



A brush fire burned 60 acres of woodland in the Little Pine section of Madison County, Tuesday.

See Page 8

Madison's Lady Patriots won the Western Highlands 2-A Conference Basketball Tournament.

See Page 6

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School Consolidation Plan Amended

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

The Madison County Board of Education amended its long-range facilities plan Thursday, agreeing to retain a school in the town of Hot Springs for students in kindergarten through eighth grade in the western end of the county.

The decision comes after two months of controversy surrounding the N.C. Division of School Planning recommendation calling for massive consolidation and the creation of a countywide middle school for grades 6-8.

Under the unanimously approved amendment, students in grades 6-8 at Hot Springs and Spring Creek will have the option of attending a K-8 facility at Hot Springs, or the new consolidated school.

Sixth- through eighth-graders at

Spring Creek and Hot Springs should be able to enjoy the advantages that the larger consolidated middle school would provide, said school board Chairman James Baker.

School board members called the amended plan "a good compromise."

"This gives as many people as possible what they want, but at the same time, never for a minute overlooks the well-being of the children," Baker said.

The amended plan follows most of the recommendations originally made by state planners and tentatively adopted by the school board - with the exception of facilities in Hot Springs and Spring Creek.

The state plan called for the phasing out of schools at Hot Springs, Laurel, Marshall and Walnut. Students in grades K-5 at those schools would be consolidated in a

new elementary school, to be built north of Marshall.

Students in grades 6-8 at those schools would join sixth- through eighth-graders from Mars Hill and Spring Creek in a consolidated middle school to be built near Madison High School.

Under the state plan, students in grades K-5 at Spring Creek would remain at a small, renovated school in that community because of problems transporting younger children to the consolidated school.

In public discussion of the consolidation issue, the majority of speakers from Spring Creek said they wanted to keep a community school.

Some Spring Creek residents said they preferred the benefits of a larger school, but would rather send their children to Hot Springs than to the Marshall area.

"Economically speaking, I do not feel like there is a sufficient population to support a separate school at Spring Creek," Baker said. "I'm sorry, I know many of you want a school at Spring Creek."

Walnut residents had also asked that a school be kept in their community. Baker said the new consolidated elementary school will be built north of Marshall, "in the vicinity of Walnut."

One idea proposed by some residents was a K-8 school at Hot Springs for students at Hot Springs, Spring Creek and Laurel. Baker said he had supported that plan until many Laurel residents said they preferred their children to go to Marshall.

"The people of Hot Springs have been consistent with wanting a school at Hot Springs," Baker said. "I've not changed my mind on that. There are

three township areas in the county, and each area should have a school there."

Baker said that Hot Springs residents' insistence on a school in their community was a key factor in the board's decision.

"I would not have been in favor of a K-8 school at Hot Springs if not for what you people told us," he said. "I still feel it would be better to go to a central middle school, despite the long distance."

The school board agreed to adopt a resolution allowing Hot Springs and Spring Creek students to attend the consolidated school, and that the county would provide transportation.

The Madison County Board of Commissioners, meeting jointly with the school board, agreed to the amended school facilities plan.

-Continued on back page



Gerald Young
...suggests bond issue

Weaverville Council OKs Golf Course Annexation

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

The Weaverville Town Council agreed in a split decision Thursday night to proceed with the satellite annexation of 90 acres of the Reems Creek Golf Club.

That decision came during a special meeting called for the sole purpose of acting on a petition from Kenmore Associates of Hendersonville asking the town to annex 189 homesites planned at the development, located 1.2 miles outside town limits.

A standing-room-only crowd jammed Weaverville Town Hall for the meeting, and several residents did not hesitate to let town officials know their feelings on the annexation - and on the special meeting.

Weaverville Mayor Reese Lasher,

who normally does not vote in town council meetings, was forced to cast the deciding vote when council members present deadlocked in a 2-2 tie.

Voting in favor of the voluntary annexation, in addition to Lasher, were Councilmen Bernard Koesters and Frank Spears. Voting against the annexation were Councilmen Ronnie "Butch" Davis and Harold Payne.

Council member Ann Williams, who would have cast the deciding vote, was absent from Thursday's meeting after undergoing minor surgery earlier in the day, Lasher said.

