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At School Board Meetings

Use Of Gymnasium Denied, Lawsuit Settled

By KATHY LIVESAY

In five hours, which included three executive sessions, the Madison County school board took care of a number of routine matters Monday and decided that the Madison High School gymnasium could not be used for a fundraising bout of Saturday afternoon professional wrestling.

After nearly an hour in executive session, the board ruled to deny a request from Bobby Capps and Mack Boone, representing the Mars Hill Youth Program, to rent the gymnasium for one night to hold a fund-raising wrestling match to raise money for the organization, which they say currently oversees some 11 ball teams during the summer. One reason for the request, Capps and Boone said, was that the program wanted to include eight to nine girls softball teams next summer but lacked the necessary funds.

School board members indicated that since the request was to rent the gym, or "subcontract," that they were entitled to go into executive session to discuss the matter even though Boone indicated he would like the discussion to be "out on the table."

Board chairman Bobby Ponder voted against the request, as did board members Floyd Wallin

and Ed Gentry. Wallin, who appeared to be dozing throughout most other parts of the meeting, came wide awake to voice his opposition to the request, saying "you turn these schools over to the public and the first thing you know you ain't got nothing."

Board members Gerald Young and Dedrick Cody abstained from voting. All members indicated their support of the efforts of the program, which Capps said was not exclusively designed to turn out athletes, but also to give young people something to do during the summer.

Both of the board's other two executive sessions were, they said, about personnel matters. One of the closed meetings, lasting 40 minutes, was brought about by the appearance of Rosalyn Boss. The board later said that it denied the transfer of Rena Boss, a request apparently asked for in the closed session.

In another executive session, lasting about 20 minutes, the board took up a matter involving a letter from a parent concerning a child, according to Dr. Bobby Jean Rice. Madison County school supervisor. No action was taken on that matter, according to Ponder, except that Dr.

Rice would report back to the board.

Prior to the calling of the regular meeting, R.L. Edwards, superintendent of Madison County Schools, said he would supply the newspaper with a list of school personnel in the county provided it would not be used by sales people.

Edwards also, in reading the minutes of the January meeting, disclosed that an "emergency meeting" of the school board was held on Jan. 21. The meeting was called by school board attorney Larry Leake to enter into a settlement of a lawsuit which had been pending between the board and Knox Brigman. The lawsuit involved a boundary line at the high school. According to the minutes, the board would erect a fence as good as the one Brigman had previously built. The settled boundary line would be determined by the board surveyor, Walter Hutchins.

Brigman said, when contacted Monday, that he accepted the boundary, but did not agree with it. Asked why he accepted it, he said, "They are using the county's money; I'm using mine." He indicated that the expense involved was not worth the difference in where he thought the line was and where the board thought it was. The emergency meeting was held at Mary's Restaurant. The press was not notified.

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J. Bertham King, architect for the proposed consolidated Marshall-Walnut Elementary School, appeared at the meeting to discuss the possibility of lowering the proposed building site about 15 feet. He said it was possible, but added "the more we lower it the more it will cost." He agreed to supply the board with cost estimates for lowering or grading the site down by 15 feet and by 20 feet. King said the final plans will be ready for the board at their next meeting and that the school construction should start on schedule, April 1.

In another matter, the board approved an expenditure of \$783 for a 47 foot cooler at Mars Hill School, money to be matched with state funds.

Supt. Edwards reported to the board that after a survey of 19 schools in District 8, he had found that none had policies regarding the length of athletic practice sessions for girls' junior varsity basketball. One school had a policy of no practice on Sunday, he said. The survey was the result of a parental suggestion at the last board meeting

that the Madison board adopt a policy. The parent said he felt the practices here were extensive, especially when they followed, in some cases, physical education classes.

Board members approved a bid from MeierJohn-Wengler, Inc. for \$2,062 to supply a bronze plaque for the Madison High School stadium to honor those who contributed to its construction.

The board also approved three substitute teachers: Teresa Shelton, Barron S. Fleetwood and Verna Bradley.

In an item of information, Supt. Edwards told the board that at Rocky Mount City Schools, where they have 6,200 students, the local budget is \$3,502,433; the federal appropriation is \$621,551; and the state budget is \$6,691,066. In Madison County, he said, where the school population is half that, the local budget is \$550,000.

Edwards also told the board that according to letters from Exxon, all grades of gasoline here will be going up three cents, as will all grades of diesel fuel, kerosene and heating oil. The last gasoline bought for the schools, cost 97.7 cents, he said. Fuel oil and gasoline are one of the major expenses in most school budgets.

