



THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF

Madison County Library
Marshall, NC 28753 9/81

80th Year No. 15

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

THURSDAY

781

15c Per Copy

Why Did School Bus Cross Closed Bridge?

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

Who reported what to whom and when, and who was responsible for getting something done, or not getting something done? That seems to be the multiple question left in the minds of persons attending Monday's board of education meeting in Marshall.

The question revolves around a Madison County school bus which has traveled over a bridge closed to truck and bus traffic since December, and who was responsible for getting the bridge repaired or replaced beginning this week.

School officials have said variously that "someone" and they reported the inadequate bridge to state authorities. Ed Gore of Route 2, Leicester thinks his talk with Gov. Jim Hunt last Friday spurred the action of building a new bridge.

Whatever the case, parents in the Little Sandy Mush area are upset, and Gov. Hunt appeared to be appalled at the situation.

Speaking before the board, Gore said parents in the Little Sandy Mush community feel that school superintendent R.L. Edwards has "acted in an ir-

responsible and negligent manner in allowing students to ride a school bus twice a day over a bridge that was closed to truck and bus traffic."

He said signs limiting the weight of vehicles using the bridge to five tons and stating "no trucks or buses allowed" were put on the bridge last December by the State Department of Transportation, but the school bus continued to cross the bridge with students aboard through last Friday without anything being done to repair the bridge.

Gore contends this action has changed the conditions of a court judgement which reassigned Madison children attending Buncombe County Schools to the Madison school system. He said the judgement stated Madison County would provide adequate transportation for the students.

"A bus going across a condemned bridge is not adequate transportation," Gore said. According to Gore, Mrs. Betty Reaves telephoned school board chairman Bobby Ponder on Monday, March 30 to inform him that the bus was still crossing the bridge on State Road 1107. However, at Monday's

meeting Ponder said the first he had heard about the situation was Friday evening (April 3). Ponder said a parent called him and he in turn called Edwards about the situation.

Edwards told the board Monday that the bridge was being replaced "as of today," and that "someone reported it to the bridge department and they're supposed to shore up the bridge whereby we were not in any violation."

Edwards asked Gore if he were familiar with the North Carolina general statutes pertaining to the assignment of students to buses and the operation of buses, and Gore replied that he was familiar with state law which says that the school superintendent is responsible for approving bus routes submitted by each school principal.

"For three months did you authorize that bus to cross that bridge closed to (bus) traffic?" Gore asked Edwards.

Edwards replied that the school board attorney would answer his question. However, the board's attorney, Larry Leake, was not at the meeting at that time, but was scheduled to join the meeting later in the afternoon.



MADISON COUNTY SCHOOL BUS NO. 12 crossing bridge on State Road 1107 on Tuesday, March 31 while signs warn of a five ton

weight limit and state "No trucks or buses allowed." (Photo by Ed Gore)

Ponder interjected it was up to the principals of the individual schools to ride the bus routes and recommend them for approval by the superintendent, but he said Robert L. Patton in Raleigh "is the man in charge over all the transportation."

In the afternoon session of the board meeting, Edwards said he had known about the bridge and had called Patton, an area coordinator for school transportation, about it "some time ago," Edwards also indicated that once the matter was reported to Patton he

was the person to handle the situation. Interviewed Tuesday morning just before press time, Patton said he recalled talking to Edwards and a Mr. Bullman last October about the Little Sandy Mush bridge. He said Bullman, (Continued on Page 2)

Hendon Addresses Madison Lincoln Day Dinner



Bill Hendon

Photos by N. Hancock

Speaking before a sparse gathering of Republicans at the annual Lincoln Day Dinner in the Madison High School cafeteria, 11th District Congressman Bill Hendon told his Saturday night audience that getting President Ronald Reagan's economic program passed in the U.S. House "is going to be a real battle."

"The people in Washington, D.C. do not think like we think... and that's the bottom line of what ails America today," Hendon said. "They put politics first and America second."

"Congress is delaying, changing and thwarting the President's program every day. It's 'so far, so bad', not 'so far, so good,' for this new Congress," he said.

Hendon said it was his opinion that the only thing that was going to get the U.S. economy back in shape and bring about prosperity again for the American people would be the implementation of all three phases of Reagan's economic program set forth on February 18. But, House budget subcommittee chairmen are opposed to

reductions in federal spending programs in their own jurisdictions. "It's going to be a real fight," Hendon said.

