

Hot Springs VFD Toy Drive

The Hot Springs VFD is sponsoring a toy drive for Christmas. Anyone wishing to donate new or good used toys should contact Angela Wills at 622-7171.

Christmas Decoration Contest

The Walnut Creek Community Development Club will hold a Christmas decorating contest in the community. For more information, contact Helen Hunter, Joe Penland or Mrs. Charles Neighbors.

Laurel VFD Turkey Shoot

The Laurel VFD will sponsor a turkey and ham shoot on Dec. 7 at the fire hall beginning at 11 a.m. Everyone is invited to attend and participate.

Christmas Tree Sale

The Madison County 4-H Club will be selling Christmas trees on Dec. 7 from 9 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. at the Ingles Shopping Center on the Marshall By-pass. Locally grown live and cut Fraser fir and white pine will be available. All proceeds from the sale will benefit the 4-H Exchange program.

Pageant Seeks Donations

The Marshall Christmas Pageant is still asking for donations to offset the costs of this year's production, scheduled for Dec. 13-15. Pageant organizers are asking for \$20 donations. Those making \$20 donations will have a light on the star lit on either Christmas Eve or Christmas night in memory of a loved one.

For more information or to make a donation, contact Ed Fender at 649-3003 or 649-2828.

American Legion To Meet

The American Legion Post No. 317 in Marshall and the Ladies Auxiliary will meet on Dec. 5 at 7 p.m. at the Legion Hall on Back St. All members are asked to attend.

Optimists Meet Tonight

The Madison Central Optimists Club will meet tonight at 7 p.m. at Mary's Restaurant on the Marshall By-pass. All members are asked to attend.

Patriots Host Black Hawks Friday

The Madison Patriot basketball teams will meet North Buncombe H.S. in basketball action Friday night in Weaverville.

Young Dems Host Christmas Party

The Madison County Young Democrats Club will host a Christmas Party on Dec. 6 at 9 p.m. in the Greek Community Center in Asheville. Entertainment and refreshments will be provided. Tickets are available from club members or at the door. For more information, contact Vernie Lunsford at 649-3080 after 5 p.m..

Marshall Board Meets Monday Night

The Marshall Board of Aldermen will meet on Dec. 9 at 7:30 p.m. Mayor-elect Anita Ward and the town's aldermen will be installed during the meeting.

Two Lawsuits Filed Against Mars Hill, Cooper Construction

The Town of Mars Hill, former Mayor W.O. Duck, former aldermen Art Wood and Franklin Anderson and present board member John L. Chandler have been named as defendants in two lawsuits filed recently by town residents. The Cooper Construction Co. of Hendersonville was also named in the lawsuits filed on behalf of Harold and Ruth Ponder and Ed and Maggie Howard.

The suits stem from alleged damages to private property caused during the construction of the new Mars Hill sewer system. Cooper Construction is the principal contractor on the project.

Harold and Ruth Ponder allege that construction crews employed by Cooper Construction dumped and stored a large quantity of gravel on their

dwelling at 31 Ponder St., Mars Hill. The suit was filed with the Madison County Clerk of Superior Court on Nov. 8 by Marshall attorney Richard Miller, who also represents Ed and Maggie Howard.

The suit filed by the Ponders seeks \$10,000 in damages from the defendants.

The suit filed by the Howards also seeks \$10,000 in damages to the Sunshine Roller Rink property in Mars Hill. Howard's suit alleges that Cooper Construction crews dug a large hole on the property, which subsequently was filled with rain water and flooded the skating rink.

Howard also alleges that Cooper Construction crews dumped and stored a large quantity of gravel on their

Auditor Criticizes County Purchasing Practices

Annual Report Cites Conflict Of Interest

By ROBERT KOENIG

The county's auditor has criticized several Madison County purchasing practices in the annual report on the audit of the county's budget released Monday.

In the report dated Nov. 15, the accounting firm of Greene, Skidmore and Smith cited the county for purchasing \$6,016.82 in goods and services from a member of the Madison County Board of Commissioners.

The auditor's report did not specifically name the county official from whom the goods and services were purchased.

The board's chairman, James Ledford, operates three service stations in the Mars Hill area. The three Ledford-owned stations have provided fuel and repairs to vehicles operated by the Madison County Transportation Authority and the Emergency Medical Service in the past. Virginia Anderson operates a motel and restaurant in Hot Springs and board member Ervin Adams is retired.

In their report, the auditors note that the legal limit on such approved transactions is \$5,000 per year. The accounting firm issued a similar warning to the county commissioners in 1984 when goods and services purchased at Ledford's Exxon service stations totalled \$5,247.35.

The auditors issued several other warnings in their Nov. 15 report, citing the county's failure to comply with state statutes regarding the purchase of capital equipment. The auditor report states, "Certain capital outlay items totalling \$71,834 were purchased during the year without adherence to North Carolina General Statute 143-129 regarding requirements for bidding."

The auditors also criticized the commissioners for approving a \$200,260 contract for tax mapping without providing funds in their budget.

The state law on purchasing procedures which the audit report refers to requires that equipment purchases of more than \$10,000 or construction or repair projects costing more than \$30,000 must be publicly advertised and let for bid. The same statute requires that all contracts for equipment or construction be in writing and that bids on contracts be opened publicly.

