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CLOUDS BLANKET hills near Grapevine after a recent afternoon shower.

Board Of Education Sets School Teacher Assignments

The Madison County Board of Education allocated teachers during a day-long session last Wednesday. The board heard reports from each of the school principals before adjourning to executive session. Each of the eight school principals presented their capital expense budget requests and made personal recommendations.

Hot Springs school principal J.C. Wallin presented a request for \$60,000. Wallin told the board that most of the money would be needed to repair the roof on the school.

Madison High School principal David Wyatt submitted the second largest request, for \$50,000. Wyatt told the board that the funds would be used to purchase additional computers and make repairs to a roof at the school.

Mars Hill Elementary submitted a request for \$52,000 while both Marshall and Laurel Elementary schools asked for \$20,000. Walnut principal Sidney Harrison submitted a request for \$40,000.

Marshall Primary School principal Nancy Allen asked the board for \$8,000 to purchase encyclopedias and a globe for the school. Spring Creek School turned in the smallest request, asking for \$5,000 with which to make repairs to the windows of the school lunchroom.

The school board allocated nine teachers to Hot Springs Elementary. The teachers named were:

Emma Davis, Dorothea Chandler, Lynn Plemmons, Selma Wallin, Elizabeth Staude, Shirley Franklin, Sharon Baker, Mattie Ramsey

and Ethel Kirkpatrick.

Walnut School received an allocation of eight teachers. Those assigned to Walnut School are: Winnie Brogan, Katherine Adams, Wanda Capps, Keith Ray, Larry Wyatt, Katherine Phythian, Jeter Sherlin and Deborah J. Baker.

Marshall Primary School received an allocation of nine teachers. Those teachers assigned to Marshall Primary are: Debra Boone, Jean Hunter, Teresa Banks, Donna Rice, Norma Ball, Othello Ogle, June Gahagan, Robina Adams and Vickie Carver.

Mars Hill Elementary School received an allocation of 36 teachers. Those assigned to Mars Hill were: Janie Briggs, Marie Cody, Shirley Cody, Patsy Hoyle, Diane Sams, Wanda Edmonds, Mar-

sha Boyd, Carolyn Ponder, Sadie Wallin, Ruby Anderson, Paula Ammons, Woody Ammons, Billy Haynie, Betty Ballard, Pat Ball, Elizabeth Norville, Tommy Blackwell, Ruby Wallin, Gladys Ball, Mary Metcalf, Diana Condra, Nina Ledford, Shirley Metcalf, Connie Kramer, David Thomas, Beverly Hough, Jack Radford, Peggy Thomas, Judy Wallin, Shirley Norton, Linda Campbell, Carolyn Rich, Wanda Hollifield, Jane Grose, Eva McIntosh and Barbara Hunter.

Spring Creek School received the smallest allocation with just six teachers. Those teachers assigned to Spring Creek School are Katy Hunter, Isabel Maynard, F.N. Willett, Howard Rimple, Don Fowler and Martha

Continued on Page 9

Marshall Sewer Rates To Rise Construction To Begin In August

By ROBERT KOENIG

Work on the Marshall water and sewer project should begin sometime early next month, according to Bill Lapsley, an engineer on the project. Lapsley made the announcement at the Monday night meeting of the Marshall Board of Aldermen.

Lapsley, an engineer with Butler-McGill Associates, the town's consultant on the project, told the Monday night meeting that the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) had agreed with the recommendations of the consulting firm concerning the awarding of contract bids for the project. Butler-McGill recommended that the town accept the lowest bids submitted for both portions of the \$1.2 million project.

The board of aldermen approved a resolution accepting the low bids. The contract for constructing a waste treatment plant was awarded to Bildon, Inc. of Hendersonville. Bildon had submitted a low bid of \$176,110.28 for the project. A second contract, to install collection and main lines, was awarded to Taylor and Murphy Construction Co. of Asheville who submitted a low bid of \$923,766.25 on the project.

Lapsley said that contracts for the project would be mailed out on Tuesday. After they are

signed by the construction firms, they will be reviewed by town attorney Ed Mashburn, before being sent on to FmHA. Lapsley said that a pre-construction conference with the buildings has been scheduled for Aug. 2. He told the aldermen, "We should have machinery moving in within a week of the meeting."

Marshall aldermen approved a revised rate schedule for water and sewer service and accepted several changes to the project's budget at the Monday night session.

The aldermen approved a new fee schedule for hook-ups to the town system. Following completion of the project, Marshall residents and businesses not already connected to the town water and sewer system will have to pay the cost of installing service. Town residents and businesses will be charged the cost of installation, while homes and business outside the town limits will be charged the cost of installation plus 50 percent.

