

## School Board

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All students and teachers are to return to classes on Friday, April 4, with exception made in case of further cancelled school. If one or two days are missed, school will be held on April 3 and April 2, as necessary. If further days are missed, the County Board of Education will inform the state of its intention to waive the 180-day requirement.

The board also approved the bid submitted by electrician Ron Martin for the rewiring of eight rooms at Mars Hill Elementary. Martin reported that the upstairs rooms showed exposed wiring, numerous damaged switches and that a number of light fixtures in classrooms and hallways are in need of repair. Martin said he would also need to replace the upstairs breaker panel. Total cost of the repairs will be \$5,770.

Superintendent Edwards gave a report on the school lunch program, stating that he felt it was in trouble. "I need to know what avenue we wish to take on this matter, as we have a lot of equipment that is breaking down."

One possibility Edwards offered to the board was a reduction of in-kind services between schools. As an example, he mentioned the school's food services truck, which needs replacing.

The board heard from Wally Burnell, a U.S. Navy recruitment officer. He requested a letter from the superintendent and Madison High principal David Wyatt, so he could have dropout students that wish to join the Navy enrolled in the Polk County Adult Education program to complete their high school diploma. No student under 18 can be placed in the program without permission from school authorities. Superintendent Edwards said that Madison County would provide the letters.

The board was also advised by Edwards that the state will no longer be providing funds through a juvenile justice grant for Madison High School's in-school suspension pro-

gram. Started two years ago, the program provided for students under suspension to continue classroom studies with other suspended students.

At a cost of approximately \$16,000 annually, the program began as fully state-funded, but has dropped to half state-funded this year. The state informed Edwards that it felt the program was showing little or no benefit to that age group and they will not provide any funds for the 1986-87 school year.

In other business, the school board approved numerous substitute teachers for Mars Hill School and Marshall Primary School. Those substitute teachers are: Mary Brumo, Jose Coda, Sandra Gentry, Cindy Stanton, Deborah Cutshaw, Larry Boone, Marsha Gosnell, Robby Webb, Mary Shahbaz, Laura Coates, and Faye Ramsey for the Mars Hill School; Jose Coda, Eva Oliver, Nancy Hitt, Karen Branham, and Brenda Elkins for Marshall Primary School. The board also approved a leave of absence for Peggy Anderson from Madison High School. She will be replaced by Diane Wells.

The board also approved the expenditure of \$5,500 for its insurance policy, a reduction from the \$6,100 of last year. The school insurance is provided by Nationwide Insurance, through the Roy Reeves Agency in Marshall.

The board approved the payment to French Broad Electric for its utilities. Those bills were as follows: Spring Creek School, \$378.38; Marshall School, \$1,425.07; Madison High School, \$15,202.80; Laurel School, \$1,087.06; Walnut School, \$507.99; and Mars Hill School, \$1,265.38. School Board Secretary Jan Franklin informed the board that the state allotment for their utilities was \$5,121.46, leaving the board responsible for a total of \$14,745.22 of these bills.

The next meeting of the board is scheduled for April 2.

## Edwards

(Continued from Page 1) through state allocations, and therein lies another concern of the superintendent.

Edwards told the board last week that enrollment figures are expected to be down by almost 100 students this year. The state bases its salary allotment on a ratio of one teacher for every 26 students. That means Madison County could have at least three less teachers next year, unless the local school board wants to retain them at their own expense.

That kind of news doesn't sit well with Edwards, coming at a time when he is trying to attain accreditation for the elementary schools. Only Madison High is presently accredited by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges. To attain accreditation, the elementary schools will need teachers for music, art, and physical education, as well as counselors and librarians.

School Board Chairman Bobby Ponder says the state is considering exempting counselors, librarians, and other specialized teaching positions from its one-to-26 allotment.

Currently Madison County relies on the state to provide over \$5 million for education, a figure that accounts for 76 percent of the total budget, and a PPE ranking of 10th in the state.

