

Standing Room Only At Second Forum

By ROBERT KOENIG

More than 250 residents crammed into the Little Theatre of Madison H.S. to hear local candidates discuss the issues Monday night at the second Candidates' Forum conducted by the Madison County League of Women Voters. Interested voters stood to hear the candidates explain their positions on issues ranging from law enforcement and tax collection to water and ambulances.

Democrat and Republican candidates for sheriff, county commission, tax collector, clerk of courts and school board took part in the forum. All invited local candidates took part in the forum except Republican Clarence Cutshall, who is reported to be recovering from a recent heart attack. Cutshall also missed last week's forum in Beech Glen due to illness.

While both Republican and Democratic candidates agreed that improved water services were needed in order to attract industrial development, the candidates suggested several different solutions to county water problems.

Democrat John Hensley suggested that the new county commissioners meet with the mayors of Marshall, Mars Hill and Hot Springs to discuss the town's problems. Hensley's running mate, Bobby Capps of Mars Hill, told voters, "We have a lot of water we're not taking advantage of... We have the French Broad River and watersheds in these mountains. I think there would be federal money available if we went after it."

Democrat Reese Steen suggested that a county-wide water service is needed to attract industry.

Republican candidate Bob Phillips also suggested that a county-wide water system be considered if the Ivy River dam project Mars Hill, Weaverville and Marshall are studying should prove unfeasible.

All five county commission candidates agreed that education must be one of the county's top priorities in the years ahead. Republican Clarence Faulkner said the county must attract new industry in order to build the tax base. He told the audience, "We need a larger tax base in order to fund all our programs. I think taxes are as high as Madison County can stand."

Bob Phillips warned that "Without quality education, we're not going to get the economic development that we need."

Bobby Capps also listed education as one of his top three priorities, but also said, "We've got to make the ambulance service, the Dept. of Social Services and the other services work correctly."

For the second time in eight days, all five county commission candidates endorsed a proposal to hire a county manager to oversee government operations on a day-to-day basis.

The Republicans and Democrats were also in agreement regarding the Madison County Planning Board. Steen, a former member of the Mars Hill Planning Board, told the audience, "Careful planning is the key to any development pro-

gram. The county would be well off to follow their recommendations."

Saying that he had never heard of the Planning Board before last week, Clarence Faulkner declined to comment.

There was also agreement concerning open meetings of county government. Referring to a pledge made last week by District I school board candidate Joseph Godwin, Bobby Capps said he would not vote to go into executive session "unless the law required us to." Reese Steen also said he would avoid closed sessions except to discuss personnel decisions and real estate acquisitions.

