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State Completes DSS Investigation

From Staff Reports
State officials have apparently given the Madison County Department of Social Services a clean bill of health on its handling of the Andrew "Junior" Chandler child sexual abuse case.

Several representatives of the Division of Child Protective Services of the N.C. Department of Human Resources were in Marshall on Monday to determine if county Social Services employees acted properly in their investigation of accusations against Chandler.

Although state officials say they have not yet completed a report on

their findings, Anita Davie, DSS director in Madison County, said she has been told that her department did what it should have during its investigation of Chandler and another child abuse case.

"I do not have their written report, but in leaving they gave me a verbal statement that, in the two cases they reviewed, they found no problems and they complimented me on the work that my employees had done on the cases," Davie said Wednesday.

"They reviewed all the files involved in the cases to make sure we followed state law and DSS regu-

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Harold Wallin
... faces charges

Tax Collector Faces Four Charges By SBI

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

The State Bureau of Investigation has charged Madison County Tax Collector Harold H. Wallin with failing to discharge his duties by not collecting interest and penalties on delinquent taxes.

According to warrants filed Tuesday in the Madison County Clerk of Court's Office, Wallin "did corruptly omit, neglect and refuse to collect interest in the nature of penalty from taxpayers which he favored."

Warrants charge that Wallin failed

to collect \$240.60 in interest from delinquent taxpayers from July 1-31 1985 and \$357.47 in interest from Feb. 1-28, 1986.

Special Agent Claude Greene of the SBI filed two warrants each containing two misdemeanor charges against Wallin on Tuesday.

Wallin has been charged with two counts of willfully failing to discharge his duties and two counts of failing to collect a penalty on delinquent tax. The latter charge violates the revenue sections of state law, according to an SBI spokesman.

Wallin was arrested Tuesday and released on a written promise to appear in court. A trial date of July 27 has been set, according to court documents.

The filing of charges against Wallin comes more than a year after the former Madison County Board of Commissioners asked 24th Judicial District Attorney J. Thomas Rusher to look into Wallin's alleged failure to collect penalties on delinquent taxes.

"This investigation began at the request of the Madison County Board of

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Falcons May Fly Over WNC Again

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

Hikers on the Appalachian Trail as it snakes along Madison County's border with Tennessee will have to have to make a slight detour during the next few weeks.

Tennessee and federal wildlife officials are in the middle of a project designed to re-introduce peregrine falcons, an endangered species, to the eastern United States.

And one of the sites from which young falcons will be released is near the Appalachian Trail on the North Carolina-Tennessee state line.

Wildlife officials are trying to teach the young birds, raised in captivity by a national organization, to fend for themselves. And they want the falcons to have as little exposure to human beings as possible, said Bill Yambert, endangered species coordinator for the eastern region of Tennessee.

Six of the birds have been atop a mountain in the Unaka range bordering Unicoi County, Tenn., and Madison County since June 2, Yambert said. The falcons, now

nearly two months old, are learning to fly and hunt for their own food.

And that, Yambert said, is the most critical stage of the whole process.

"These birds have just been released," he said. "We don't want to do too much to disturb them right now. We don't want a bunch of sightseers up there."

That's why officials, working with the Appalachian Trail Conference, have temporarily move the trail away from the "hacking site."

The project is part of a national effort to return peregrine falcons to the eastern United States. Several birds have been released elsewhere in Western North Carolina, including Shining Rock in Haywood County, Picken's Nest in Macon County and Potato Knob near Mt. Mitchell.

So far, so good, wildlife officials say. But they admit they've got a long way to go.

"The peregrine falcon population was completely extirpated in the east," said Gary Henry, coor-

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Peregrine falcons, like this young bird, are the subject of an on-going project.

Mars Hill OKs 1987-88 Budget

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

Mars Hill business owners got some good news Monday night when the Board of Aldermen approved a budget for the coming fiscal year based on the current property tax rate and on lower sewer rates.

The board adopted a \$399,150 budget for the 1987-88 fiscal year and agreed to hold the ad valorem tax rate at its current level of 70 cents per \$100 assessed valuation.

The board also approved a \$326,000 water and sewer fund budget, with projected revenues based on a lower sewer use rate for industrial and commercial customers.

Although Mars Hill officials have yet to actually take steps to reduce those sewer rates, they will do so later in the year, Mars Hill Town Manager Darryl Boone said.

Currently, industrial and commercial sewer customers pay \$4.50 for every 1,000 gallons of water used above 10,000 gallons. The sewer and water budget approved Monday is based on a rate of \$2.40 for every 1,000 gallons after 10,000 gallons, Boone said.

Rates for usage less than 10,000 gallons would remain at their current level, he said.

Business and commercial users now pay \$14 for the first 3,000 gallons used; \$5.50 per 1,000 gallons for the next 2,000 gallons; \$5 per 1,000 gallons for the next 5,000 gallons; and \$4.50 per 1,000 for all usage above 10,000 gallons.

Mars Hill officials have talked about lowering sewer rates charged industrial and commercial users since the town installed its municipal sewer system. Businessmen in Mars Hill have complained that the sewer rates are too high.

An accounting firm studied the town's rate system to find a way that sewer rates could be lowered without putting the town's \$2 million sewer system, completed last year, on shaky financial ground.

The firm's recommendations of lower sewer charges at the top end of the rate scale are the basis for projected revenues in the town's water and sewer budget, Boone said.

