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## Assessed Value Rises \$70 Million In Madison

### County May Ask 80 Cent Tax Rate

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK  
Editor

With the 1981-82 departmental budget requests to the county totaling \$1,765,000, the Madison County commissioners indicated Friday night they would have to levy a tax rate of 80 cents per \$100 of assessed value on property to remain solvent and fulfill obligations through essential services to residents.

But, County Finance Officer David Caldwell said it would take "a flat one dollar tax rate" to get the \$1.7 million needed to meet all the budget requests. Caldwell based his figure on a 90 percent tax collection on the re-appraised property valuation which totals \$181.5 million.

The new assessed value of Madison County real estate is up \$70 million over the county worth listed

a year ago at \$111.6 million after a round of property revaluation.

"We're not going to get a dollar," Commissioner Ervin Adams told the board. And board members agreed that the higher the levied rate, the lower the percentage of collection.

With the fiscal year ending in two and one-half weeks, Caldwell said, "as of right now the county has collected 83 to 84 percent of taxes."

Commissioners chairman James Ledford recommended an 80 cent tax rate and explained he would like to see the ambulance service, the landfill and capital outlay fund each receive 10 cents, and the school bond debt fund receive five cents of the 80. "That would leave 45 cents to operate the rest of the departments of the county," he said.

Acknowledging a 70 cent tax rate would provide the county with the same amount of money it budgeted last year, Ledford said, "There's no way we can keep the budget the same as last year on account of inflation."

Even at Ledford's recommended 80 cent rate, the county will have to shortchange some departments on their requests. "The only way to cut a budget is to cut the people who are on the payroll, and we're down to minimum personnel now," Ledford said.

The commissioners decided to hold off setting the new rate until after a public hearing this Friday night at 7:30 at the courthouse during which they hope to obtain public comment to help them make the final decision on the issue.

## At County Commissioners Meeting

### Group Seeks Paving Of Highway 212

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK  
Editor

Twelve highly vocal and somewhat angry residents from White Rock and Shelton Laurel marched into the county commissioners meeting Friday night to find out what the commissioners could do to help get a five mile portion of Highway 212 leading into Tennessee paved.

County attorney Larry B. Leake told spokesmen for the group he would personally make an appointment with N.C. Department of Transportation district engineer Earl McEntire in Asheville so that the group could make him aware of the condition of the road.

The commissioners listened

to the group's grievance, and then told the residents that they have no control over what roads get paved or when. "Our priorities are set by the state," the commissioners said.

Philip Franklin, one of the group's spokesmen, told the commissioners that a Mr. Martin and Mr. Crumpler from the NCDOT district engineer's office "were supposed to be here tonight, but where are they?"

"I'll meet with McEntire. I'll go down to Raleigh, I'll go to Washington," Franklin said, indicating his willingness to do something to get the road paved.

Gladson Cutshall told the commissioners it would take

gravel "three feet deep to cover up the rocks in that road." He countered the commissioners contention that there were worse roads in Madison County with a blunt, "You're dead wrong!"

The residents contend they have waited for years for something to be done about the road, and that "the people who own land on the head of Shelton Laurel don't even get the crumbs from the state and county taxes they pay."

Commissioners chairman James Ledford explained to the residents that Madison County gets a certain amount of funds per unpaved mile each year and the commissioners determine where the money is spent at a hearing

with a representative from the highway department. Then the state decides what to do with the money, Ledford said. "We really want to help you, so we're going to set you with the people who've got the authority," Ledford said.

In other business the commissioners:

- Heard a report from acting CETA director Darlene Cody who said the Summer Youth Employment Program proposal had been approved with a budget of \$78,989 to provide 51 in-school job positions and five dropout positions. The commissioners approved the hiring of 56 employees in the program for 24 job sites. Cody said the Public Service Employment program would

end June 30 leaving three bus drivers and three ambulance EMT personnel without jobs. The Youth Work Experience program will resume when school starts and will provide 47 job positions on \$82,150, Cody said.

Ledford told the board that he had received word that Madison County will experience an 11 percent cut in CETA funds for the next year, giving the county \$141,256 in CETA funds.

- Heard a report from Esther Franks, director of senior citizens program, and approved the hiring of Wanda Goslin as site manager at the Shelton Laurel meal site.

- Approved the hiring of Steve Metcalf as a bus driver



Photo by N. Hancock

GLADSON CUTSHALL makes a mile stretch of Highway 212 paved point during the county commissioners meeting Friday night as he pleaded his case to help get a five- highly vocal meeting.

for the Greater Ivy Day Care Center and meal site, on the recommendation of Day Care director Luanne Roberts.

- Signed a contract to release the recreational facilities on Blannanhattet Island to the Town of Marshall.

- Acknowledged the receipt

of a \$25,000 grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation ty.

- Approved moving ambulance service director

- Agreed to pursue a proposal to hire a person to serve Marshall ambulance service as an emergency headquarters.

- Appointed commissioner Ervin Adams to the Social Services Board beginning July 1.

## Money Matters Dominate School Board Meeting

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK  
Editor

Money matters occupied much of the time at last week's board of education meeting as board members adopted an amended 1980-81 in order to finish out this year, were told they would have to take some positive steps in order to secure a \$2.5 million Farmers' Home Administration loan, and decided to table a proposal to submit a community schools project to Raleigh — a project, if approved, would cost the board \$8,000 to get \$25,000 from Raleigh.

