

# Commissioners Ignore Auditor's Warning Continue Doing Business With Ledford-Owned Service Stations

By ROBERT KOENIG  
Part One In A Series

Despite a warning from the county's auditor, Madison County Board of Commissioners chairman James T. Ledford has continued to conduct business with the county in what may be a violation of state law. Ledford is the owner of Ledford Enterprises, which operates three Exxon service stations in the Mars Hill area.

The audit of the county's 1984 fiscal budget revealed that Madison County purchased \$5,247.35 in goods and services from Ledford Enterprises during the year which ended June 30, 1984.

In his report, auditor Jim Skidmore of the accounting firm of Greene, Skidmore, Smith and Co. warned the commissioners that the practice was in not in compliance with state law.

The auditor's report, delivered to the commissioners in December, 1984, states: "During the year ended June 30, 1984, the County purchased \$5,247.35 in goods and services from a member of the County Commission. The Commission failed to ratify these actions as required by approving them in public meetings, recording the approval in its minutes, and having a list of transactions posted quarterly."

North Carolina General Statute 14-234 prohibits elected officials from making contracts for personal benefit with agencies of state, county or city governments.

Madison County, however, is not covered by the law prohibiting such practices because the law exempts towns with fewer than 7,500 residents and counties in which there is no town with a population of more than 7,500.

While Madison County officials are not prohibited from doing business with the county, the law does limit the amount of business they may do in a 12-month period to \$5,000. The law also requires a vote in open session on any contracts with public officials and requires the county to conspicuously post the amount of business being done with elected officials.

The Madison County Board of Commissioners have not taken a vote on doing business with Ledford Enterprises. A check of the Madison County Court House bulletin board also revealed that there has not been a notice of the amount of business being done by the county with Ledford Enterprises.

A review of the county's General Fund ledger prompted by the award of \$8,000 to Team Madison '85 revealed that the county has continued to conduct business with Ledford Enterprises despite the warning from auditors.

(Continued on Page 3)

MADISON  
COUNTY LIBRARY  
GENERAL DELIVERY  
MARSHALL NC 28753

MARS HILL EXXON STATION. One of three such stations operated by Ledford Enterprises.

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March 13, 1985

1985-86 School Calendar Approved  
-See Page 6

Community  
Calendar

## THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY SINCE 1901

WEDNESDAY, March 13, 1985

25¢

### Tobacco Production Meeting Set

The annual Madison County Tobacco Production meeting will be held on March 14 at Madison H.S. at 7 p.m.

### March 24 is Deadline For Ordering 4-H Club Shrubbery

March 24 is the last day for submitting orders for shrubbery, fruit trees and berry plants from 4-H Club members. Orders will be delivered on April 4 and 5 at the Marshall Recreation Center. Order forms can be obtained from 4-H members or the county Extension Service office. Call 649-2411 for further information.

### Mars Hill Beautification Meeting

A public meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, March 14, at Mars Hill Town Hall to discuss the planting of dogwoods as a community beautification project and as a way of joining in the 400th anniversary celebration of the founding of the first English colony in North Carolina. Nurseryman Bill Penland will present a program, including slides, on planting and caring for shrubs and trees and landscaping.

### Art On Display At MHC Library

An exhibit of sculpture, collages, and paintings by Earl and Lou Stressing will be shown at Memorial Library, Mars Hill College, during the month of March. Library hours are Mon-Thur. 8 a.m.-11 p.m.; Fri.-8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sat.-Noon-5 p.m.; Sun-2 p.m.-11 p.m.

### Merchants' Association Sponsors

#### Bake Sale Saturday

There will be a bake sale on Saturday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. in front of Ingles on Marshall By-pass sponsored by the Main Street Merchants Association. Proceeds from the sale will benefit the Marshall Christmas Pageant.

## Marshall Board Ponders Town's Budget Troubles

By ROBERT KOENIG

Marshall's dwindling assets were the prime topic of discussion during Monday's meeting of the Board of Aldermen at Town Hall.

The financial debate was opened by Cecilia Ward when she delivered her monthly report on the town's General Fund and Water and Sewer Department budgets. According to the figures released Monday night, the town has exhausted the Water and Sewer budget and is within weeks of breaking the General Fund budget as well.

The Water and Sewer Dept. budget was originally set at \$70,000. Expenses through February 28 show the department operating with a deficit of \$23,332. The department's operating expenses for the previous fiscal year were more than \$120,000.

Forced to make up shortfalls in the Water and Sewer budget has put a strain on the town's General Fund, Ward said. Although anticipated revenues are running \$9,669 ahead of projections, the General Fund has less than \$32,000 left with the fiscal year still four months from completion. The additional revenues were the result of a grant from the North Carolina General Assembly for the purchase of the town's new garbage collection truck.

"We're between a rock and a hard place."

-Alderman Ed Niles

Averaging both the total Water and Sewer Dept. and General Fund expenses over the past eight months of the current fiscal year shows the town has had average monthly expenses totalling more than \$37,000. The current balance of \$30,000 in the General Fund will mean Marshall will again be forced to tap into its savings in order to meet expenses.

Asked what funds the town has at its disposal, town secretary Linda Dodson reported that Marshall currently has two certificates of deposit on account with First Union Bank totalling \$50,000. The town also has a \$32,000 CD with Wachovia Bank, \$20,000 in federal revenue sharing funds and is expecting some \$38,000 in refunds on sewer bond payments from the Farmers Home Administration. The board authorized Mrs. Dodson to open a CD with the expected \$19,670 refund from FmHA. The funds will remain on deposit until the town must make its next bond payment in May.

