



THE NEWS RECORD

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82nd Year No. 18

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

WEDNESDAY, May 4, 1983

15¢ Per Copy

County Democrats Re-Elect Zeno Ponder

By ROBERT KOENIG

Madison County Democrats met at Madison High School Saturday afternoon and re-elected Zeno Ponder to another term as county chairman. Ponder was unopposed in the election.

Other members of the county executive committee were also chosen without opposition in a show of unity following controversy regarding the selection of delegates from Grapevine precinct.

Hot Springs mayor Debby Ponder Baker was elected to a two-year term as vice chairman of the executive committee. Wayne McDevitt was named second vice chairman, and Bobby Jean Rice was elected to another term as third vice chairman. Christine Lister was elected party secretary, succeeding Jena Lee Buckner, and David Caldwell of Walnut was named to serve another term as party treasurer.

The elections to county offices followed a debate regarding the Grapevine precinct elections. In those elections, both T.O. Coates and G.D. Mace claimed victory. The other delegations to the convention were to decide which slate of delegates to seat as the convention's first order of business.

Both Coates and Mace were given 10 minutes to present their cases. G.D. Mace spoke to the delegates on his own behalf. The Coates delegation's case was presented by Judy Coates.

Delegate R.L. Edwards suggested a compromise by which each of the opposing delegations would receive some of the seats for the precinct. Mace rejected that.

When a vote of the convention was called, the Coates delegation was approved by a margin of 48-13. The decision sparked a mass departure of an estimated 100 Mace supporters. The

Grapevine residents had come to the convention to express their support for Mace.

Contacted by telephone Monday evening, Mace told The News Record, "I don't think we got a fair shake and neither do the people who supported me. I think it was unfair for the other precincts to decide who was elected. They didn't get all the facts. The people feel that we got hoodwinked. We didn't get justice."

Asked why he rejected the suggested compromise, Mace said, "We tried to compromise before the election. We wanted to get some of our young people who are interested in politics on the ticket."

The controversial election was conducted at Roberts' store at the junction of Grapevine and East Fork. Mace said the final count of votes showed him the

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Re-Elected MADISON COUNTY Democratic Party Chairman Zeno Ponder.

Marshall, County Apply For Block Grants

By ROBERT KOENIG

The Town of Marshall and the Madison County Board of Commissioners will be applying for Community Block Development Grant (CDBG) funds totaling \$699,903. Announcement of the grant applications was made at public meetings held in Marshall last week.

Marshall will ask for \$549,370 to revitalize the Cotton Mill section of the town. The county's request for \$150,533 will be used for economic development planning and site development for a proposed new housing development on Higgins Branch Rd. outside Mars Hill.

Marshall's request for funding was approved by the town board of aldermen at a special public meeting held on April 18. The request calls for \$460,010 in funding to provide water, sewer and housing rehabilitation in the Cotton Mill section and an additional \$89,360 in local option funds to pay for water lines and fire hydrants on Roberts Hill Rd.

The town's requests states that the Cotton Mill section has the greatest concentration of substandard housing in Marshall. If approved, block grant funds will be used to destroy two unoccupied houses and renovate 18 occupied dwellings. Most of the homes were found to be more than 40 years old.

Both Island Rd. and Cotton Mill Hill would receive repairs, according to the plan submitted with the grant request. In addition to the housing rehabilitation, the plan calls for installing water lines to five homes on Island Rd. and placing two fire hydrants on the road 500 feet apart. A 600-foot section at the end of Island Rd. would be graded and graveled and a guard rail installed along the road next to the river bank.

Sewer lines to serve ten homes in the community will also be installed, according to the plan.

Cost estimates submitted with the request show that \$226,000 of the grant would be used to rehabilitate 18 homes

in the Cotton Mill section and demolish two other buildings deemed beyond repair. The grant request estimates an average cost of \$12,400 for each house to be repaired. Homes requiring major renovations could receive up to \$15,000 in repairs. Other homes will receive minor repairs, such as painting and insulation worth up to \$10,000 in cost.

All but one of the 21 homes in the Cotton Mill section was judged to be substandard. Most of the residents in the community are elderly or handicapped.

The \$89,360 request for local option funds would be used to install a six-inch water line and four fire hydrants on Roberts Hill Road. There currently are no fire hydrants on the road. A Tennessee Valley Authority water leak inspection determined that Roberts Hill Rd. has more leaks than any other section of the town.

Neither the Cotton Mill section nor Roberts Hill Rd. are included in the planned \$1.2

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Coming Next Week . . .

For the past month, News Record editor Bob Koenig has been touring each of the schools of Madison County. In interviews with teachers, principals and students, we have compiled a special four-page report on the schools. For an up-to-date report on the school in your community, look to the special four-page supplement to next week's News Record.

