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Planning Group Asks For Economic Agency

By C. B. SQUIRE

A Madison County ad hoc planning committee has recommended that the County Board of Commissioners set up an Economic Development Commission "responsible for promoting and coordinating the various aspects of economic development" in the county.

The committee also called for a referendum on school bonds to help pay for needed school building repairs (see other story, this issue).

Based on the work of three task forces, the ad hoc group's recommendations will be considered by the county's Planning Board at a meeting June 13. The recommendations would then go to the Board of County Commissioners.

Essentially a followup to last year's Planning Board report, "Madison County: Plans for the Future, 1983-1990," the Ad Hoc Committee's report also makes recommendations on such diverse areas as reducing dependence on tobacco in the county's agricultural economy, industrial development including new uses for the Melville Shoe Co. site in Hot Springs, tourism development including a county-wide agricultural fair and a farmer-craftsmen market.

As to industry, the ad hoc committee's economic development task force calls for a target industry study and survey "to identify specific support-type industries that might be interested in locating in Madison County"; development of a marketing strategy for promoting industrial sites, and preparation of site plans for "at least the Marshall industrial park site, at least one site in the vicinity of the Mars Hill bypass area, and a plan for the Melville...site and nearby land" in Hot Springs.

Emphasizing the long-range nature of its recommendation for an Economic Development Commission, the Ad Hoc Committee urges that there

-Support the Extension Service and state and national forest services "to encourage more productive agriculture and help identify areas of greatest need";

-Develop a major county agricultural fair to bring together farmers and others "as the key for producing widespread support for improvements in agriculture."

In addition to its basic recommendation for a county Economic Development Commission, the Ad Hoc Committee's economic development task force also urged:

-Use of land-use controls "to reserve suitable land for both commercial and industrial development."

-Greater use by the county of available grant programs.

-Promotion of a farmer-craftsmen market, further development of white-water-related enterprises, rejuvenation of the hot springs and development of land there as a tourist attraction.

But the task force also warned that "there could be adverse impacts on a community" through tourism development—that "without careful planning, tourism could be associated with seasonal unemployment, rapid and haphazard undesirable growth and the depletion of prime agricultural lands."

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Swim Pool Opens Soon

The Marshall town swimming pool will open the first week in June, or possibly even sooner, says Mayor Betty Wild.

She expects to hire a

manager, a person to handle concessions, and three life guards. Last year a private company ran the pool for the town, but this year the town will be running the pool directly.

School Referendum Backed

A school-bond referendum should be held "at the earliest appropriate date" to raise funds to pay for repair of the "rapidly deteriorating" condition of many of the county's elementary school buildings, a planning group recommended last week.

The Ad Hoc Planning Committee added that if the Board of Education and County Commissioners agree, they "can depend on our enthusiastic support of a school bond" to provide resources for "physical plant renovation,

repair and construction" essential for accreditation of the county's elementary schools by the Southern Assn. Neither the county budget nor local communities can provide such revenues, the task force noted.

The task force said it is particularly concerned with the "rapidly deteriorating condition of most elementary school buildings" in the county, adding that the county schools should "provide a demanding and relevant educational experience for our youth."

Ricker Gets Suspended Sentence

William Albert Ricker of Mars Hill, a state Department of Transportation maintenance crew chief, and Edward Hume Paschall of Black Mountain, a retired DOT official, were convicted in U.S. District Court, Asheville, last week of extortion charges related to construction of the new Weaverville-Marshall highway.

Testimony in the case brought out that a section of the highway on the Weaverville side of the Ivy River bridge was not built properly, U.S. Attorney Charles Brewer told The News Record this week.

Paschall, who was the top state official on the U.S. 25-70 job, was sentenced to one year in prison on one count of extortion from construction companies. He also received a 30-month suspended sentence and three years' probation on a second charge, and was fined \$5,000.