Mars Hill Town Council

Equipment And Funds Dominate Meeting

The February meeting of the Mars Hill Town Council held on Monday night was a discussion of the managing of funds, including state and federal grants, the purchasing of city utility equipment, and the development of the town's recreational park.

The council first heard discussion from the town manager, Roger Swann on the purchase of a Case 480 backhoe that could be used for a variety of purposes for the town. Last year, the town spent over \$7000 on the renting and operating of backhoes to be used for the maintenanc and repair of water and sewer lines in the town. Swann suggested that the town purchase a backhoe from the Case Company which has a '79 model which would cost around \$15,000. A new model of this type would cost the town over \$39,000. The backhoe would see much use. Swann said, "There were over eight breaks in the water

line this year, and each break requires the use of a backhoe for repairs."

The council also acknowledged the funding through a grant for lighting and landscaping the Mars Hill Recreational Park. A grant of \$20,000 was given with an agreement that the town would match 50 percent of the grant with local funds. The park which is located on Crooked Street will be renovated in stages. The lights for the baseball field will be the first area of improvement. Landscaping and installing fences will be the following stage.

The council also acknowledged that the state grant for the improvement of the Longridge area has reached the state channels. Final approval and direction from the state agencies will come from Raleigh in the next few weeks. This grant will fund the improvement of housing, sewer, and water facilities in the Longridge area.

Child Abuse: 64 Cases In County Last Year

By SCOTT FITZGERALD

The North Carolina Department of Human Resources recently released statistics for 1979-80 involving child abuse and neglect cases in North Carolina. The statistics showed a 30 percent increase in the number of reported cases across the state. The department feels the increase is due to an increase in the reporting of cases, not an increase in neglect and abuse.

In Madison County, the number of child abuse and neglect cases are moderate in relation to the total child populations of other counties of the state. There were 96 cases of child abuse or neglect reported in Madison County last year. Only 64 of these cases were confirmed. Out of 4,923 children in the county, there were 13 substantial cases per 1,800 children. To control the number of cases reported the Madison County Department of Social Services has increased its number of social workers from one to three.

According to department director, Anita Davie, "three workers are still not enough." Each worker not only handles child abuse reports but they must also deal with adoption proceedings, foster care, and foster homes. Each social worker does not have enough time to aim all their efforts toward one area of social work.

The social workers handle child abuse cases under the Protective Services Division of the Social Services Department. These workers have the responsibility of confirming reports of abuse and neglect.

