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Commissioners Apply For Sewage Grants

The Madison County Board of Commissioners announced Monday that a final application for state and federal assistance for the planning, design and construction of on-site sewage treatment facilities to serve individual homes in rural areas of the county has been completed and submitted to the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources and Community Development.

These grants will assist owners and occupants of homes within the county which cannot be served by sewers now being built or extended from Marshall, Mars Hill and Hot Springs. The grant will be used for the construction of individual septic tanks or alternative systems on sites where septic tanks cannot be installed.

Funding for the project will be sought under section 201 of Public Law 92-500, the same source of funding now being used for sewer system and sewage treatment plant construction in the three towns.

Commissioners said the project will be initiated at six individual locations within the county and will then be expanded to include additional areas as it progresses. A public meeting at which this project will be described in detail, and at which questions concerning individual participation will be answered

is scheduled for Monday, April 20 at 7 p.m. at the courthouse in Marshall.

The commissioners said all interested residents of the county are invited to attend.

The purpose of this project, in which the county will be assisted by Frank Schutz, a consulting engineer and by Health Department staff, will be the elimination of existing and potential health hazards and water quality problems caused by the direct discharge of inadequately treated sanitary wastes from homes in the county.

At homesites where the installation of conventional septic tanks and drain fields to eliminate these problems may not be possible, use will be made of such alternative systems as earth mounds and pressurized distribution systems.

Prior to the installation of any system, a survey will be made of each homesite to determine its suitability for the use of a conventional system. If a conventional system cannot be used, an alternative system, suitable for use on the site will be selected on the basis of soil conditions, depth to bedrock and groundwater and other site characteristics.

Only those systems which have been successfully used in other areas under similar conditions will be considered, commissioners said.

At the time of installation, federal grants of between 75 and 85 percent of construction cost, and North Carolina Clean Water Bond Issue grants of between 7½ and 12½ percent will be available to the homeowner. When necessary, methods of assisting the homeowner in meeting the remaining 7½ to 12½ percent of the construction cost through multi-year payments or direct assistance will be considered.

All home and property owners of houses which were completed and occupied by December 26, 1977 are eligible for this assistance regardless of income or family size. One grant application, on behalf of all individual owners, will be filed by the county.

The county will be responsible for the satisfactory operation of each system through a continuing management program. Each homeowner will be assessed for his share of the cost of this management system. This assessment will be similar to the charges which residents of the towns now providing central sewer service are currently paying. In return for this fee, maintenance, inspection and pump-out services will be provided as necessary.

Provision of this same service on a fee basis to homeowners who have built or will be building their own systems will be considered.



Madison County Industrial Park Site

Photo by N. Hancock

Special County Bill Passed

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

A special bill was passed and ratified by the General Assembly on April 3 which opened the door for Madison County to continue to develop its industrial park without the encumbrance of putting tracts of land up for bids to be made by industrial developers.

The bill, HB 471, exempts Madison County from the restrictions and limitations of Article 12, Chapter 160A of the N.C. General Statutes which requires bids to be made on lands sold or leased by the county.

The bill states in part, "It is the intent hereof that leases and sales may be negotiated and consummated without further formality other than the required unanimous resolution by the County Board

of Commissioners all on terms as negotiated." Such lease or sale shall be for cash. The commissioners have previously adapted such a resolution.

County commissioner chairman James Ledford said Monday that passage of the resolution enables the county to go ahead with the transaction between the county and American Greetings Corporation of Ohio in which 52 acres of the county's industrial park is to be sold to American Greetings.

Ledford said the deed to the property is to be signed this week paving the way for American Greetings to construct multi-million dollar manufacturing plant on the site in the future. The greeting card operation would employ 500-700 persons initially, with expansion plans which would incorporate hiring approximately 1,500 people.

Hot Springs Teacher Acquitted Of Charge

Larry Wyatt, a 5th and 6th grade teacher at Hot Springs Elementary School, was acquitted in criminal court Wednesday, April 8 of a charge of assaulting a minor by Judge Earl Fowler of Asheville.

Wyatt, 32, was charged in March with inflicting physical injury upon a minor child by striking him with a wooden paddle while administering corporal punishment to Toddney Snelson, 11, a student at the school.

After hearing testimony from both prosecuting and defense witnesses, Judge Fowler said he found Wyatt not guilty of the charge on the grounds that the bruises allegedly sustained by Snelson during the paddling could have been induced by other physical incidents involving Snelson during

the same day of the paddling. In addition, Fowler said he had doubts that the bruises described by a physician who examined Snelson were made by the paddle used in the paddling.

Mrs. Charles A. Snelson, mother of the student, brought the charges against Wyatt after she discovered bruises on her son's buttocks the same day of the paddling incident.

A stream of defense witness testimony established that Wyatt had followed proper procedures in administering the punishment, and that Snelson had fallen in the school bathroom and engaged in "football tackles" in the gym the day he was paddled, incidents which could have contributed to the bruises.

Oil Company Seeks Madison Leases

The National Forests in North Carolina have received applications from Weaver Oil Company seeking to lease 79,936 acres of land in Graham, Haywood and Madison counties, George Olson, North Carolina Forest Service supervisor, has announced.

This brings to 297,289 the number of acres on which leases are being sought in the Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests, Olson said.

The oil and gas lease applications continue to trickle in, he said, but so far no leases have been granted although affirmative action on some of the applications is expected, according to Olson.

The 297,289 acres comprise almost one-third of the one million acres which make up the Pisgah and National Forests.

