

# THE NEWS RECORD

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## County Faces Tough Budget Decisions

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

Although Madison County commissioners are still in the middle of preparing the budget for the 1987-88 fiscal year, one thing was clear from the start — taxes will be increasing.

That much is obvious because the former Madison County Board of Commissioners, shortly after losing in last year's Democratic primary, lowered property taxes from 90 cents per \$100 assessed valuation to 75 cents per \$100 — a decrease of 15 cents.

The current commissioners say that controversial tax cut has put them between the proverbial rock and a hard place — they can either leave the tax rate where it is and

drastically cut back on county services, or they can raise taxes to at least the previous rate and maintain services at current levels.

"Lowering it from 90 cents to 75 cents did affect the county financially," said Robert Capps, chairman of the commissioners. "There's no question about that."

Capps said he has heard from state officials that a 1 cent decrease in the tax rate could mean up to \$25,000 in revenue.

"When you lower it 15 cents, well, that's a lot of money," he said.

Commissioner Reese Steen agreed that a tax hike is inevitable.

"We're going to have to raise taxes because our fund balance — the money set aside for emergencies — is

**'They've still got some decisions to make. Based on what they decide, the tax rate could go from 90 cents up to \$1.09.'**

**Janice Burke  
Fiscal Expert**

totally depleted. Revenue sharing (a federal program) has been stopped," Steen said.

"We're very much dependent now on local tax dollars. Therefore, we're going to have to go back to at least the previous rate," he said. "We haven't cut services and, in some cases, state and federally mandated services have actually increased."

Steen said he did not believe the county commissioners can cut services. "Since we're really have

minimum services now, it's very hard to cut them," he said.

Capps agreed. "To maintain the services we feel our people deserve and want, we're going to have to raise taxes to continue providing those services," he said. "I think most people know this."

"We have two choices — we can cut services or become more efficient," Steen said. "I prefer we seek ways to make county government more efficient."

During a series of recent budget workshops, the commissioners have arrived at a rough draft of the 1987-88 budget. Janice Burke, assistant director of fiscal management with the N.C. Local Government Commission, helped county officials draw up the rough draft.

According to the rough draft, the commissioners are looking at a total budget of \$9,767,444. If that budget is approved, Madison County taxpayers can expect to pay 98 cents for every \$100 of property they own, Burke said.

"They've still got some decisions to make," she said. "Based on what they decide, the tax rate could go from 90 cents up to \$1.09."

Commissioners have discussed

changing the way revenues from the half-cent sales tax are distributed. Currently, 40 percent of the original half-cent sales tax goes to the county school system for construction and repair projects; while 100 percent of the latest half-cent tax goes to the schools.

State law, however, only requires counties to allocate 60 percent of that second half-cent tax for school construction and repair.

What county officials decide to do about the half-cent sales tax distribution could be a factor in the county's tax rate, Burke said.

Commissioners say they want to hold all county departments to the same level of funding allocated in the

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## Raid Nets \$75,000 In Marijuana

From Staff Reports

The Madison County Sheriff's Department confiscated more than 100 marijuana plants, with an estimated street value of \$75,000, in a drug raid at a Mars Hill apartment complex.

Authorities arrested three people and charged them with possession and manufacture of a controlled substance.

Deputies found the marijuana plants in boxes and planters behind Ivy Ridge Apartments in Mars Hill, said Madison County Chief Deputy Dal Peek.

Authorities suspect that the plants were apparently ready to be transplanted onto a hillside behind

the apartment building, Peek said.

N.C. Wildlife Commission officers assisted county deputies with confiscation of the plants, said Madison County Sheriff Dedrick Brown.

"This is a result of an on-going investigation and the sheriff's department's commitment to its war on drugs, utilizing inter-agency cooperation," Brown said.

Charged with one count of possession of a controlled substance and one count of manufacture of a controlled substance were:

- Kenneth Lee McAbee, 23, of Ivy Ridge Apartments in Mars Hill.

- James Curtis Ball of Ivy Ridge Apartments in Mars Hill.

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## Marshall Collects Late Water Bills

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

Marshall residents who have delinquent water bills had better pay up.

The town is finally following through on its long-time threats to stop water service to customers who have not paid their water bills.

And the "get-tough" attitude already appears to be paying off. Less than a week after announcing that water service will be cut off to delinquent customers, the town has received \$2,506.99 in overdue payments, according to figures from

Linda Dodson, Marshall town clerk. That amount came from 10 water customers who owed amounts ranging from \$114.19 to \$458.20.

According to Dodson's records, Marshall water customers owe the town a total of \$14,394.01. With the recent payments, that total is down to \$11,887.02.

The Marshall Board of Aldermen agreed to aggressively seek payment of delinquent bills earlier this month after learning that the town would stand a better chance of receiving a

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ANNE KITCHELL PHOTO

**Captain Parker's cornet case is on display at the Dry Ridge Museum.**

## Weaverville Woman Finds Town's March

By ANNE KITCHELL  
Staff Writer

When Mrs. W. Arthur Robinson stumbled upon a dusty musical case last year, she had no idea she had discovered a missing piece of Weaverville's history.

The story began shortly after her mother's death last year when Robinson was sorting through the family possessions.

