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Town Officials Puzzled By Threats

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

Hot Springs town officials say they are puzzled by allegations by several residents who feel they have been harassed and intimidated because of their opposition in the Nov. 3 municipal election and support of a controversial game room on Main Street.

Mayor Deborah Ponder Baker and two aldermen said in recent interviews they "don't have any idea" why unsuccessful alderman candidate Hank Holmes, mayoral candidate Richard Waltz, and other residents received threatening or annoying phone calls following the Dec. 7, town meeting. Waltz and some of his supporters also had their homes falsely advertised for sale following the Nov. 3 election.

"We have no reason to harass anyone," Mayor Baker said. "I have no hard feelings

toward anyone, and I don't want to see them harassed," she said.

Holmes, Waltz and a half-dozen other residents have said their problems with threatening phone calls, and with realtors and moving companies calling to offer to sell their property or move them to other cities, began around the time of the election and continued through December after Holmes objected to a town ordinance which affected his game room.

Mrs. Alberta Stroud, Holmes' mother, received a call from an unidentified man who threatened to burn her home and property. Holmes' house, owned by Mrs. Stroud, was destroyed by a fire of undetermined origin on Jan. 3.

Alderman Wesley Staude said he doesn't think anyone is being intimidated for political reasons. "If they are, I don't know why," he said. "I don't know why anybody would. I've never

known it to happen in Hot Springs in any election," Staude said.

"Why would the winners harass the losers?" Alderman Ernest Autrey asked in reference to the election. "I know I haven't done that (harassed anyone). I am a Christian and I want to be honest," he said.

Autrey said one of the residents recently told him that an anonymous caller had threatened to burn his house. "The man told me he knew who it (the caller) was, but he did nothing about it. I don't know if it's the truth, but he told me that," Autrey said.

"If a man calls me and I know who it is, I'm going to get a warrant for him if he threatens to burn my house," Autrey said.

Mayor Baker and Staude both said they have received annoying calls, but no threats, from anonymous callers in the past.

"I'm always getting calls — people calling me and hanging up, saying things. I don't pay any attention to it. I'm use to it," Staude said. "There's always a few people you can't satisfy. I ran for alderman to try to do something for the many, not the few."

"I'm sorry that these people are being harassed, if they are being harassed. I have no way of proving that they are," Mayor Baker said.

"I want to see it be a good town and the people working together. I see no reason why we shouldn't be able to work together," she said.

Holmes says "things have quieted down" since his house burned. No one was reported receiving any more threats or annoying calls. Holmes, who operates the Trail Cafe in town, said last week the game room is "holding its own," but his plans to finish remodeling the building and to add a pizza diner have been postponed.

Ponder Files For Sheriff

Madison County Sheriff E. Y. Ponder filed last Thursday to seek re-election to the office which he has held for 27 years.

Ponder, 72, announced his candidacy saying he is running on his record. He will be competing for the Democratic nomination in the May primary with former deputy John Hensley of Marshall.

The sheriff's race had developed into a three-way primary up until Monday when Roger D. Haynie withdrew his name from the primary ballot. Haynie said he was withdrawing because Ponder had thrown his hat into the ring.

Ponder was first elected sheriff of Madison County in 1950 in a close race with Republican Hubert Davis. Since that time he has lost the office in only one election and reclaimed it in the following



E. Y. Ponder

election. Two Republicans — William R. Lisenbee, Marshall police chief, and Lue Allon Silver, a carpenter with an Asheville construction company — have filed for the sheriff's office in the Republican primary.

Ponder, who says he's running on his record, said, "I plan to do the best I can to provide fair and honest law enforcement," if re-elected in November.

Ponder's brother, Zeno H. Ponder, is chairman of the Madison County Democratic Party, and election officials are looking to him for nominees to replace Hensley on the county board of elections.

Hensley resigned his seat on the elections board in order to run for the sheriff's position.

Alex K. Brock, state elections director, has said State Democratic Party Chairman Russell Walker has written to Zeno Ponder asking for nominations for a successor to Hensley in the hopes the new appointee could attend the training school for election officials in Winston-Salem on Jan. 29.



Haynie Withdraws

Roger D. Haynie, who filed last week as a Democratic candidate for the office of sheriff, withdrew his name from the May primary election ballot Monday.

In a written statement, Haynie, 32, said he first decided to run for sheriff "based upon my understanding that our long-term, great Sheriff E.Y. Ponder had made the decision not to seek re-election."

But Ponder filed for re-election last Thursday, and Haynie said he was withdrawing his candidacy for that reason.

Local political observers have speculated that the county's Democratic Party could have been weakened in the May primary had Ponder chosen to retire and Haynie competed against sheriff's office hopeful John Hensley of Marshall.

Lisenbee Wants Changes In Sheriff's Department

William R. (Bill) Lisenbee, Republican candidate for sheriff in the May primary election, says he decided to toss his hat into the ring because "we need so many improvements in county law enforcement to help people without hurting them."

Lisenbee, 44, says if he is successful in the May primary and elected next November one of his top priorities as sheriff will be to keep the sheriff's office open 24 hours a day.

The "safety and well being of our young people" also ranks high on Lisenbee's list of goals for the sheriff's department.

"I feel the county needs



Bill Lisenbee

more full-time deputies, marked patrol cars and uniformed personnel to help

keep down crime by being more visible in the community," he said last week.

He said he is interested in promoting crime prevention through good public relations between the sheriff's department and citizens and through "providing the protection the public needs."

A native of Marshall, Lisenbee has been on the town police for seven years and chief for one and one-half years. He holds certificates in both basic law and criminal justice training from the University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Lisenbee and his wife, the former Betty Griffin, have three children.