In approving the amended budget, the board acted on the advice of its accounting firm, Green, Skidmore, Smith and Company, and voted to transfer a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant of \$155,000 to the Madison High School erosion project fund in the capital outlay category of the budget.

In a similar action, the board consolidated a 1973 federal flood disaster grant and flood insurance benefit money into one account under capital outlay funds. The federal flood money, some \$314,000, and the money collected from flood insurance had been kept in separate accounts, according to school superintendent Robert L. Edwards, "and now the accountants want it shoved into one account," he said.

Edwards, at the close of the budget action, told board members, "On June 30 we go to the commissioners to see what our money is," referring to the proposed school budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1. Commenting on anticipated budget cuts, board members

speculated they would be making several budget amendments during the coming year.

Larry Merrill, district director of the Farmers' Home Administration, appeared before the board to find out if the board planned to take positive steps toward securing a \$2.5 million FHA loan that was obligated to the county for a local school bond referendum in 1979.

The loan obligation will be cancelled on June 15 (Monday) unless the board shows the FHA that steps are being taken to obtain the loan, Merrill said. However, he indicated the FHA would give the board 30 days within which to notify the agency of its intentions. Merrill said essentially that FHA would expect the board to hold another school bond referendum by Dec. 31 of this year.

Board chairman Bobby Ponder told Merrill, "Thirty days will give us enough time to talk to key people in the county to see how they feel about it (a bond referendum)."

The board told Merrill they would report to him by their July 6 meeting. A bond referendum for the money was defeated by voters in 1979. The \$2.5 million was earmarked for the construction of the Marshall-Walnut consolidated elementary school and renovations to some of the county's other elementary schools.

Edwards brought up the matter of submitting a Community Schools Act project to Raleigh, and drew a less than positive reaction from board members Ed Gentry and Ponder. The board decided to table the pro-

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## \$1,000 Spirit



PAUL FRISBY, 13, learned Monday that it pays to "Get That Pepsi Spirit" — to the tune of \$1,000. Paul, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Frisby of Route 4, Marshall, said he had been collecting Pepsi bottle caps for about a month trying to completely spell out P-E-P-S-I-S-P-I-R-I-T with the single letters found in the caps. Monday he found the elusive letter R, and he and his dad made a quick trip to Asheville to pick up the \$1,000 check from John Teeter, general manager of the local Pepsi Cola Bottling Company.

## School Biz Rivals Madison Burley

It's been said education is big business in Madison County. With some 300 employees on the payroll last year, the public school system is probably the county's largest single employer, other than county government itself.

In terms of cash flow in the local economy, the system was responsible for handling \$6.5 million, according to the amended 1980-81 fiscal year budget approved by the school board at its meeting last week.

In comparison, the county's burley tobacco crop — long considered the economic backbone of Madison — produced \$7 million for the county last year, and on the average brings in between \$7 and 18 million annually for the local economy, according to W.B. Zink of the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service office.

The amended school budget was presented to the board for approval by school superintendent Robert L. Edwards who said the system's auditing firm, Greene Skidmore Smith and Company, had suggested the board amend the budget to include amounts of money appropriated by state, federal and local sources.

The amended budget gives an exact definition of the size of this service industry, and shows a clearer picture of the system's financial operations than did the 1980-81 budget request submitted to the county commissioners.

That budget request asked the commissioners for a total of \$822,988 in local money (local current expense funds plus capital outlay funds) which amounted to 12 percent of the \$6.5 million figure the system had to work with for the year. The commissioners granted only \$575,000 of the request to the board.

In its request for local funds for the 1981-82 fiscal year, the board is asking the commissioners for \$977,833.34 in current expense

monies and \$50,000 in capital outlay funds for a total of \$747,939.56.

The amended budget lists allocations made to the local system by state, federal and other sources in seven main categories.

The updated local current expense fund showed a total of \$1,176,422. Primary revenue sources in this category were the state (\$470,330) and the county appropriation (\$525,000).

The state public school fund contributed \$3,507,119 to the system for instructional programs and various supporting services.

The federal grant fund category totaled \$570,958 with revenues coming from ESEA Title I, Title IV and Title VI allocations.

School Food Service monies totaled \$536,250 with \$437,250 supplied by United States Department of Agriculture grants, \$6,000 allocated by Non-Food Assistance, and \$87,000 made through lunchroom sales.

The system's capital outlay fund totaled \$752,029 with some of the major expenditures being \$190,000 for the Madison High School erosion project and \$512,029 for the new Marshall-Walnut elementary school. Three of the larger revenue sources in this category were a USDA grant (\$155,000), a 1973 state public school facilities bond (\$154,882), and the flood disaster fund (\$314,863).

The budget also showed \$10,990 from the Spring Creek Veteran's Farm Cooperative spent on the system's vocational program, and \$800 from the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board used for the purchase of equipment.

Even with anticipated federal cutbacks for the system for 1981-82, the largest being expected in the School Food Service program, Madison County Public Schools will still be doing business near the \$6 million level and maintain its economic rivalry with "King Burley" until a larger industry comes along.