The leasing of federal forest lands for oil and gas exploration is a multi-step process, Olson emphasized. Firms seeking leases first apply to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in the Department of the Interior. BLM then transmits these applications to the U.S. Forest Service in the U.S. Department

of Agriculture.

The forest service prepares an environmental assessment which outlines how the surface resources within the national forests will be protected during exploration activities. The forest service can then give its consent, and when BLM issues the leases the exploration can begin.

The service completed the environmental assessment in September of 1980 and has already given its consent to most of the lease applications it has received (all from Amoco except the just-received requests from Weaver) and has forwarded them to BLM.

More applications are expected. In fact, it is expected that almost every acre in the Pisgah and Nantahala may be leased.

The prospecting leases are for 10-year periods and companies must pay \$1 an acre a year for the privilege of exploration.

So far a total of 143 lease applications from Amoco and Weaver have arrived in the Asheville office of the National Forests in North Carolina.

Here are the acreages on which

leases are sought on a county-by-county basis:

Buncombe, 14,448; Cherokee, 63,073; Clay, 4,397; Graham, 47,263; Haywood, 28,303; Henderson, 17,143; Madison, 47,477; and Transylvania, 75,185. The total acreage is 297,289.

Olson has made it clear that exploration for gas and oil must be done with sensitivity and care to protect the environment and so that it will not infringe on other multiple uses of the forests such as timbering, backpacking, camping, hiking, hunting, fishing and others.

The public will not be denied access to any exploration area. Many persons might actually enjoy watching the exploration take place, he said.

Oil companies began applying for the leases soon after U.S. geologists told a meeting of petroleum geologists in October of 1979 that the Appalachian Mountains from Pennsylvania to Alabama belong to a great land over-thrust which has buried an immense area of sedimentary rocks which might contain oil and natural gas. Previously the region had been considered devoid of petroleum products.

Ponder Re-Elected Chairman Of Madison School Board

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

Bobby Z. Ponder was re-elected chairman of the Madison County Board of Education, and Asheville attorney Larry B. Leake was rehired as the board's attorney for 1981-82 in one of the board's first actions taken at the April meeting.

Ponder thanked board members for showing confidence in him and assured them that he would do all he could do to benefit the board and the school system as chairman. "I sort of dread the next few years, though, with all the cutbacks. But, we must keep some 3,000 kids in mind, and do the very best for them that we can," Ponder said. "And that's what I pledge to you that I will attempt to do for the next year."

In other business the board:

- Heard a report from school superintendent R.L. Edwards concerning projected reductions in federal allotments to the Madison system for the coming school year. Edwards quoted the report as saying the ESEA Title IV-B program allotment would be reduced by some \$5,000 to give the board only \$10,000 for 1981-82. The Child

Nutrition Program will be \$110,112 less than this year leaving the local program with approximately \$300,000 in operating expenses. Edwards said \$10,000 is expected to be cut from the ESEA Title VI-B Handicapped program giving the board some \$66,000 to operate that program next year.

Edwards said the school system stands to lose \$191,820 through federal cutbacks this coming year. He summed up the bleak looking financial situation by saying federal cuts will run 20 to 30 percent, state cuts at 6 percent, and county cuts nearly 5 percent. On top of that, the board is faced with a 12 percent inflation rate.

The board said they would discuss cutback matter further at a called meeting on Wednesday, April 15 when they will discuss the new budget for 1981-82, and open bids for the Marshall-Walnut K-3 school building. The meeting is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. in the superintendent's office.

- Approved a leave of absence for Martha Kirkpatrick at Spring Creek School and agreed to hire Lynn Flemmons as a replacement for Kirkpatrick.
- Accepted a letter of resignation

from Luanne Chandler at Laurel School who stated she would be moving out of the county. The board declined to hire a replacement for Chandler.

- Spent one and one-half hours in executive session with Mr. and Mrs. Bob Ferguson and high school principal David Wyatt in a discussion of what Ponder said were "some problems." The board took no action on the matter.

- Approved a proposed budget of \$108,895 for the vocational education program at Madison High School. Jack Cole explained to the board that the only increase in the budget was for salaries.

- Accepted a letter of resignation from Madison High School secretary Shirley Baldwin. The board approved the high school's hiring a business co-op student as a substitute secretary for the remainder of the school year.

- Granted a request from Peter Gott to allow his son to transfer to the Alaska public school system for the remainder of the school year, provided the transfer would be acceptable to school officials in Alaska.

- Approved a student council constitution for Madison High School.

Hunt Concerned Over State Block Grants

WASHINGTON—If Congress goes along with President Reagan's proposal for block grants, lawmakers also should give states more flexibility and authority in administering the money, North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt testified in Washington.

Hunt appeared before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources as chairman of the National Governor's Association's

Committee on Human Resources. "If programs are consolidated into block grants with greater state flexibility and less extensive administrative requirements, we could provide a higher level of services with the same amount of funding, or the same level of services with funding reductions of about 10 percent," Hunt said.

With high inflation, Hunt said, maintaining funding at current levels represents a 10 percent cut in real terms. Of the \$48.6 billion in savings for fiscal 1982 proposed by Reagan, he noted, state and local grants will bear \$14.5 billion, or about 30 percent of the cuts.

Hunt, in naming specific features the governors are looking for in the block grant approach, called for "full federal assumption of financing and program design for income assistance and medical care financing programs." And he said governors must be given the ability to determine how to spend block grant funds. Hunt said states should be allowed to retain and carry over any unused block grant funds from one year to the next.