Beall Seeks Full Term

Charles M. Beall of Clyde has announced that he is a candidate for election to a full term in the North Carolina General Assembly from the 44th House District.

Beall was appointed to the House of Representatives last month by Gov. James Hunt after he had been chosen by the Democratic Party's 44th District Executive Committee to serve the remainder of Rep. Ernest Messer's unexpired term.

Messer was Beall's basketball coach when he was a student at Bethel High School in Haywood County in the 1930's.

Messer left the legislature in November to accept Hunt's appointment as assistant secretary of the North Carolina Department of Human Resources, heading the Division on Aging. The term to which he had been elected expires in January, 1983.

Beall is seeking the Democratic Party's nomination for the House seat in the May Primary and election next November to a full two-year term.

Beall represents the 44th District, along with Rep. Liston Ramsey of Marshall, currently Speaker of the House. The District is composed of Haywood, Madison, Jackson, and Swain counties.

Beall, 61, is an inventory controller at Champion Papers' Canton plant, where he has been employed for 43 years.

Ramsey has appointed him to 12 legislative committees, all those on which Messer sat. They are the House Committee on Aging, Appropriations Base Budget Committee, Appropriations Base Budget Committee on Human Resources, House Appropriations Expansion Budget Committee, Appropriations Ex-

pansion Budget Committee on Human Resources, committees on Higher Education, Insurance, Legislative Redistricting, Manufacturers and Labor, Rules and Operations of the House, Transportation, and the Special House Committee on Use and Lease of Public Lands.

In addition, Beall is serving on the North Carolina Judicial Nominating Committee.

A former Canton alderman, for four years, he was chairman of the Haywood County Board of Elections for eight years, chairman of the Haywood County Democratic Executive Committee for six years, and has served on the State Democratic Executive Committee seven years. He was a delegate from the 11th Congressional District at the 1980 National Democratic Convention.

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Charles M. Beall

News Record Wins N.C. Press Association Award

The News Record received its first North Carolina Press Association award this week at the 57th North Carolina Newspaper Institute in Chapel Hill.

The third place award for feature writing was presented by Ken Wilson, president of the N.C. Association of Community Newspapers, and Gov. James B. Hunt to Editor G. Nicholas Hancock at the awards ceremony held at the Carolina Inn on the University of North Carolina campus.

The award-winning entry, "He's the Keeper of the Creek," was written by Hancock and printed in the April 23, 1981 edition of the newspaper. The article was in competition with 74 feature ar-



Hancock

ticles from community (weekly) newspapers across the state.

"I was a bit surprised when the NCPA called to congratulate me on winning the award," Hancock said. "There aren't many Keepers of the Creek in this world; I'm glad I found him."

The article told the story of a 10-year-old boy who is the self-appointed protector of a creek, and who doesn't allow fishermen, swimmers or passers-by to "mess up" the creek with litter or pollutants.

The NCPA awards are presented annually to winning entries submitted by both daily and non-daily newspaper members of the association. Nearly 2,000 entries were judged in the 1981 contest by professional journalists from outside North Carolina.

Planning Board Denies Max Patch Rezoning Request

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

The Madison County Planning Board denied an initial request that could change an area of "unspoiled mountain beauty" into an "exclusive type resort" for wealthy clientele at its meeting last Wednesday in Marshall.

James Anders, representing Max Patch Investment Group, requested rezoning 430 acres of land surrounding Max Patch Mountain from RA25 (residential/agricultural) to R26P (residential/resort).

Anders, a county native who lists his address as Columbia, S.C., said he's

seeking the zoning change in order to pave the way for developing the property into a private, "exclusive type resort" limited to 200 residents. He said tentative plans call for one to three acre lots to be sold for approximately \$35,000, and compared the proposed development to South Carolina's Hilton Head Island.

Over 50 people showed up at the meeting to oppose the zoning change citing damage to the natural and human environment and possible skyrocketing property taxes to Max Patch area residents as reasons to leave the area unchanged.

The planning board, which acts in an advisory capacity to the board of county commissioners, recommended unanimously that Anders' request be denied "until a more specific proposal for development is submitted."

Opposition to the zoning change was led by Joe Huff, a Mars Hill resident and attorney, who told the board that the history of such developments in western North Carolina is "they have all gone broke." He called the natural bald on top of Max Patch Mountain "a crown jewel" of natural wilderness areas and said, "I hope it will be preserved."

Arch Nichols, an Asheville resident representing the Appalachian Trail Conference, said the conference was concerned about the impact such development would have on the Appalachian Trail which borders the property.

"Like the adjacent Great Smoky Mountains, the major value of Max Patch is its unspoiled mountain beauty in a natural state," Nichols said.

Danny Wyatt of Walnut told board members he had conducted a personal study of similar developments in Avery County where, according to Wyatt, property taxes on land adjoining resort

developments escalated to the point that residents there united to oust the commissioners who had approved rezoning for resort development.

"The real question here is one of values," Wyatt said, and contrasted the mountain community "that was able to get along for generations without destroying the land" and wealthy resort dwellers "who are removed from the process of living."

"We've got something to tell and share with the rest of the country," he said. "But if we go along with this greed, and never come to the point of saying this is enough — this is a good way of living — we're just going to kill

ourselves."

Anders said the development would create a "considerable tax base for Madison County plus increase jobs." He said the resort would not interfere with the Appalachian Trail or cost the county any money for road improvements.

Planning board Chairman Dr. Don Anderson said the board's recommendation would be passed on to the county commissioners within a week. The commissioners have the option of supporting the planning board's recommendation or approving Anders' request.