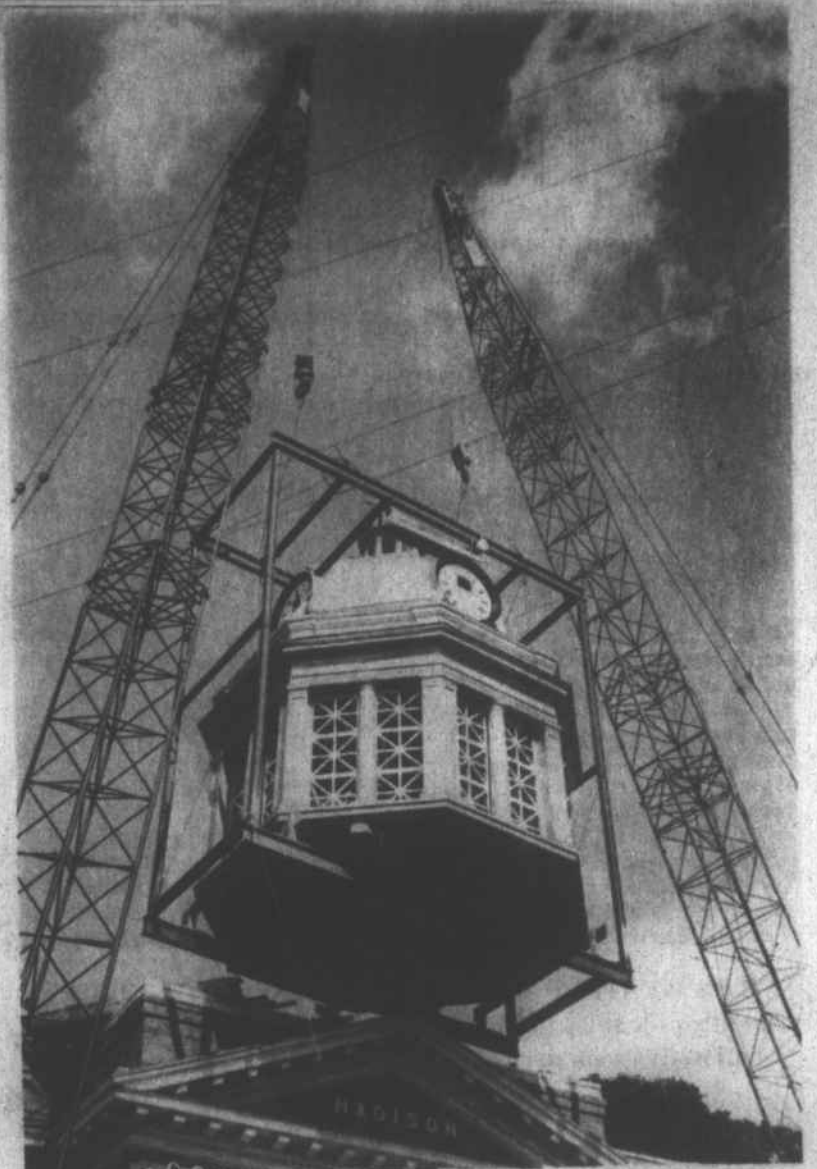
Bob Phillips told the audience that he had taken part in an executive session with the current commissioners early in their present term. Describing himself as "a lamb in a wolves' den," Phillips said he discussed concerns with the commissioners during their closed session, but that no action was ever taken during open session.

The county's emergency medical service also drew comments from the candidates. John Hensley suggested that the new commissioners would need to look into the service's operations. Reese Steen suggested upgrading EMT salaries when they complete increased training and improve their skills.

Capps got a laugh when he told the audience, "Being in the funeral business, I know something about ambulances." Capps went on to say, "I want these ambulances to have whatever they need to save lives. I want people who are trained to save lives."

Saying that "The Madison County EMS leaves something to be desired," Bob Phillips blamed "a lack of supervision" for the condition of county ambulances.

Former Marshall Mayor Betty Wild and Democrat Harold Wallin again debated tax collections. Mrs. Wild reminded voters that uncollected taxes currently total "over half a million dollars" while Wallin countered that his 92.4 percent collection rate was better than the 85 percent collected before he took office. (Continued on Page 7)



UP IT GOES...After six months of restoration work, cupola to Madison County Court House was returned to the roof on Saturday, completing the current restoration project.

Candidates Discuss Arts, Music, Buses

By ROBERT KOENIG

Arts and music education in the schools was one of the chief topics discussed by local school board candidates during Monday night's Candidates Forum at Madison High School.

The Republican challengers and Democratic incumbents for the three District II seats fielded questions from the capacity audience during the two-hour session.

Madison County elementary schools currently do not offer arts and music instruction. The first question from the audience asked the candidates if they thought such education was important.

Republican Jim Baker pointed out that the new Basic Education Plan for North Carolina schools will soon require arts and music education on all grade levels. Baker said, "I don't think you can leave out something as important as music and arts," and called for the inclusion of arts instruction before the 1991 deadline for implementing the plan.

Incumbents Bobby Ponder and Ed Gentry said they supported arts education, but said that the state does not currently fund arts and music instructors. Ponder said, "Madison County is a poor county. Madison County doesn't pay for a single teacher. We're trying to get the state to fund a position. If they do, we'll advertise it immediately."

Ed Gentry, while admitting that "We are short on the arts," added that "The present board of education is very concerned about teaching arts and teaching music. I don't think the state will pay for music and art

teachers. Up until now, we haven't had the funds to add teachers on our own."

Republican Mike Jenkins said, "I think we need to address ourselves to this issue in the future."

There was disagreement concerning the county's dropout rate among the candidates. School board chairman Bobby Ponder defended the county's rate, saying that Madison County's 9.5 percent dropout rate compared favorably with the dropout rate in neighboring WNC counties where the rate is between 10 and 13 percent.