Ricker was convicted on two charges of extortion and was

Vandals Do \$2,400 Damage

Vandalism and an apparent theft at the old Capitola Manufacturing Co. building in Marshall sometime Friday night resulted in a total loss of about \$2,400, according to Sheriff E. Y. Ponder.

Shortly after midnight, the sheriff's office was called to the building and were told that while a Crowder Construction Co. employee was working in the boiler-room of the building, a tool box and tools were removed from a storage room upstairs. The tools had been last seen about 8 p.m. Friday, and the Crowder employee found them missing at 11 p.m., Ponder said, adding that the tools were valued at \$200 to \$400.

Meanwhile, Ponder reported, someone broke glass and damaged a vending machine in the glove factory in the same building. Owners of the soft-drink vending machine estimated damage at about \$2,000.

Sheriff Ponder said he believes the same person or persons were involved in both

cases. Ponder said he fined \$5,000 and received a three-year sentence, suspended, and was placed on probation for three years.

Brewer explained that under federal law, a public employee who receives gifts under circumstances where such gifts might influence his ability to see a job is well done is guilty of extortion.

A federal court jury found the two men guilty in the early hours of last Thursday after being unable to agree earlier in the day on two of three charges against Paschall and on both charges against Ricker. The prosecution then dropped the third count against Paschall from the indictment.

During a period when both Ricker and Paschall were expected to be working at the construction site, Brewer explained, they were found to have accepted a free visit to a Hilton Head Island, S.C., villa plus round-trip air fare from one of the construction firms on the job, Asheville Contracting Co., and a visit to a hunting lodge in Texas from another contractor, Phillips Jordan Inc. of Knoxville, formerly of Robbinsville. Ricker was later removed from the project, but Brewer said the extortion laws still covered his actions.

Evidence brought out in the trial showed that some 2,000 feet of the highway, completed before a federal highway inspector disapproved it, was improperly built, Brewer said. Specifications called for a six-inch cushion of under-three-inch rock, he said, to give the road some elasticity, but the section in question was found to contain 40 to 60 percent "shot rock" from blasting operations.

The rest of the road was properly built as far as can be determined, Brewer said.

Earlier, Ted Phillips, president of Phillips Jordan, and Ben Turner, vice president, pleaded guilty to big-rigging charges in connection with the project. Baxter A. Taylor, president of Asheville Contracting, was indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of conspiracy, federal antitrust law violations and three counts of mail fraud. His trial is set for June 7.



PATRIOT PRIDE STAFF MEMBERS, from left to right, Tim Goldsmith, Kelly Robinson, Lisa Honeycutt, Tammy Harris, Traci Baldwin, Kay Rice, Annette Thomas, Cindy

Deitz, Sherry Shelton, Julie Allison, Greta Griffin (front), Deirdre Smith, Julie Meeks, Rebecca Edmonds.

Man Charged In Stabbing

Doug Lunsford of Marshall white male, 24, has been charged with assault with a deadly weapon and inflicting serious injury, not resulting in death, in the apparent stabbing of Donnie Roberts, also of Marshall, Sheriff E.Y. Ponder told The News Record.

On Tuesday, May 15, at 10:30 p.m. Gary Ball of Marshall rushed into his office, the sheriff said, and called him to a hill behind the court house on Hill street where Ponder found Donnie Roberts on a bed in an upstairs room of his house, apparently suffering from a number of knife wounds. Roberts was rushed to Memorial Mission hospital by ambulance for surgery.

Investigation revealed that the victim ran out of gas and that Lunsford stopped and gave him and his family a ride home, the sheriff said. The two men spent some time together apparently drinking beer, Ponder said and an argument broke out between the victim and the assailant. A fight broke out in the yard of the victim's home, Ponder said. Lunsford came and turned himself in to the sheriff the same night, Ponder said. Lunsford was released on \$3,000 bond.

Tennessee Man Arrested In Shelton Laurel

Direll Tipton, who allegedly struck a child in the head with a plank with a nail in it, was apprehended in Shelton Laurel last Thursday by sheriffs and deputies from Madison County and from Unicoi County, Tennessee, according to Madison County Sheriff E. Y. Ponder.