Robinson, the daughter of William Parker (also known as Captain Parker), was going through and throwing away things in the house when she came across

her father's old cornet case.

Inside the case, along with the original instrument, was a musical composition written for the cornet called "The Weaverville March."

"I took the music to the band master at North Buncombe High School, Wally Brown, and he played the piece for the first time in two generations in the Dry Ridge Museum last year," Robinson said.

She said that Brown took the music, which was composed for

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## School Board Hires Attorney, Finance Officer

By ANNE KITCHELL  
Staff Writer

The Madison County Board of Education appointed a new finance officer and replaced longtime school board attorney Larry Leake during the third extension of the board's regular meeting last week.

The board agreed to hire Ron Smith of Hot Springs as the school system's new finance officer. That decision came after board members interviewed Smith and two other candidates.

Jan Franklin, who resigned as county finance officer, served as interim finance officer for the school system.

The board went into executive session for more than three hours to review applications and interview candidates. Smith was chosen for the position in a 3-to-2 vote and will begin his duties July 1.

The board also agreed to hire Mars Hill attorney Forrest Ball to replace Leake as the school board attorney. Ball will begin his duties Monday.

Those in favor of Leake's replacement were Jimmy Dean Hensley, Mike Jenkins and Jim Baker. There were no votes against, but Gerald Young and Franklin Anderson abstained from the vote. No reason was given for Leake's dismissal.

In other business, Madison County Commissioner Reese Steen told the school board that commissioners

have made a commitment to meet the proposed \$1.4 million budget for the school system.

"We will repay the school system the amount that is due," said Steen. "Money will be paid before or in June, before the fiscal year begins July 1."

Vocational rehabilitation counselor George Abbott addressed the board with a proposal to hire a job placement counselor in Madison High School two and a half days a week. There is currently no one available to counsel students on future employment possibilities.

Board members voted unanimously to hire a counselor at a cost of \$3,586 per year.

In other action:

- The board approved the disposal of 11 surplus vehicles.

- Mike Allen, newly hired community school coordinator, addressed the board concerning parental and media involvement in the schools.

Allen told the board that each school needs an active parent teacher organization, as well as media coverage of school programs and events.

Last Thursday's meeting was the third time that school board members have met this month. Completion of the proposed budget for the coming fiscal year prevented the board from addressing other items on its agenda until last Thursday.

## Upper Laurel Subject Of Book

By ELIZABETH SQUIRE  
Feature Writer

The lore behind such Madison County placenames as Wolf Pit Mountain, Wolf Laurel, California Creek and Puncheon Fork is described in a new book, "Upper Laurel and Her People," by Delia Tipton Brittain.

The book, which deals with the northeastern corner of the county that borders on Yancey County and Tennessee, describes many 19th century and early 20th century customs such as home doctoring and exchanging news at the country store.

Brittain, now in her 80s, grew up in Upper Laurel and, in a way, started the book in her formative years there. She recalls that, as a girl, she was considered a bookworm but that few books were readily available. She read the Bible from cover to cover, school texts and a few other books

such as "Grimm's Fairy Tales," "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Alice in Wonderland," available at school. And she read the newspapers her mother pasted over the mud and log walls of the main room in their house.

Then, lacking more books, Brittain listened carefully to all the stories of local history and all the background of nearby families. She said she felt the history might, for example, explain such Madison County expressions as "What's your hurry? Did you come to borrow fire?" (She says she figured that expression came from the days people in the more isolated parts of the county had matches — so if the fire went out it was easier to borrow fire from a neighbor than to strike sparks from a flint.)

In 1931, Delia Tipton, second of nine children of Yancey and Maggie Tipton of Upper Laurel, married

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## Group Looks At Tourism

By ANNE KITCHELL  
Staff Writer

A group of Madison County residents heard some optimistic words concerning tourism development in Western North Carolina during a meeting with representatives from the Tennessee Valley Authority last week.

The group met in Spring Creek with tourism planning representatives Bob Genie and Gale Trussell of TVA to discuss ways of promoting Madison County.

"This is an exploratory meeting," Genie said. "We're here to see what Madison County would like to do."

"The county is humming," said Russell Rowe of Spring Creek. "From Mars Hill and the county chamber of commerce to the Marshall Merchants' Association, people want to see a change and are uniting to make a joint effort."

Trussell told the group there are three areas to consider when promoting tourism: organization, financing and marketing.

"You're in the best travel district in the United States," Trussell said.

"Your area falls in the center of an interstate system from Atlanta to Charlotte to Knoxville to Asheville," Trussell explained. But Western

North Carolina is considered third in the top 10 rated areas in the South, according to a "Southern Living" survey.

"The federal government has already made a great investment in the forests, as has the Billmire Estate. You have to tap into what is already available," said Trussell. "What you need to do is look into ways of getting people off the interstate and then getting them back on."

Mars Hill resident Rick Murrin agreed that the county residents must start looking at things they have



## Memorial Day Memories

Main Street, Marshall, was the scene for a Memorial Day parade and other festivities on Saturday. Above, a veteran surrounded by American flags salutes the crowd. Left, Anna Katherine Keating and her brother William watch the parade from the steps of Madison County Courthouse.

JERRY PLIMMONS  
PHOTOS