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25¢

Madison Tax Rate 99¢ After 2-1 Vote

By HILL STUDENC
Editor

Madison County taxpayers will have to fork over 99 cents to county government for every \$100 worth of property they own.

That's after the Madison County Board of Commissioners approved by a 2-1 vote a \$9,821,778 million budget for the 1987-88 fiscal year, based on an ad valorem tax rates of 99 cents per \$100 assessed valuation.

The new property tax rate is 24 cents higher than the rate in effect when the current commissioners took office, but 2 cents lower than the tax rate in a proposed budget studied two weeks ago by county officials. Taxpayers had to pay 75 cents per \$100 of property during the previous fiscal year; commissioners had considered raising the tax rate as high as \$1.01.

But commissioners agreed earlier this month that a \$1.01 tax rate is too high, and sent the budget back for further revision.

The county's new budget comes after several weeks of figuring and refiguring — and after a tense public hearing on the budget Monday.

Commissioner Reese Steen, who cast the lone "no" vote, presented his own proposed budget to the rest of the board, setting off a lively debate between the three commissioners.

Steen's budget, which included more money for the Madison County school system and less money for the county ambulance service and Department of Social Services, was based on the same total budget of \$9.8 million.

Steen asked commissioners Robert Capps and John Hensley to give an

additional \$40,000 to the school system. The proposed budget presented to commissioners Monday by finance officer Ralph Rice allocated \$763,333 to the school system — \$76,667 less than the original proposed budget.

"As usual, the July 13, 1987, budget is shorting our schools by giving them whatever is left over after we take care of welfare and making the 'good ol' boys' a job," Steen said, reading from a prepared statement.

"It is time to change our thinking.

"We hired Mr. Rice to make our financial decisions for us, and this is what he's told us he can live with."

Commissioner Robert Capps

The trite saying 'put up or shut up' is very appropriate here," he said. "John Hensley, Bobby Capps and Reese Steen promised the people better schools. It is time to invest in the future."

Capps, board chairman, said he agreed that the school system is in need of more county funding — but not at the expense of other departments, especially the Emergency Management Service.

"You're talking about taking \$15,000 from our ambulance service," Capps said. "Eddie (Fox, EMS director) says if we cut it anymore that we've already cut it that he'll either lose one person or one ambulance."

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"We can stand 10 or 20 of them (workers) out on the courthouse porch with a broom and that's not going to advance the county at all."

Commissioner Reese Steen



Reese Steen

...proposes different budget

Marshall Woman Dies In Crash

From Staff Reports

A Marshall woman was killed Wednesday morning when the car in which she was a passenger plunged more than 42 feet off the side of winding Roberts Hill Road, landing on its top on U.S. 25-70 Business.

Diana Kingston was dead at the scene of the accident, which occurred at about 8:50 a.m. Wednesday, according to police reports.

Mrs. Kingston, a Marshall real estate agent, was a passenger in a 1976 Chevrolet driven by her husband, Richard Kingston, on Roberts Hill Road when the vehicle left the road about 400 feet from its intersection with U.S. 25-70 Business on the north end of town, said Madison County Sheriff Dedrick Brown.

Kingston was injured in the accident and taken to Memorial Mission Hospital in Asheville for treatment, said Marshall Police Officer Edward

"Popeye" McLean. Kingston did not appear to be seriously injured, McLean said.

Kingston apparently was able to get out of the car before it went over the side of the hill, he said.

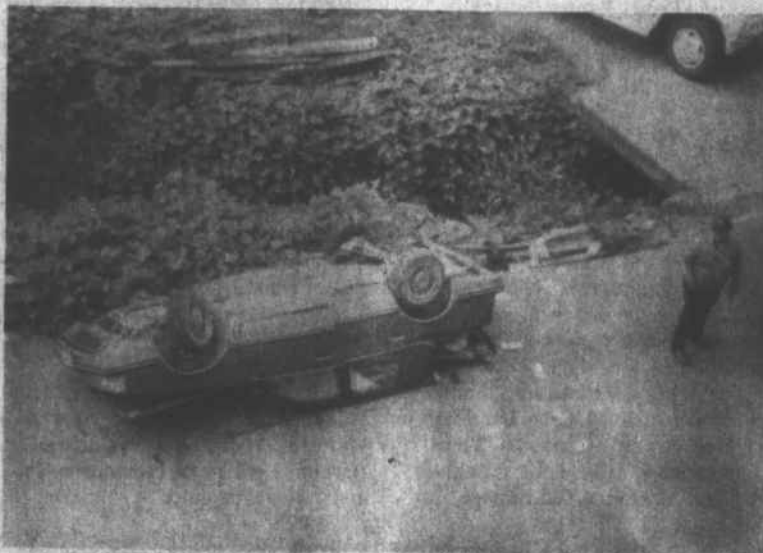
McLean estimated that the car was traveling no more than 20 mph at the time of the crash.