Car Wreck Kills Marshall Man

Fred Samuel Ramsey, 81, of Route 4, Marshall was killed instantly Saturday morning in a two-car accident at the intersection of U.S. Hwy. 19-23 and N.C. 213 outside Mars Hill, according to the State Highway Patrol.

Ramsey was the driver of a 1974 Dodge station wagon which collided with a 1974 Ford pickup truck driven by Oliver Dean Honeycutt, 37, of 34 Dogwood Dr. in Weaverville, a report by Trooper W.C. Swanson said. The impact of

the collision sent the Ramsey vehicle 140 feet down the road.

The accident occurred at approximately 10:35 a.m. Saturday. No charges were filed.

Two passengers in the Honeycutt vehicle were taken to Memorial Mission Hospital in Asheville by members of the Madison County Emergency Medical Service. Betty Honeycutt, 34, of Weaverville and her son, Jonathan, 4, were treated and released, according to a hospital spokesman.

Marshall Delays Budget Decision

The Marshall Board of Aldermen deferred a decision on the 1984 town budget at their monthly meeting Monday night. The aldermen will schedule a special session in two weeks to adopt a budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

They are waiting for a decision on the county budget before setting the tax rate for the town. At present, the town's tax rate of 75 cents per \$100 valuation is identical to the county rate.

Town Clerk Shirley Sexton has prepared a budget for the upcoming fiscal year. She recommended that the aldermen set a tax rate of 85 cents.

Asked, "Can we make it on 80 cents?" by alderman James Penland, Sexton said, "We probably can." Penland pointed out that the town will soon be raising sewer and water charges and that a tax increase would be an additional burden.

The aldermen agreed to consider the budget for two weeks before making a final decision. They are waiting to see what the county commissioners do at their monthly meeting Friday night. The commissioners are expected to consider the 1984 county budget at that time. The board then voted to hold a special session in two weeks to vote on the budget. Sexton urged the board to take quick action on the budget to avoid a delay in

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Mars Hill Board Approves Water Savings Plan

The Mars Hill Board of Aldermen approved an \$800 loan to help finance a water conservation project at their monthly meeting in Town Hall Monday night. The aldermen voted to sponsor the project after hearing a proposal from Mike Bradley of the Madison County Health Department.

Bradley told the aldermen that the county health department is planning a joint water conservation project in conjunction with the French Broad Electric Membership Cooperative; the towns of Marshall, Hot Springs and Mars Hill; and Madison County. Marshall aldermen endorsed the project with a similar

\$800 loan at their April monthly meeting. Hot Springs and the Board of County Commissioners have not yet taken action on the proposal.

The water conservation project will encourage home owners to install three water-saving devices in their homes. The project's coordinators

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Hughie Ray Brings The Farm To Town In Mars Hill

By PAULINE CHEEK

A sure sign of spring in Mars Hill is the frolicking of lambs in the fields of Hughie and Lena Ray.

This year, 15 ewes graze protectively near their 20 lambs. "My daddy and granddaddy both kept sheep, and so I do, too," says Mr. Ray. "Sheep are very shifty; about the only time they eat hay is when there is snow on the ground. What I like about them is that they're so humble; all I have to do is go to the barn and make one yell, and they come."

Usually, one lamb has to be bottle-fed a gallon of milk a day, becoming a life-long pet in the process. This year, however, none is being raised on the bottle. After the lambing season, January through April, Mr. Ray will take the sheep to his farm on Paint Fork, once owned by his grandfather. Already the lambs' wool, black at birth, is turning white. In May, the shearer will arrive on his annual trek from Florida to New York.

Even without sheep, the Parkway View farm will continue as an animal shelter, for Ray also raises cattle, pigs, chickens, cows,

dogs, bees, rabbits, pigeons, and sometimes, guineas and turkeys. Thirty-five years ago, the same land would scarcely have supported two cows.

"People thought I was crazy to pay \$6,000 for 20 acres of poor land," Mr. Ray recalls. "One Sunday afternoon my father-in-law took us to look at it, and I said I wouldn't have it. All I saw was broomsage and dewberry briars. But, as time went on, I kept getting a little more interested. We were living on Hamburg Mountain and had no telephone, no electricity, not much of a road. So we bought the land."

"The next spring, we moved over here and got to work. We tore up every bit of the land and starting putting out lime and fertilizer. We sowed grass seed and built fences and cross fences. In the next few years we turned the place green."

"All this was a painline," Ray emphasizes, speaking of his pleasure in getting out to the fields after a day's work inside. A graduate of Mars Hill College and Wake Forest University, with a B.S. in animal



MARS HILL FARMER Hughie Ray with some of his flock.