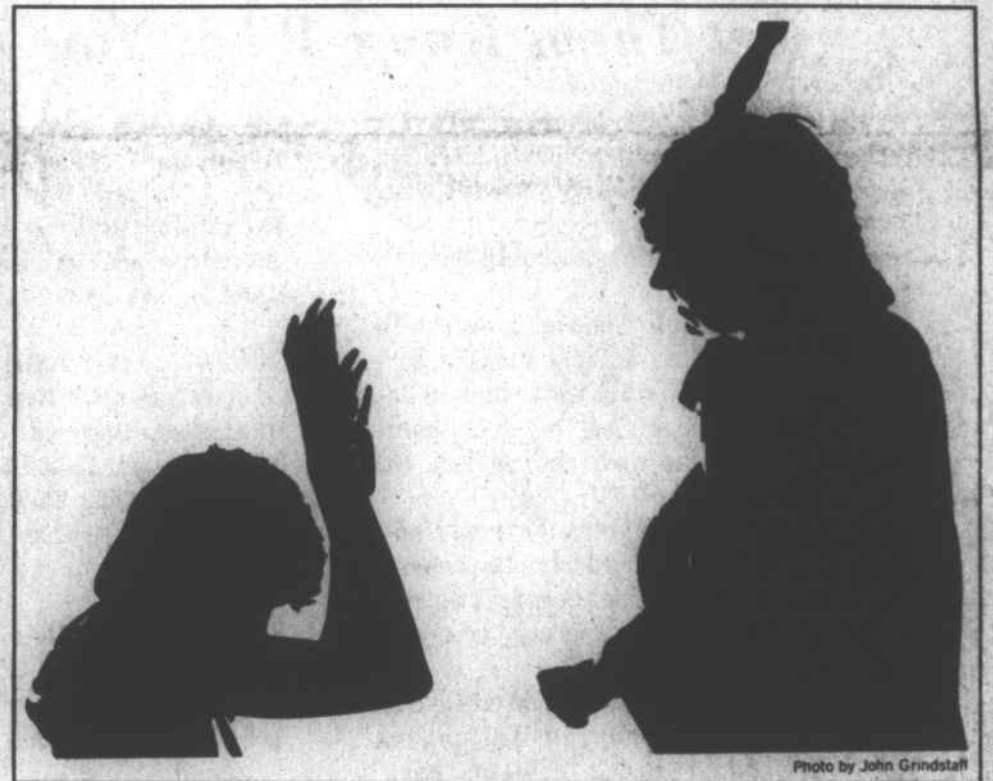


Photo by John Grindstaff

Once a report has been confirmed, the workers will work with the parents in trying to reach a solution to end the problem. The workers may provide marriage counseling, homemaker counseling and may even prescribe foster care for the children if necessary.

"The workers are trying to provide help to problems that families may have. They are not trying to take anyone's children. Our main objective is to provide services that can allow the parents to help themselves," said Ms. Davie.

Ms. Davie also said, "The Social Service Department

can provide help 24 hours a day." She stressed the need in the community that every citizen become involved. "It's every citizen and neighbor's responsibility to report incidents of child abuse and neglect. They must realize that we can help," she said.

The National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect estimates that for every case reported, five go unreported.

The Division of Social Services maintains an automated Child Abuse and Neglect Information System (CANIS) which supplies the state with a clearer profile of citizens who

abuse or neglect their children. The information comes from reports of child abuse or neglect submitted to the Central Registry for Child Abuse and Neglect from every county social services department in the state.

According to the 1979-80 CANIS report, the typical profile of perpetrators of child abuse and neglect were white married females between the ages of 20 and 39 years, unemployed and with some high school education. The vast majority (91 percent) were natural parents of the

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Crackdown On Food Stamp Fraud Works

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
EDITOR

During 1980, county social services departments across the state recouped a total of \$402,551 in fraud and other overpayments in the Food Stamp Program.

According to John Kerr, chief of the Food Assistance Section of the Division of Social Services in Raleigh, this money represents collection efforts through the courts, direct county action as well as voluntary repayment agreements by food stamp recipients.

Lib Roberts, director of Madison County's Food Stamp Program, said the local office had recovered \$605 in 1980, and of that amount \$332.50 was returned to the county as per guidelines in the program.

According to Mrs. Roberts, 1,188 households in Madison receive food stamp services, and 2,921 individuals receive food stamps in the county.

Food Stamp Office figures show totals of \$92,389 for November and \$95,695 for December in coupon value issued in the county.

Statewide, county departments of social services determine eligibility for food stamps households receive based on income and the number of people in the household. Social Services officials have increased their efforts to prevent and detect fraud," Kerr said from Raleigh. "Many of them have added fraud analyst positions to their staff."

Kerr expects this year's collections to reach well over one-half million dollars because of the added techniques for detecting and prosecuting fraud cases. He also expects the added emphasis on detection, investigation and prosecution will, in the long run, serve as a deterrent to food stamp recipients who fail to report increased income or other changes which effect their food stamp allotment.



Photo by N. Hancock

Sleepy Little Town?

WE'VE OFTEN heard that expression to describe the smaller communities or municipalities that dot the North Carolina landscape, but someone must mean it in Marshall. This mattress was unexplainably spotted in front of the Post Office late Sunday afternoon.

State Budget Cuts To Hit Personnel

State Representative Ernest B. Messer reported this week from Raleigh that House and Senate Appropriations Committees are working overtime to examine budget requests in

an effort to find ways to substantially reduce the state budget.

"Appropriations Committee chairmen want to reduce budget requests by \$400

million," Messer said. "A reduction this size is going to be difficult. Since more than 70 percent of the budget expenditures is for salaries and wages, deep cuts will have to be made in personnel."

"The largest budget item — about 50 percent of the total budget — is for education, and to cut \$400 million from the budget means that education will have to share in the cuts," Messer added.

Rumblings from Washington indicate substantial cuts in Federal spending, and since 28 percent of the state budget is derived from

Federal funds, these contemplated cuts can mean trouble for the state's budget makers.

"Rumors are circulating here that an attempt may be made to cut, or even eliminate, the Regional Education Centers," Messer said.

There are eight Regional Education Centers set up throughout the state. Messer said he would like to see them eliminated.

On the Inside . . .

Noted Educator And Author

Coming To Marshall Feb. 16.

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