"It wasn't going too fast," Brown said. "It didn't go through the air at all, it just went straight down through the bushes."

Authorities say that the vehicle went off Roberts Hill Road to the left on the last big curve on the twisting road before its intersection with U.S. 25-70 Business.

The car crashed over a rock wall and plunged nearly 43, landing on its top and apparently rolling once before coming to rest upside down on U.S. 25-70 Business, Brown said.

The accident is still under inves-



MIKE ALLEN PHOTO

Diana Kingston of Marshall was killed Wednesday morning when the car in which she was riding plunged off Roberts Hill Road and landed on its top on U.S. 25-70, some 43 feet below the curve-filled road.

igation by the Marshall Police Department and the Madison County Sheriff's Department, authorities

said. The N.C. Highway Patrol is also assisting.

Two Charged With Abducting Woman Found In Virginia

From Staff Reports

The Madison County Sheriff's Department has asked the FBI to help investigate the apparent kidnapping of a 17-year-old Grapevine woman, allegedly taken against her will to Virginia by her brother and a Maryland woman.

The sheriff's department has charged Ernest James Marler, 20, of Falls Church, Va., and Mary Jane Stack, 31, of Gaithersburg, Md., with first-degree kidnapping and larceny, according to Chief Deputy Dal Peek.

Marler and Stack were arrested late Monday by authorities in Lexington, Va., Peek said.

The two waived extradition and were returned to Madison County at

about 3:30 a.m. Wednesday, Peek said. Marler was being held in Madison County Jail, while Stack was transported to women's facilities in Buncombe County Jail.

Marler and Stack have been charged with kidnapping Marler's sister, Reba Dean Marler, from her Thomas Branch Road home in the Grapevine community sometime Monday morning, Peek said.

Authorities charge that Marler "drug his sister off a horse and forced her into a car."

The vehicle left Madison County, stopping in Lexington, Va., later that day so that the three could get something to eat, Peek said.

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Hot Springs OKs \$175,000 Budget

By STEVE FERGUSON
Staff Writer

After legal delays and adoption of an interim budget of \$10,000, Hot Springs officials approved a \$175,582 budget for the 1987-88 fiscal year Monday night.

The Board of Aldermen had adopted the a proposed budget June 30, just before a July 1 deadline. Town attorney Larry Leake, however, advised board members that they had not given 10 days public notice of the budget meeting, as required by state law.

The budget they had adopted was invalid and the town of Hot Springs could legally make no expenditures, Leake said.

On July 1, the board held an emergency meeting and approved an interim budget of \$10,000 so town employees could be paid and the town could meet other operating expenses.

The board then set July 13 as the new approval date for the budget.

The \$175,582 budget is based on the same ad valorem tax rate in effect during the 1986-87 fiscal year — 85 cents per \$100 assessed valuation.

The biggest portion of the town's income will be from property and sales taxes, totaling almost \$70,000. Other income includes a franchise tax of \$17,000 and restricted state revenues of \$10,000.

The town also expects almost \$17,000 from Department of Transportation funds, and will run the sewer and water system at a cost of \$39,500.

Expenditures include almost \$30,000 in police salaries and expenses, \$12,400 in electricity and \$10,000 for the fire department.

Other expenditures include insurance — \$4,500, legal fees — \$4,699, and gasoline — \$5,500.



Raymond Eugene Moore
...running for mayor of Marshall

Moore Enters Mayor's Race

From Staff Reports

Raymond Eugene Moore, an unsuccessful candidate for alderman in 1985, has entered the race for the job of mayor of Marshall.