Reagan's economic program calls for a reduction in federal regulations imposed on businesses, a cutback in federal expenditures and a 30 percent tax cut spread out over the next three years.

Hendon told the gathering of local GOP officials and supporters that his biggest fear is that Congress will pass the president's proposed expenditure cuts and not pass the proposed tax cuts. He said the tax cuts are necessary "to enable the country's industries to expand and put money back into pockets of the American workers."

"Government leaders have the attitude that the American people can't have their own money. They might go spend it and that would be inflationary," he said. "To solve inflation, you don't run around upping the national debt every five minutes — putting band-aids on the problem. You adopt the president's

Continued on Page 3

EMS Future Is In Question

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

Life is full of paradoxes, and apparently so is county government. At least that's the way it seemed at Friday night's meeting of the county commissioners when the talk turned to the county ambulance service.

On one hand, the commissioners voiced praise of the emergency medical service (EMS) after hearing a monthly report from EMS director Mildred West, and talked of providing new headquarters for the service in the recently county-leased French Broad EMC building on Main Street in Marshall.

On the other hand, the commissioners stated their concern over ambulance service funding in light of upcoming cuts in CETA revenues and touched on

the possibility of closing the service down if money was not found to continue providing the service.

County finance officer David Caldwell explained to the commissioners that the ambulance service has 11 county-paid EMS workers and had seven CETA positions as of last July. "We have slowly been losing CETA positions," Caldwell said, "and picking them up on the county payroll. So I estimate the ambulance service is going to over-expand its budget this year some \$21,000."

Caldwell said it would cost the county \$250,000 per year in local money to operate the service without financial assistance from the CETA program. That amount would be needed to employ 18 drivers and one director and

provide maintenance for the vehicles.

Caldwell said in order for the county government to provide the \$250,000, an increase of 15 cents on the new tax rate recently established by the countywide tax evaluation would have to be levied.

With the commissioners already facing making adjustments to the county budget in order to end the 1980-81 fiscal year in balance on June 30, the question of what to do with the ambulance service hung rather heavy in the meeting room.

Commissioner Ervin Adams said he thought the board should "take a look at closing it (the ambulance service) down."

Chairman James Ledford said, "It's a needed service. I'd hate to have to

Continued on Page 3

Walnut Creek Residents Flood Meeting With Complaints

By SCOTT FITZGERALD

Walnut Creek residents spilled their woes and complaints to the Marshall aldermen at its Monday night session. The residents, mostly elderly and parents of the area, were very verbal in their plea for something to be done about the serious sewage problem that exists in the Walnut Creek Area.

The sewer system is spilling raw sewage and waste water into the creek and surrounding lands causing a hazardous health problem, according to Ed Norton. Residents complained of foul smelling water and air, rocks and land covered with slime, polluted water, excessive number of rats and other rodents, and even sewage running across the highway.

The citizens stated concern for their safety and the health of their children who play in or near the creek. Several angry housewives voiced their thoughts that something has got to be done soon or they will have to take "drastic measures" to solve the problem. One resident threatened to stop up the line and cause the sewage to flood the high school and the shopping center in hopes of drawing attention to the situation.

The Marshall council could only reply that their hands were tied. The federal government had promised to construct a community-wide sewer and water system this spring, but presently, no word on the proposed construction has been given. Mayor Lawrence Ponder and the other councilmen are torn between the processes of

local and federal government.

Mayor Ponder discussed the possibility of repairing the system with local funds but if the government project did come into effect, the money spent on repair would be wasted. Government policies do not permit the local governments to spend grant or loan monies as they wish. "We have to play by their (federal agencies) rules if we want to use their money" said Mayor Ponder.

Councilman S.L. Nix suggested that the town raise the water service cost to help fund the cost of repairing the system. The town residents were not at all pleased at the idea unless they could be assured the problem would be corrected.

"We'll pay after the system has been fixed. We won't pay for dirty water," said one Walnut Creek housewife.

As the meeting reached a close, the aldermen could only respond with sympathy and promises to do what they can. "The town just doesn't have the funds and we can't act without the government's help," pleaded Ponder.

The citizens agreed to petition and contact representatives and officials in Washington and Raleigh in search for assistance to the situation.

The town council is faced with a desperate dilemma and the complexity of the problem was best shown by the councilman's frustration in trying to soothe the anger of the Walnut Creek homeowners. The aldermen promised action, but the citizens left the meeting angered and concerned and not wanting to hear promises.



Hendon Shells Out For Daughter And Robbie At Cake Auction