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County To Receive \$700,000 Grant Homes In Spring Creek, East Fork To Be Refurbished

By ROBERT KOENIG
Editor

The state of North Carolina has awarded Madison County a \$700,000 grant from its \$45 million share of Community Block Development Grant funds. Acceptance of the grant funds will be made official at the monthly meeting of the county Board of Commissioners Friday night.

Most of the grant will be used to rehabilitate homes in the East Fork and Beartown communities, according to Sam Parker, executive director of the Madison County Housing Authority.

Parker told reporters Friday that \$541,000 of the funds are earmarked for renovating 38 homes in the two communities. The project will repair 24 homes in East Fork and an additional

14 homes in the Beartown section of Spring Creek.

In addition to rehabilitating substandard housing in the county, the grant funds will also be used to install septic tanks in connection with a Clean Waters project to eliminate straight dumping into local creeks. The grant also provides \$20,000 for planning the construction of 10 low-income homes in the county at a site to

be determined.

The East Fork and Beartown rehabilitation projects will be the fourth such project undertaken by the housing authority. In past years, Community Block Development Grants, previously administered by the federal government, have funded rehabilitation projects in the Lisenbee, Bluff, Bee Tree, Rice's Cove and Calvin Creek sections of the county.

Work Begins On Spring Creek-Marshall Hwy.

By ELIZABETH D. SQUIRE

After a decade of hope, work has finally begun on a new road system linking the Spring Creek area of Madison County to the county seat at Marshall.

Funding is already in the pipeline for all but the last four miles of the road to Route 63 near Trust. State Transportation Board member Zeno Ponder told The News Record, "I have all the faith in the world that we'll get the money for the last four miles in the next few months."

Here is what is already happening along the new route:

• Funds are available to improve Sweetwater Rd. (State Road 1138) from a point on U.S. 25-70 one mile north of the Marshall By-

Pass to Dry Branch Rd. (State Road 1136) as far as the gap where SR 1136 and SR 1134 intersect. From that point, there is a short section where the exact route has not yet been determined.

• Money is available from the federal government's bridge rebuilding funds to replace an existing bridge over the French Broad River with a larger one to carry the new road across the river near Redmon. According to Earl McEntire, Transportation Department division engineer, a public hearing will be held, probably in Marshall, to decide the location of the bridge and the road it will carry.

Although the hearing date has not been set, Zeno Ponder said he thought the location and

date would be picked within about 60 days.

• After crossing the French Broad River, the new road will connect with Little Pine Creek Rd. (State Road 1135), where work is already in progress to widen and straighten the road to accommodate 40- to 55-mile-an-hour traffic. Work is largely funded to improve Little Pine Creek Rd. about 4.3 miles to Payne's Chapel Church.

• A projected new road is planned for the last four miles to the Spring Creek area, from Payne's Chapel Church to a point on Route 63 near Trust. When completed, the new road would offer an alternate route to Marshall from West Asheville via Route 63 and the Sandy Mush area. (See related story on Page 8).

Jim Daniels, State Transportation board member from Buncombe County, joined with Ponder in expressing optimism that funds for the last four mile gap will be available shortly.

The new road will trim about 45 minutes from the current ride from the Spring Creek area to Madison High School. The trip currently takes as long as two and a half hours each way, Ponder said. He added that the new road would also make Spring Creek a more desirable area for industry.

Bill Moore of Meadow Fork remembers when Gov. Bob Scott came to a meeting in Marshall and promised a road to Spring Creek at the time voters were considering the con-

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Exclusive Interview With House Speaker

Ramsey Foresees Busy Session For Legislature

Speaker of the N.C. House Liston Ramsey sees the budget for the upcoming fiscal year as the biggest challenge facing the state legislature as it prepares to open the 1983-84 session on Jan. 12. In an exclusive New Years' Day interview with The News Record, the speaker said that work on the budget will begin as soon as the House convenes.

"Work on the budget will begin the first week when Governor Hunt presents his proposal to the legislature. Once a budget is proposed, it will go to the budget committees. There'll be 30 new members in the legislature this year and the first three or four weeks will have to be spent on orientation for the

new members. They'll need this time because state budgets are completely new to them. After that, we'll break up into subcommittees to look at the budget for each state agency. These continuation subcommittees will meet with and question the heads of each state agency to find out what their needs are. When these subcommittees reach a finding, five more subcommittees will take up requests for additional money from the agencies in the expansion budget."

Ramsey said that he expects the total state budget to be somewhere around \$6 billion for the coming fiscal year. As speaker of the house, Ramsey appoints four members to an advisory budget committee

that works with Gov. Hunt in formulating the state budget. Ramsey's appointments this year were Rep. Al Adams (D-Wake), Rep. Dwight Quinn (D-Cabarrus), Rep. Sam Bundy (D-Pitt) and Rep. Jeff Enloe (D-Macon). Four members of the state senate are also appointed to the committee by Lt. Gov. Jimmy Green and four additional members are named by Gov. Hunt. Although the committee presents recommendations to the governor, he is not bound by their findings in his budget proposal to the legislature.

Concerning the budget, Ramsey continued, "I don't think you'll see any major cuts, but there won't be any big new programs either."

"The state constitution

requires the governor to balance the budget. When we made up the current budget, we forecast a growth in revenues at somewhere around 8.9%. For the first five months of the year, its running at five percent, almost four percent below the expected growth. If it keeps up like it has, we'll be \$120 million short. Gov. Hunt has cut most state agencies to 94% of their appropriations, except for education, in order to make up the difference. We'll wind up with a balanced budget on July 1."

