6 cents; Idaho and Arkansas, 9.5 cents. North Carolina's tax is 9.25 cents a gallon, including a quarter of a cent fee that finances an inspection program by the state Department of Agriculture.

The number of states which peg or "index" their gas tax and/or their sales tax on gas in whole or in part to the wholesale or retail price of gasoline has increased to 13 in recent years, the survey also shows.

The survey was made by the state Transportation Department in conjunction with the work of Gov. Jim Hunt's Blue Ribbon Study Commission on Transportation Needs and Financing, headed by former Gov. Dan K. Moore.

The state-by-state gas tax survey was based on an average national retail price

of \$1.068 per gallon of leaded regular gas, exclusive of taxes, as of Dec. 15 of this year.

A report on the survey said that a "variable tax rate policy bases the tax per gallon... on a percent of the average wholesale or retail sales price, which may be adjusted monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually. It said that "a variation of this policy is a cents-per-gallon tax plus a percent of the average wholesale or retail sales price."

Taxes pegged or "indexed" in whole or in part to wholesale or retail prices were calculated in terms of cents-per-gallon to determine the relative standing of the states.

The survey shows that six states levy a percentage tax on the average wholesale or retail price of gas and that

eight states combine a percentage sales tax on the retail price with a cents-per-gallon tax. North Carolina is one of the remaining 37 states which levy only a cents-per-gallon tax. (Indiana applies both the variable rate and retail sales taxes to motor fuel sales, so it is counted with both groups).

• Indiana, 8 percent of the average retail price with a maximum tax of 12 cents a gallon in 1980, 14 cents in 1981 and 16 cents in subsequent years;

• Nebraska, 2 percent of the average retail price plus 11.5 cents a gallon.

The eight states with a combination tax, all of which apply the percentage sales tax figure to the retail price, are: Mississippi, 5 percent and 9 cents a gallon; California, 4.75 percent and 7 cents a gallon; Hawaii, 4 percent and 8.5 cents a gallon; Illinois, 4 percent and 7.5 cents a gallon; Michigan, 4 percent and 11 cents a gallon; Georgia, 3 percent and 7.5 cents a gallon; New York, 4 percent and 8 cents a gallon; and Indiana, 8 percent plus 8 percent of the average retail price (variable tax rate cannot exceed 10 cents a gallon in 1980, 14 cents in 1981 and 16 cents in subsequent years).



THE FIRST CHAMPIONS of the Pisgah Holiday Classic girls basketball tournament receive their first-place trophy from Pisgah Coach Tom Nix. The Madison Lady Patriots claimed the prize with a win over host-team Pisgah (see page 6). (Photo by Mark Pompilio)

School Beautification Program Continues Through May

About 175 public schools across the state are participating in this year's North Carolina School Beautification Program.

The schools will develop projects according to their individual needs including landscaping and long-range goals. In many instances, they will enlist the aid of the community in their project.

"The program not only encourages enhancing the school environment, but it promotes school spirit, student responsibility, and better community relations," Norman Leaf, director of the Division of Health, Safety, and Physical Education for the State Department of Public Instruction and beautification committee chairman said.

"The program can easily be incorporated with the learning experiences of students in all curriculum areas."

Awards will be presented on the local, educational district, and state levels in May.

The program is sponsored by Keep North Carolina Beautiful, Inc. in cooperation with the State Department of Public Instruction.