

Contel Seeks Rate Increase

Average Bill Would Jump 21.5 Pct.

Continental Telephone Co. of North Carolina, Madison County's local telephone utility, has asked the state Utilities Commission to approve \$4.5 million in rate increases in the coming year.

In announcing the proposed rate increase, Contel president John A. Feaster said the increases were needed to offset losses in revenues and increased depreciation expenses brought about by the deregulation of the telephone industry.

About one-third of the proposed increases are needed to recover revenues which previously came from customers renting telephone equipment from the company. Feaster said Contel has lost some \$1.5 million in revenues as businesses and residential customers purchase equipment they formerly leased from Contel.

The other \$3 million in the rate request is necessary due to increased

expenses as a result of depreciation rate changes and plant additions. Contel is currently in the process of installing digital switching equipment in Madison County.

Contel's operating costs have not increased in the past year, Feaster said, because of service improvement programs and increased productivity.

Contel is asking the state Utilities Commission to approve a new rate structure that would produce a 21.5 percent increase in local service charges.

Among the changes in the proposed rate structure would be the elimination of zone charges for rural customers. More than half Contel's customers currently pay these mileage charges, Feaster said. The elimination of the zone charge would mean that rural customers would pay the same monthly rate for service as customers residing within towns

served by Contel.

Another proposed change in the rates would effect customers in Weaverville and Sylva only.

Contel has asked the Utilities Commission to approve a new "Optional Usage Pricing Plan" that would provide customers with a flat monthly allowance of calls. Any calls above the monthly allowance would be billed at a higher rate. The service would not be available to party-line customers. If approved, the plan will be tried on a one-year experimental basis.

The Utilities Commission is expected to act on Contel's request early next year. A series of public hearings will be conducted before a ruling is handed down.

Earlier this month, Southern Bell began instituting a 50 cent charge for long distance information.

Marshall

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While the police expenses have declined, the town's Water and Sewer fund has spent more than half its budget of \$70,000 with nine months remaining in the fiscal year. Ward's report states that Water and Sewer expenditures for the three months ending Sept. 30 were \$37,621, leaving only \$32,379.

The September financial report also indicates that the town is over budget in recreation and tax collections. A \$1,052 bill for what was described as 'printing' accounts for tax collection expense being \$620 over budget.

Mrs. Ward also presented the aldermen with a list of delinquent privilege taxpayers. She said that the list of vendors required to pay the tax will be increased in the future.

The Wards have asked that the town move their monthly meetings to the second Monday of each month, but the board took no action on the request at Monday's session.

As has become a tradition at the monthly meetings, the aldermen heard several complaints from residents regarding the condition of water and sewer lines. Bradley Iverson complained of a leaking water line on his Roberts Hill Rd. property. Evelyn Collins complained about the lines leading to her home and James Jones spoke about a leaking town line in the basement of his mother-in-law's home in Rollins.

Mayor Wild asked Sammy Lunsford to have the town crew give the problems at the Collins' home top priority.

The problem presented by Jones was more complex. Jones pointed out that several homes in Rollins above the railroad tracks have not been connected to new water and sewer lines serving the community. He told the board that he brings water to Mrs. Tweed from Asheville because the water in her home is "undrinkable." Sammy Lunsford said that the town cannot afford to install a main line to the homes above the railroad. He sug-

gested that the town's engineer, Bill Lapsley, inspect the site and provide the town with a cost estimate on the project.

The board also approved sending Richard Kingston to a two-day meeting of the N.C. Downtown Development Association in Winston-Salem in Nov. at a cost of \$60.

Mavor Wild closed the meeting

shortly after 9:15 p.m. by administering the oath of office to the town's newest police officer, Larry Davis.

Davis was hired at the Sept. 24 meeting following the resignation of officer Chris Bowman.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Marshall Board of Aldermen is scheduled for Nov. 5.

Correction

Mayor Wild has requested that The News Record retract a portion of a story which appeared in last week's edition concerning the meeting of the Marshall Board of Aldermen on Sept. 24.

In that story, we said, "Wild made the letter from Whalen public, along with a memorandum from town attorney, Charles Mashburn." Mr. Whalen is the Asheville attorney who represented Charlie Sexton in his dispute over wages owed to him by the Town of Marshall.

Mrs. Wild has requested that we retract the above statement because

she did not present The News Record with a copy of the letters. In fact, The News Record obtained the letters from town secretary Linda Dodson, who also supplied the members of the Board of Aldermen with copies of the correspondence.

While Mayor Wild did not present the letters in question to the press, it was done by her employee, presumably with her knowledge and consent.

The News Record regrets any confusion that may have been caused by our account of the meeting.

Hunters Celebrate Anniversary

Mr. and Mrs. Bruce M. Hunter of Marshall will celebrate their twentieth wedding anniversary today. They were married on Oct. 3, 1963 at the First Baptist Church of Mars Hill.

Mr. Hunter is a retired farmer and lifelong resident of Madison County. He is employed by the Asheville Citizen-Times Co.

Mrs. Hunter, the former Vienna Sharpe of Statesville, is a retired staff member of the Mars Hill College library.

The couple will be honored by their daughters, Joann Freeman of Marshall, Bernadette Buckner of Weaverville and Joyce McClure of Marshall.



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DWI Arrests Decline

State Highway Patrol Commander Colonel David L. Matthews announced today that Patrol DWI arrests for July, 1984, declined 21.4 percent when compared to July, 1983, arrests.

"Our troopers charged 3,309 drivers with DWI in July," Matthews said. "This is 902 less than were charged with DWI by our Troopers in July, 1983."

"Governor Hunt's Safe Roads Act is having the impact on drunk driving that everyone hoped it would have," Matthews said. "Fewer people are drinking and then getting behind the wheels of an automobile."

"I want to thank and commend our citizens for observing the law and refraining from drinking and driving," Matthews said.

Matthews warned, however, that while DWI arrests are declining from last year, traffic fatalities are increasing. He appealed for drivers to observe all traffic safety laws and to stay within the speed limit.

"Speed kills," Matthews said. "Our Troopers are reporting more people on the highways and more people are speeding. Also, inattentive drivers are causing a number of accidents. Safe driving practices demand full attention."

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