Moore officially filed as a candidate for November's municipal elections Tuesday morning, said Linda Dodson, Marshall town clerk.

Moore finished in fourth place in balloting in the Marshall aldermen's race in 1985, just three votes short of election.

Moore will run against incumbent Mayor Anita Ward, who filed last

week for re-election. No other candidates have filed for municipal office in Marshall by early Tuesday afternoon, Dodson said.

Moore, a 40-year-old shop foreman at Wilson Trucking in Swannanoa, said he would like to see economic growth return to Marshall.

"I'd like to see some changes in this town, as far as growth is concerned," Moore said Tuesday. "I've had some people tell me they'd like to see more stores downtown and more parking."

Marshall needs to attract more

businesses to make the businesses that are already here more competitive, he said.

"I'm not saying I can do anything, but I would like to be a part of seeing Marshall grow," he said.

Moore said he has no problems with the way the present administration has run the town — he'd just like an opportunity to see if he can do any better.

"She (Ward) has probably done the best she could, but I'd like a chance to do something, too," he said.

Authorities Say Man Raped 8-Year-Old

From Staff Reports

A 26-year-old Marshall man has been charged by authorities with raping an 8-year girl several times during the past three years.

The Madison County Sheriff's Department arrested Terry Collins Jr. of Collins Road, Marshall, last week and charged with him with first-degree rape.

Madison County Chief Deputy Dal Peek said Tuesday that Collins has been charged with raping the girl an undetermined number of times between June 1, 1984, and June 30 of this year.

During a probable cause hearing Monday in Madison County District Court, Judge Phillip Ginn sent the case on to Superior Court.

Collins was released from custody, originally at \$100,000, in 1984. Collins was still in Madison County Jail late Tues-

day afternoon, according to the Madison County Sheriff's Department.

The sheriff's office has also charged two more people with manufacturing marijuana. Arrested Saturday were Lynn Jasper Huggins, 35, of Burnsville and Claudine Ragsdale, 36, of Aurora, Ill. Both have been released on bond.

Authorities made the arrest after discovering 14 marijuana plants growing at their home on the Burnsville Highway, Peek said.

Peek estimated the street value of the plants at about \$24,000.

Eleven other plants were found nearby, but authorities have made no charges in connection with those plants.

Peek said the plants may be used for manufacturing marijuana. Peek said



HILL STUDENC PHOTO

Wolf Laurel, new general manager of Wolf Laurel, discussed plans of the improvements planned for the resort.

Wolf Laurel Owners Plan Improvements

By HILL STUDENC
Editor

The new owners of Wolf Laurel say all they want to do is help Madison County's mountain resort realize its potential.

And, according to the Stokes, O'Steen, Williams Group, all it will take is a little bit of elbow grease and a healthy injection of cash to get the once-financially beleaguered resort back on its feet.

"This whole resort has a lot more going for it than what most people ever imagined and we intend to take advantage of that," said Buster Inman, new general manager of Wolf Laurel.

The Stokes, O'Steen, Williams Group officially took control most of Wolf Laurel Resort on June 22 from Bald Mountain Development Corp. The Jacksonville, Fla., based development firm took over the resort's golf course, restaurant, inn and an estimated 1,000 acres of undeveloped land, said Walter Williams, the firm's president.

Needless to say the portions of the site area are still in progress, Williams said.

weeks, company employees are already on the mountain, initiating the changes they think will make Wolf Laurel one of Western North Carolina's prime resorts.

"We think we have a lot here," said Inman. "It's just a matter of coming in here and doing the things that need to be done in order to make it what was originally intended to do."

And that, said Inman and Williams, will mean giving the resort a good, thorough refurbishing.

Wolf Laurel's 18-hole golf course, which Inman said may be the highest course in the eastern United States, will require some landscaping.

"What's happened is that, over the years, the woods have grown in around the fairway areas," Inman said. "We need to get in there and cut out all that growth. Our immediate plan is to maintain the golf course from nature."

The golf course at Wolf Laurel is the only 18-hole course in the area, Williams said. The present 9-hole course is a "miniature" course.