The aldermen also approved new sewage charges for Marshall residents. The rate for sewage will be raised to \$15 for the first 3,000 gallons each month, up from the present \$6 charge. Water rates will remain unchanged. The aldermen agreed that the new rates would

Madison County Students Score Below Average In Skills Tests

The results of a statewide standardized testing of math and reading skills were released last week by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The test results show Madison County first graders excelling in both math and reading, while students in both the sixth and ninth grades are well below the national average. In both reading and math, Madison County sixth grade students

compiled the lowest scores in the 16-county region which makes up Western North Carolina.

According to Bill Ammons, a spokesman for the Department of Public Instruction, Madison County first graders scored in the top five percent nationally in math test, highest in the WNC region. The first graders also scored in the top 60 percentile in reading skills. Ammons said that the Madison County test results show first graders with math skills equal to a child beginning the third grade. The first graders also have reading skills on third grade level.

Third graders who were also tested recorded scores above the national average in both math and reading.

The test results show that Madison County sixth graders were below the national average in reading skills. The sixth graders fared little better in tests to measure language and math skills. Although they placed above the national average, the sixth graders mark of 54 in math was the lowest recorded in WNC.

Last year's freshman class at Madison High School also measured below the national

Rob Amberg: Recording Our History As It Happens

By ROBERT KOENIG

Rob Amberg of Big Pine spends his time looking at life through a camera lens. Apparently, he likes what he sees when photographing Madison County.

Amberg recently opened a studio on Main Street in Marshall. Together with his wife, Laura Ball, they operate Main Street Studios in a third-story loft above the new video game arcade. The loft provides ample space for both Rob's photography studio and Laura's soft sculpture designs.

A native of Silver Springs, Md., Amberg came to Madison County by way of Ohio, Arizona and Asheville. After graduating from Dayton University, Amberg returned to his native Silver Springs for a time before taking a teaching job in Tucson, Ariz. It was while in Arizona that Amberg first became interested in photography. While instructing nursery school and pre-school children, he took photography classes and had his first work published.

The Tucson Daily Citizen published a story and photographs Amberg took of a group of pentacostal preachers who gathered each weekend in one of the city parks. Shortly after this first work was published, Amberg decided to move to Asheville.

"Tucson was like a foreign place to me," he says. "The environment, the people, everything, was so different from anything I'd ever known before. The people I wanted to photograph weren't open to me."

The move to Western North Carolina was the realization of a life-long dream, he says. "The mountains have always had a special appeal to me. Not just their natural beauty, but also the culture of the people in the mountains. I was interested in photographing the people here. At first, I thought that Madison County would be a stepping stone. But after living here for a few years, I found out that this is definitely where I wanted to be. Now, I can't conceive of any place else that I'd want to live."

While in Asheville, Amberg worked as the first photographer for The Arts Journal, a monthly newspaper devoted to the arts in Western North Carolina. It was while living in Asheville that Amberg first became acquainted with Madison County. He would make photo trips to the county, staying with his uncle, Vince Galeano, or Dellie Norton of Sodom Laurel. Amberg credits Dellie with introducing him to many of the people and customs of Madison County.

In 1976, Amberg took a job teaching photography at Mars Hill College. While at Mars Hill, he also served as the director of the photo archives in the Appalachian Room of the school's library. In 1980, he and Laura bought a small farm in Big Pine. Since moving to Madison County, Amberg has supported himself by working tobacco and taking on odd jobs. Laura works part time at the Ball Photo store in Asheville.

Working in tobacco, he says, has helped

him understand more about the Madison County lifestyle. "I wanted to approach the county as a neighbor and a partner, rather than as an outsider coming in."

The same attitude applies to his photography. "I try to establish a rapport with people before I take their picture."

Opening the studio in Marshall was a big step for Amberg. "I thought about opening a studio for a long time before I got up the nerve. Now, I ask myself why I didn't do it four years ago," he says. The studio work is just a part of a bigger project Amberg works on. "Basically, I see myself as a family and community photographer." While working in his studio photographing families or out shooting weddings, Amberg will continue his documentary work. "I feel more oriented toward documentary work, pictures about people. I would approach weddings more as a documentary than a commercial assignment. Most of my work has been done in the field. That's where my instincts are. There, you can capture decisive moments. In a studio, you pose people. Working in a studio is an adjustment I'm still making. There's a real difference in the way you relate to the subject."

History has always interested Amberg. He says that his documentary work is an attempt at recording the history of Madison County as it is happening. "If we don't record the changes that take place, we won't know just how they have



Photo by Bob Koenig

ROB AMBERG