Despite the anticipated lower rates, the total budget for the water and sewer fund comes to \$326,000 -- \$40,100 greater than last year's \$285,900.

That apparent discrepancy is due to the fact that the town has more

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Weaverville's Water Woes May Hinder Future Growth

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

The biggest problem facing future industrial development in Weaverville is the lack of an adequate water supply.

That was one of the findings of a recent economic appraisal of Weaverville completed by a city and regional planning student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Susan C. Glen, who visited Weaverville earlier this year to gather information for her report for a college course, recently shared her economic appraisal with town officials.

Glen's overall view of Weaverville's economic future is optimistic, but she says that the lack of sufficient amounts of water may prevent new industry from moving into the area.

"Lack of an adequate water supply is cited by nearly all development of-

officials in the greater Asheville area as the biggest factor hindering growth in northern Buncombe County," she said in her report.

Although QTI, the latest industrial addition to the North Buncombe area, has supplied its own water through the use of wells, most potential industries would not be willing to do that, she said.

And although other industrial recruitment tools are in place, Weaverville's attempts to attract new industry will be hampered by the town's water supply problems, she said.

Weaverville, since 1974, has had a moratorium on the extension of new water lines outside the town limits because of its water supply woes.

The town -- along with Mars Hill and the Woodfin Sanitary District -- is looking at a \$10.5 million project that would tap the Ivy River as a water

source for all three participants.

But, because of the high price tag of that project, Weaverville officials are also looking at other options, including tapping the French Broad River and signing of a long-term contract with the Asheville-Buncombe Water Authority.

Weaverville officials, who recently approved a 27 percent increase in municipal water rates to help pay for a new water supply system, are currently examining all of those options.

What ever option the town takes, it will be several years before water is flowing through a new system -- and that means industrial development should be slow for the next several years, Glen said.

"The industrial recruitment strategy will be severely hampered for the next five or six years by the lack of adequate water supplies," she said.

But after that time, "Weaverville should fare pretty well, due to its many attractions for industry," she said.

Those attractions include:

- An abundance of flat, developable land. The area has one of the best supplies of flat potential industry sites in Western North Carolina.
- Possible expansion of U.S. 19-23

north of Mars Hill to a four-lane highway or interstate, which would open Weaverville (and Asheville) up to markets in the midwest.

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Town Joins In County Plan

By ANNE KITCHELL
Staff Writer

The town of Weaverville has agreed to participate in a plan designed to boost Buncombe County's economic development and create new jobs countywide.

Weaverville officials agreed to pledge \$3,000 annually to the countywide economic development project for the next three years.

Weaverville Town Manager Charles Horne said the economic development partnership is a product

of the economic summit held in Buncombe County last fall.

"The summit targeted the area's most pressing economic needs and found we need a partnership and a pool of money to advertise and recruit potential industry," Horne said.

The summit -- promoted by David Brown, chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Asheville, and the Asheville Chamber of Commerce -- gave Buncombe County leaders a chance to discuss how economic

growth can lead to new job opportunities.

The group determined that a pool of dollars from area communities would help the recruitment of industry.

The proposed plan calls for \$100,000 a year for three years from the city of Asheville and \$500,000 for three years from the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners. Buncombe commissioners say they like the proposal, but cannot afford to donate a half million dollars a year to the project.

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Lightning Kills 1, Injures 3 Workers

From Staff Reports

A Woodfin man was killed and three others injured when lightning struck the tree under which they were sitting at a construction site near Weaverville.

Mike Connor, 39, of Elk Mountain Road, died when lightning struck him at about 6:45 p.m. last Thursday, according to the Buncombe County Sheriff's Department.

Injured were John Nunday, 25, of Parkwood Avenue, Woodfin; Troy Pegg, 27, of 21 Upland Ave., Weaverville; and James Gerritt, 35, of Ballard Branch Road, Weaverville.

Pegg and Gerritt were treated for injuries at Memorial Mission Hospital's emergency room Thursday and released Saturday in a hospital ambulance.

hospital's coronary care unit Thursday and was released Sunday, the spokesman said.

The four men were working at a residential construction site on Blackberry Inn Road in the Reems Creek area late last Thursday afternoon when a thunderstorm developed, said Lynnett James of the Buncombe County Sheriff's Department.

"Apparently what happened is they were working on a construction site when it started to storm," James said. "They all got under a tree, and then lightning hit the tree and that's how it got them."

Dr. Harold H. Galloway, medical examiner, said he could not determine the cause of Connor's death Thursday.



Rock quarry site in the Flat Creek area.

Hearing 'Likely' On Rock Quarry

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

North Buncombe County residents opposed to the construction of a granite quarry less than a mile from two area schools will apparently have a chance to voice their concerns at a public hearing.

Steve Conrad, state director of land resources, said earlier this week that a public hearing is likely on plans by Vulcan Materials Co. to open a gravel mine in the Flat Creek area.

By state law, a public hearing on the opening of a surface mine will be held only if officials "determine that a sufficient number of persons have been notified and that the hearing will be held."

"I feel pretty certain there will be a hearing," he said. "Certainly, anytime it seems there is sufficient public interest, a hearing will be held. A time or place has not yet been established."

The controversy began last week when North Buncombe residents learned that Vulcan Materials Co., which also operates a mine in Euka, is planning to build a granite mine on 20.54 acres of land located about two miles north of Weaverville on U.S. 19-23.

County officials filed an application for a surface mine permit with the state Department of Natural Resources last week.