The auditor's report did not state the nature of the expenses cited in the report as having been made without adherence to the statute. Attempts to contact James Skidmore, the certified public accountant who prepared the report, were unsuccessful. County finance officer David Caldwell was also unavailable on Tuesday.



The dome of the Madison County Court House may have to be removed because of damage caused to the building's roof.

Court House Reopening May Face Delays

By ROBERT KOENIG

The extent of damage to the ceiling and roof of the Madison County Court House should be determined later this week. The architect supervising the repair project is unsure if the work can be completed in time for the January sessions of court.

Mars Hill architect Wayne Roberts reported to the county commissioners on progress being made on the project during the monthly meeting held Monday in Marshall. The commissioners' meeting was held in the judges chambers of the courthouse because of repairs currently being made in the courtroom.

Roberts said that crews have removed most of the three ceilings which were directly above the courtroom. The ceilings must be removed in order to inspect the three support trusses for signs of decay and fatigue.

The architect told the commissioners that several of the steel bolts which hold the composite trusses together have been sheared off and that the trusses themselves have deflected or bowed.

When the remaining portions of ceiling are removed later this week, a structural engineer will inspect the trusses for damage. Following the inspection, a determination can be made regarding the extent of repair

which will be necessary.

The cupola above the courthouse dome is now leaning at three degrees and will probably have to be removed in the near future, Roberts said. The present cupola is too heavy for the building's roof to support. The cupola could be replaced with a lightweight duplicate.

Roberts warned that the courtroom could be unavailable for a long period if the inspection discovered that the building is unsafe. He told the commissioners, "If the report determines that the trusses cannot be repaired, it would be unsafe to hold court. Preparations should be made to hold court elsewhere."

December's sessions of District Court are being conducted in the theatre at Madison H.S. A planned session of Superior Court was cancelled because of the repair project.

In other business, the commissioners approved a change in the manner Madison County residents receiving food stamps will receive their monthly allotment.

Beginning in February, food stamp recipients will receive their stamp allocation by direct mail. At present, recipients must pick up their stamps at local banks.

The Dept. of Social Services will contract with Cost Containment, Inc.

for the direct-mailing of the stamps to local residents. DSS director Anita Davie told the commissioners that the change would save the county several thousand dollars annually.

The commissioners also approved a number of tax waivers and met with Joe and Anita Davis concerning an error in their tax bill.

EMS director Mildred West told the commissioners that she is having difficulty staffing the Marshall ambulance at times because several EMTs are currently undergoing training and recertification. She said there is a shortage of substitute attendants in the Marshall area. She also reported that the EMS made 91 runs in October.

The commissioners approved a resolution declaring Dec. 1 through 7 as Home Health Care Week. In another health care-related resolution, the commissioners approved a \$1 million in industrial revenue bonds for construction of additional nursing care facilities at the Madison Manor Nursing Home.

The bonds, which would be issued through the Madison Convalescent Center, Inc., a non-profit county agency, would finance construction of the additional facility. The resolution estimates that some 101 new jobs

would be created by the addition. The resolution was sent on to the North Carolina Dept. of Commerce.

The commissioners re-elected James Ledford to serve as chairman of the county board for another year at the start of Monday's meeting.

Ledford suggested that the county investigate the possibility of obtaining free use of computer facilities through a program being operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority. The TVA is offering the use of computers to selected counties.

In exchange for the use of the computers, the TVA reserves a portion of the computer's data storage capacity for recording local rainfall information. The commissioners appointed a committee to study the feasibility of transferring county records to computer tapes.

Helen Lampkin of Mars Hill was named to serve on the Council on Aging.

The commissioners also heard a report from Larry Thompson of the Blue Ridge Mental Health Center concerning plans to construct a group home for retarded adults and were presented copies of the annual audit of the county's finances. See related stories.

District Court Held In School

Judge Phillip Ginn presided over an unusual session of the Madison County District Court on Monday. The session was held in Madison High School's theatre due to construction underway at the county courthouse.

Most of the cases scheduled to be heard during Monday's session were continued until January sessions, when it is hoped that the courthouse will once again be available.

Judge Ginn said that the available

The court also rescheduled a probable cause hearing for Darrell Justice, charged with false pretenses. The case will be heard during today's session of court, which also will be held at the high school.

Allan English was found not guilty on a charge of murder in the first degree. English was charged with the murder of a woman in 1981.

The court also

Unemployment Increases

North Carolina unemployment increased slightly during October according to figures released this week by the N.C. Employment Security Commission.

The monthly ESC report showed unemployment rising four-tenths of a percent during the month to 4.8 percent. Madison County unemployment also increased during the month, but remained just below the statewide average of 4.8 percent.

The October ESC report indicates that the unemployment rate in Madison County was 4.7 percent, while the

Greene Counties all reported unemployment rates below three percent. Graham and Robeson Counties reported the state's highest jobless rates during the month.

Locally, Buncombe County reported four percent unemployment and Haywood County unemployment increased slightly to 4.3 percent. Vance County reported 4.2 percent joblessness in October, down from September's 4.7 percent.

In reporting the October figures, ESC spokesman James G. ... We believe the increase, which is