Challenger Jim Baker said that even 9.5 percent was too high, pointing out that current rates mean that some 82 current Madison H.S. students will fail to graduate.

Democrat Floyd Wallin and Ed Gentry sounded similar themes. Wallin said, "I think the parents need to take more interest in the schools," while Gentry suggested that many factors affected dropout rates. Gentry said parents need to stress the importance of education to their children in the home.

Mike Jenkins said, "We need to work together to keep our children in school." Jenkins' running mate, Jimmy Dean Hensley, said education must be encouraged in the home. Hensley said education was not stressed in his home and that two brothers dropped out of school in the eighth grade.

As expected, the physical condition of county school buildings was a topic for debate. Jim Baker said the county was approaching a crossroads and

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4-H Week Begins



MADISON COUNTY 4-H'ers RELEASED GREEN BALLOONS to mark the start of National 4-H Week. More stories and pictures appear on Page 6.

Mars Hill Tables Zoning

By WILLIAM LEE

The Mars Hill Board of Aldermen held off once again on any passage of the proposed sign and zoning ordinances in its meeting Monday night, Oct. 6.

Town manager Darhyl Boone received a letter earlier Monday from Jim Edwards of the Land-of-Sky Regional Council, requesting the board delay action on the ordinances until certain legal complications can be cleared up.

Edwards informed the board that the town of Highlands came under fire recently when its ordinance regarding billboards were in conflict with federal law. The Mars Hill sign ordinance is based on the Highlands

demand for removal of billboards along a primary highway. Federal law requires towns that wish to ban billboards must purchase the signs from the owner. Highlands attempted to amortize all non-conforming signs with gradual payments over a period of time.

Edwards asked the board to add a short paragraph exempting current signs from the requirements for removal or compliance. The new provisions would grandfather any current billboards, but would still allow the town to prohibit new ones.

The board also received a lengthy letter, signed by sign store Bill Edwards, that outlined their objections to the sign ordinance. The letter stated

Robert Phillips, Jack Phillips, Jeanne Hoffman, Bill Zink, Fred Williams, and J.F. Robinson.

The letter raised six points of disagreement with the sign ordinance, the first two being objections to the current restrictions on height and size of ground signs. The merchants felt a 25 foot height limitation was too restrictive and allowances should vary depending on location or specific situation.

A small low sign tends to slow traffic and create congestion. Therefore, a restriction of height and size increases the safety hazard rather than decrease or eliminate a potential safety hazard. The letter stated

operated by Fred Williams. The merchants said that although several members on the zoning board believed the Pizza Inn sign would be acceptable, it is in fact 100 sq. feet larger than allowed by the ordinance.

The merchants also raised objections to the town's proposed ban on off-premise and non-conforming signs. The merchants felt that billboards were not only to be removed from the back and front

By restricting the ordinance to on-premise signs, the town would require the board would require that

The sign ordinance proposed by the

Community Calendar

Marshall Aldermen Meet Oct 13

The Marshall Board of Aldermen will hold the regular monthly meeting on Oct. 13 at 7:30 p.m. in the Town Hall. The meeting is open to the general public.

Madison Athletic Boosters To Meet

The Madison High Athletic Boosters will meet on Oct. 13 at 7:30 p.m. in the student activity room at the high school to determine if the boosters will continue to operate as a support organization for the athletic programs at Madison H.S.. If members wish to continue, officers for the 1986-87 school year will be elected.

All persons interested in supporting high school athletics in Madison County are urged to attend.

Republicans Plan Supper

The Madison County Republican Party will hold a covered dish supper on Oct. 11 at 5 p.m. at Jewel Church's farm in the Sleepy Valley Community. The dinner is open to the public and Republican candidates for local offices are expected to attend.

To reach the Church farm, follow U.S. 25-70 to Sleepy Valley just before the Antioch Cemetery and follow the signs.

Legion Auxiliary To Meet

The American Legion Ladies Auxiliary will hold its regular monthly meeting on Oct. 14 at 7 p.m. in the Legion Hall on Guder (Back) Street. All members and prospective members are invited to attend.

Marshbanks Family Reunion

The annual Marshbanks family reunion will be held on Oct. 12 from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Mars Hill Elementary