When he takes office on Jan. 12, Ramsey will become only the second man in modern times to serve two terms as speaker of the house. The Marshall representative in the

state house will begin his 11th term of office when the house convenes Jan. 12. His reelection as speaker was assured when he was the overwhelming choice of house Democrats at their Dec. 3 caucus. With a second term assured a third term is apparently Ramsey's for the asking. During the New Years' Day interview, Ramsey indicated that he would seek a third term as speaker, but said his political ambitions do not extend beyond the state house. "I've been encouraged by people all over the state to run for governor, but I'm not going to do it," he said.

Ramsey indicated that he had no pet bills in the upcoming session. He said that

he would favor tightening up the state's drinking laws, as recommended by a study commission appointed by Gov. Hunt and headed by Asheville attorney John Stevens. While he favors stricter laws governing driving under the influence, he hesitated to say what specific measures he would endorse. Ramsey said, "Governor Hunt has endorsed the concepts presented by the study commission, but we haven't been presented with a legislative package yet. I'd favor raising the drinking age. The ways things are now, some places sell whiskey and others beer and wine. It ought to be uniform. I think that would make it easier to en-

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REP. LISTON RAMSEY

Jobless Rate Hits 9.8 Percent

Unemployment in Madison County increased two-tenths of a percent in November to 9.8%, according to figures released by the state employment security commission last week. The 9.8% figure represents 860 jobless workers in the county. November marked the sixth month in a row that saw an increase in the county jobless rate.

The two-tenths of a percent increase in the county matched the increase on a statewide level. Total North Carolina unemployment increased to 9.5% in November from 9.3% in October. Nationally, the unadjusted unemployment rate for November was 10.4%, up from 9.9% in October.

November's unemployment rate increased in 80 counties statewide. It decreased in 32 counties and remained unchanged in eight counties, according to Glenn R. Jernigan, chairman of the N.C. Employment Security Commission. Jernigan said, "We experienced further

seasonal employment losses in agriculture (-15,700), manufacturing (-5,300) and in the self-employed group (-2,200)."

Fifty-seven counties statewide reported unemployment over 10 percent. Among the hardest hit counties were Graham with 32.7 percent, Swain, 29.2 percent; Ashe, 21.7 percent; Richmond, 18.4 percent; and Cherokee, 16.1 percent.

Buncombe County unemployment increased in November to 8.1 percent, up from 7.9 percent the previous month. Yancey County unemployment dropped from 15.2 percent in October to 14.3 percent in November. Haywood County's jobless rate jumped from 9.5 percent in October to 11.1 percent in November.

North Carolina counties with the lowest unemployment rates included Orange at 3.9 percent; Wake, 4.7 percent; Durham, 4.8 percent; and Gates, 5 percent. Employment forecasters are calling for another increase in the jobless rate in December figures.

Prize Winner



LEAHA JENKINS of Marshall displays the first place ribbon she won during a recent clogging competition held at the Marshall Elementary School. Leaha is a member of the Walnut Ridge Runners clogging team.

Aldermen Meet

Sewer Project Discussed

The Marshall Board of Aldermen held its first monthly meeting of the new year Monday. The meeting was also the first since the council changed to a 9:30 a.m. schedule. Despite the change, the usual number of Marshall residents attended.

As has been the case for many months, the town's sewer project was the main order of business. The council heard from representatives of Butler Associates of Asheville, the consulting engineers on the sewer project.

The engineers told the board that they have finished project plans and submitted them to various state and federal agencies for final approval. The engineers said they expected no major obstacles to approval and estimated that competitive bids on the project would be taken by the end of January or in early February.

Engineers displayed maps of the proposed sewer project, outlining the order in which renovations will be made to the present system. They said

that the first phase of the project would involve construction of a waste treatment plant on Blannerhasset Island and the replacement of sewer lines along Walnut Creek Road.

The second stage of the project would place an eight-inch line up Hill Street from Main Street. This would be followed by installing a pump station from Rollins to the town line. The Rollins line will connect with a line being installed on Hwy. 213.

The final stage of the project would involve installing a line on Cotton Mill Hill and the construction of a pump station to transport sewage to the waster treatment plant on the island.

Gary McGill, an engineer on the project, said that some individual homes in Marshall needed to be inspected in order to tie them into the system. He believed there would be enough money remaining in project funds to cover these instances.

In response to a citizen's question, McGill said Butler

Associates would supervise contractors working on the project. The firm would also have an inspector monitoring the construction. Payments will be made by Marshall Town Hall personnel.

When bids are to be let, McGill said advertisements will be published in both The News Record and Asheville Citizen. He said two construction publications would also publish the bid. When finalized, the bids will be opened in a public meeting at the town hall.

McGill expressed optimism that the contract will attract a number of bids. He also said that the contract calls for the project to be completed within 330 days after the start of construction. He added that there will be three separate contracts let on the project, for electrical work, the treatment plants and the collection lines.

The engineers said that the system would be put into service as it is completed. It is expected that the treatment

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Mars Hill Hires Hoyle

The Mars Hill Board of Aldermen met Monday evening for their regular monthly session.

In their first act of the new year, the board approved a resolution calling for improvements to be made to Hickory Drive.

The board also heard a report from Town Manager Daryl Boone. He told the board that Mars Hill had received a priority rating of 50 for a water project from the funding agency and that Mars Hill will probably never qualify for the grant money needed to make improvements to the present system.

In a personnel matter, the board accepted Boone's recommendation of Sherry Hoyle as a replacement for Mark Bell, the town's former utility man. The council authorized Boone to negotiate with Hoyle for a three-year term. (Continued on Page 2)