Tipton, from Flag Pond, Tenn., was apprehended at the home of a brother, Jerry Tipton. The sheriff's report also alleges that Tipton assaulted another child and the two children's mother, Sandra Hans of Erwin, Tenn., on Monday, May 14. He is charged with attempted first-degree murder on a minor in the incident involving the first child; assault and battery on a three-year-old child and assault and battery on the children's mother.

Tipton was returned to Tennessee without extradition after signing a waiver, Ponder said. Bond was set at \$10,000 and court date is June 7.

To Uplift Downtown: Awnings And Flowers, Maybe Horse Trolley

Members of the Marshall Merchants' Association are waiting to hear June 1 whether a grant of approximately \$62,400 will be available to landscape downtown, said Richard Kingston at the group's meeting last week.

Meanwhile the group is working on a few quick short-range possibilities for making downtown more inviting. These include trash cans painted like barber poles, new awnings for downtown buildings, a possible cooperative window washing system, possible street washing on Friday evenings, Marshall-uplift campaign buttons for downtown workers, and a concerted campaign to search for more sources of funding. Estimates are already available for the awnings.

Longer-term possibilities for making downtown a magnet for shoppers include acquiring more parking space, cleaning the faces of downtown buildings, finding a mural painter to decorate some blank walls, and even acquiring a horse-drawn trolley to ferry customers up and down Main Street.

Some estimates are already in hand for washing down the

buildings on Main Street, Kingston said, but these seem high.

Doug Dodson and Kingston will attend a three-day conference of the North Carolina Downtown Development Association where funding for downtown development will be discussed.

If sales and revenues are up, the town will make more money and the county will make more money Kingston said. "271-million tourists spent money in North Carolina last year. How many of them spent money in Marshall?"

Members of the association recalled how the fire department under chief Joe Fisher used to wash down Main Street in the summertime

from about 1960 through 1972. One truck and two men or sometimes just two men attaching the hose to hydrants did the job in less than three hours. The merchants said they would look into asking the town government and the firemen if some way could not be worked out to get the streets washed again.

Kingston told the group that the Madison County Historical Society's efforts to get an inventory of historic buildings in the county, and possibly national registration for some buildings, will be beneficial to efforts to uplift downtown Marshall. The formation of a new Marshall Historical Society is also helpful.

Weaverville Ponders Budget

A major item in Weaverville's proposed 1984-85 budget is \$200,000 to help pay for a new town reservoir, but there are "essentially no major changes from the present budget plus matters that we have already discussed," town manager Larry Sprinkle told the town's Board of Commissioners on Monday.

The board, taking its first look at the proposed budget for next year, scheduled a vote on the proposal and a public hearing on revenue-sharing funds for its next regular meeting June 18.

Sprinkle emphasized that, under the proposed new budget, the town's tax rate should remain at 45 cents per \$100 of valuation. General revenues are projected at \$598,366.35, up 14 percent from the \$523,026 the town estimates it will receive this year.

General fund expenditures will be up 11.3 percent, which will allow for a 3 percent across-the-board pay increase for town employees — part flat and part merit. Sprinkle also explained that a 2.5 percent increase in the general fund revenue is projected for the year.

office in front for the police department.

A large increase in the public buildings category, to \$10,800 from \$4,235, includes funds for plumbing repairs and painting at the Hillside Community Center.

A 1.1 percent increase in the police budget includes funds for such equipment as bullet-proof vests needed now that Weaverville has its own department.

The fire department budget is down 7.4% to \$37,050. The street department budget will go up by 120.1 percent to \$106,186 because of some \$54,000 needed to repair and surface streets, Sprinkle said.

But he added that an inventory and priority schedule will be drawn up before deciding where to spend the money.

Sanitation department spending is expected to go up sharply because of the need to repair the end of a town garage, replace such and so replacement of an old truck. Some \$12,250 is being budgeted for the department.