Mayor Betty Wild called for a crackdown on delinquent taxpayers and water customers to help meet the

fiscal shortfall.

At the mayor's suggestion, the board approved cutting off water customers on March 22. Letters warning of the cutoff were to be sent out on Tuesday. The town will also be sending a final warning to delinquent taxpayers this week, warning of further legal action if back taxes aren't paid.

Linda Dodson said that many taxpayers shown as delinquent on the town's books have produced receipts showing the taxes have been paid. The aldermen considered ordering Mrs. Dodson to proceed with attaching delinquent taxpayers' bank accounts, but reconsidered when learning of the many 'delinquents' who were producing receipts.

Upon a motion made by Ed Niles, the board voted to ask all residents who can do so to produce the receipts so that the town can clear up its records.

The mayor also called for tightening the town's purse strings by requiring all payments to be approved by the town board. Wild asked twice during the meeting for a motion

on the matter, but the board never voted on the measure.

Because of the impending fiscal crisis, the board tabled a decision on hiring a police officer to replace former police chief Joe Griffey. Mayor Wild had suggested hiring former Marshall and Mars Hill policeman Bill Lisenbee, but was opposed by Sammy Lunsford.

Lunsford suggested working out a schedule with the two remaining members of the force. The town officials will meet with Larry Davis and Ed McLean in an attempt to work out a schedule that would permit both men to take an occasional day off. The two have been ordered to work seven days a week since Griffey was placed on suspension on Feb. 13.

Mayor Wild criticized a decision to purchase a used service truck for the town's Water and Sewer Dept. Earlier this month, the town purchased the truck for \$4,500 from Cody Motor Sales on the recommendation of board members John Dodson and Sammy Lunsford.

Wild criticized the aldermen for not notifying her and Ed Niles of the purchase. She told Dodson and Lunsford, "I'm not saying we didn't need the truck. I don't like the way it was done." Niles echoed the mayor's

(Continued on Page 5)

## Grapevine Dems Elect G.D. Mace

Democrats throughout Madison County elected local precinct officials and county convention delegates last Thursday night.

In one of the more hotly contested races, G.D. Mace won election as the Grapevine precinct chairman by the narrowest possible margin. Unofficial returns indicate Mace won election by a one-vote margin over Dr. Bobby Jean Rice. The unofficial tally indicated Mace won by a 75-74 vote as 149 Grapevine residents voted at Cooke Store in Petersburg.

Along with Mace, Marie Shack was elected as first vice chairman, Douglas Park was elected as second vice chair and third vice chairmanship went to Vance Murawski. Barbara Robinson was elected as the precinct secretary and Wendell Clark was elected as treasurer. The first

Jimmy Wyatt, Irene Rice and Howard Norton.

Mace was also elected as one of Grapevine's delegates to the April 13 county convention at Madison H.S. Other delegates, each with one-half a vote, were Joe Randy Wilson, Deborah Carver and Ronnie Carver.

If his election is certified, Mace will succeed T.O. Coates as Grapevine's precinct chairman. Mace was an unsuccessful candidate for the precinct chairmanship in 1983. Mace's delegation was not seated at the county convention, sparking a walkout of more than 100 Democrats.

Election returns from other precincts were unavailable as we go to press. County secretary Christine Lister said precincts have until

By ROBERT KOENIG

The Madison County Board of Education approved a schedule for the 1985-86 school year and a \$1.59 million budget request for the school year during Wednesday's meeting in Marshall. The proposed budget will be sent on to the county commissioners for approval.

The school calendar, a complete copy of which appears on Page 6, was approved following a vote by the county's school teachers. The teachers were presented with two alternatives and overwhelmingly approved the plan which will return students to classes on August 19. A second alternative would have returned the teachers to work on August 19 with the first day for students being August 26. The earlier opening was approved by a margin of 125-7. Only Hot Springs teachers have not indicated their vote.

The school board also approved changes to the present year school calendar. Snow days have closed county schools for 17 days during the current year, forcing the board to make a decision regarding students' Easter holiday. In a compromise agreement, the board voted to waive three days of school in order to provide both teachers and students with a brief Easter holiday and create an additional work day for teachers at the end of the school year.

State law requires students to receive 180 days of instruction each year. Local school boards are given the option of waiving up to five days of the 180-day requirement.

According to the plan approved on Wednesday, a planned Easter vacation originally scheduled for April 1 through 7 has been cancelled. Instead, schools will be closed on Good Friday, April 5 and Easter Monday, April 8. The school board's decision will be completed by

the end of the school year.

The board also approved a resolution required by state law regarding oversized classes. Two classes at Walnut Elementary School are currently over the state limit of 25 students per class. A combined kindergarten-first grade class has 28 students and a combined first-and-second grade class has 29 students.

The board tabled a decision regarding insurance for the school's vehicles when it learned the present carrier was seeking a \$2,855 increase in premium payments. The board instructed Superintendent Robert L. Edwards to solicit other bids on the contract. The present policy is written by Maryland Casualty Insurance Co.

Board attorney Larry Leake was ordered to look into a Feb. 4 accident involving a truck driven by Aaron

accepted the resignation of Garland Woody and approved the hiring of substitute teachers Rosa Franklin and Susan Treadway at Walnut Elementary and Ruth Smith at Hot Springs Elementary. The board also voted to continue the suspension of school bus driver Ronnie Ball. The suspended driver is facing charges in connection with the disappearance of two Marshall Elementary School students in February.

The board also authorized school superintendent Robert L. Edwards to purchase a new bus under state contract. Edwards' present bus has over 100,000 miles on it.

In presenting his proposed budget, request to the school board, Edwards also presented statistics which revealed that Madison County had the second lowest amount of per pupil spending.