Local revenue sources have gone up recently with the passage of the special half-cent sales tax in 1984. By state law, counties receiving the half-cent tax revenues are required to give 40 percent of it to education. While some other counties are giving more or all of the half-cent sales tax monies to education, Madison is giving the minimum required by law.

That is why, when Edwards holds up neighboring Yancey County in comparison, School Board Chairman Bobby Ponder takes exception. The difference, Ponder says, is the amount the commissioners give the board from the sales tax revenues.

By comparison, Yancey County shows \$2,184,000 in total county tax resources, ranking them 98th out of 100. Madison has \$2,681,000 for a rank

of 90th. But Yancey County shows 26.3 percent of its revenues reaching the schools, while only 23 percent of Madison County's revenues go to education.

"One should be able to see that, by limiting the funds they give to us, the county commissioners are setting the school budget in this county, not the board," Edwards says.

Ponder, however, believes the county commission is doing all it can. "They have to deal with every single department, each coming with its hands out looking for more and more funds. There is no doubt we need more and more money each year for education, with old buildings to fix, new programs and texts to update, but the County Commission is feeling the pinch too. Federal cut-backs are hitting us all. That is just the disadvantage of living in a poor county."

Yet the figures Edwards points to when he compares Madison with Yancey, also show Madison with a higher per capita personal income average. While a ranking of 89th out of 100 does not make Madison rich with an average income of \$6,972, Yancey has a per capita income of \$6,583, ranking 95th.

"We certainly aren't at the bottom, as far as revenues in this county," Edwards says, "but education is just being left behind."

Last year Edwards presented to the County Commissioners a school budget request for \$1,627,000. The commission granted \$620,000. Edwards then has to tailor his budget down which, he claims, is becoming more and more difficult with the school's need to expand the education program and bring it up to national standards.

Madison County voters were given the opportunity to improve their schools with a school bond referendum in the late 1970's, according to Ponder. That bond issue was voted down.

"Overall, though, I'm well pleased with the progress we have made," Ponder adds. "Things are moving slow but now, with most of our major school repairs behind us, we are certainly making progress."

## Dump

(Continued from Page 1) When the Canton pulp and paper mill began discharging into the Pigeon River, it killed off the trout downstream, isolating the trout, Smathers said.

"This makes for a very interesting gene pool," he said. "These trout have probably developed an outstanding example of the gene pool, which is very significant for scientific study."

Smathers said that a study he did not complete when his job with the U.S. National Park Service was terminated may have resulted in some concrete information about the geology of the area.

"What we found out in the study of the geology of portions of the Newfound Mountains area is that it is very likely that in the proposed

repository site that the rocks are deeply fractured," he said. Smathers also believes that there is large amount of underground water in that area.

Smathers is working against DOE's timetable for public comments on the proposed repository site. The 90-day comment period ends April 16.

Dr. Garrett Smathers has asked that anyone who has any information concerning geological, hydrological, ecological or other scientific characteristics that could disqualify WNC from DOE's list of repository candidates to call Canton Town Hall at 648-2363.

Daniel Boone, the great American frontiersman, volunteered to fight in the War of 1812, but was turned down because he was 78, says National Geographic.

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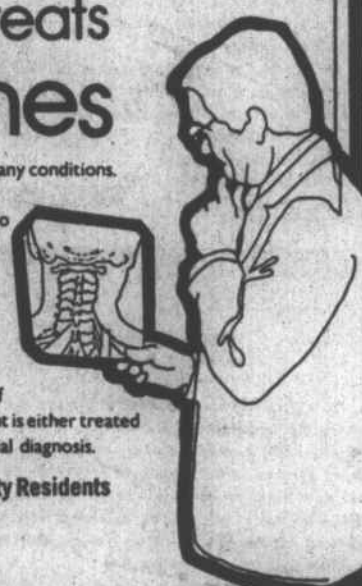
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