Because the 3-2 vote does not represent a two-thirds majority, a second vote will be held on the Reems Creek Golf Club annexation request at the council's March 21 meeting.

But several Weaverville residents present at the meeting said they were upset because town officials had called the special meeting to vote on the annexation question.

The council, at its regularly scheduled meeting Feb. 15, had agreed by a 4-1 vote to table action on Kenmore's petition until March 21 to give council members more time to study the request.

But a majority of town council members - Williams, Koesters and Spears - signed a letter calling for Thursday's special meeting to "remove from the table" the Reems Creek Golf Club request.

Some angry residents asked if the council would call another special meeting to speed up the annexation process. Town Manager Charles

-Continued on back page



BILL STUDENC PHOTO

Weaverville Mayor Reese Lasher looks over an agreement with the developers of Reems Creek Golf Club, who have petitioned the town for voluntary satellite annexation.

Thorsen Murder Trial Begins

From Staff Reports

A seven-woman, five-man jury began hearing evidence Monday in the trial of Jon C. Thorsen, 44, charged with second-degree murder in the March 1987 shooting death of his wife.

Thorsen, of S. Bear Creek Road, Marshall, is charged with shooting his wife, Claudia Ann Thorsen, in the head following a domestic dispute.

Mrs. Thorsen, a waitress at Mary's Restaurant in Marshall, died about four hours after receiving a single gunshot wound to the head March 15, 1987. She had been shot at close range with a .32 caliber revolver.

Thorsen, represented by attorney Stephen Huff, apparently will contend that his wife shot herself. Huff has yet to make his opening remarks to the jury.

Authorities had at one point considered suicide as a possibility in the shooting, but later ruled out a self-inflicted wound.

Testimony began Monday in Madison County Superior Court as a string of prosecution witnesses - including law enforcement officers, ambulance personnel and State Bureau of Investigation laboratory experts - took the stand.

The most dramatic testimony came Tuesday afternoon, when Thorsen's 17-year-old daughter, Erica Marie Thorsen, took the witness stand.

Miss Thorsen testified that she was in her bedroom talking on the telephone with a friend when she heard "a loud pop." She described the noise as sounding "like a toy pop-gun."

Miss Thorsen said she didn't pay any attention to the noise and continued talking on the phone until she heard her father yelling for her from the living room.

Trying to fight back tears as she testified, Miss Thorsen said she walked into the living room and saw her mother sitting on the couch.

"She was bleeding from the head," she said, obviously upset with recalling the painful memories. "I ran to her."

Assistant District Attorney James Baker asked if her father said anything to her.

"I told him he'd shot my mother. He said that wasn't what I should say," she said.

"I lifted up her hair and saw she was bleeding, so I ran back to the other room and told my friend to call the police."



RANDY COX PHOTO

The Bi-Lo Supermarket in Weaverville sustained some \$10,000 in damages during a small fire Saturday which forced the evacuation of 25 employees and shoppers.

Fire, Smoke Damage Grocery Store

From Staff Reports

The Bi-Lo supermarket in Weaverville sustained an estimated \$10,000 in damage when fire broke out in a storage room early Saturday morning.

The fire, which was contained to the storage room in back of the building, forced the evacuation of about 25 employees and early-morning customers, said Deputy Chief Doug Sims of the Weaverville Fire Department.

The store's manager reported the blaze at about 8 a.m. Saturday, and firefighters had the fire under control with eight minutes, Sims

said. "The store had just opened," he said. "The manager went in and smelled smoke. He said he saw smoke coming from the behind a store room door. He opened the door, and fire came out. That's when he called the fire department."

The fire was "sizeable," but it never spread beyond the storage room, Sims said.

"There was quite a bit of smoke damage in the front of the store," he said. "We used exhaust fans to get it out."

Although the cause of the fire re-

mains under investigation, fire officials believe it was caused by an electrical problem.

Sims said the fire may have resulted when an overhead light ballast blew and fell onto the floor of the room.

The storage room was used to store chili supplies, such as paper plates and cups, Sims said.

The store closed for about two hours Saturday morning, reopening for business at about 10 a.m.

A total of 26 firefighters from Weaverville, Reems Creek and Woodfin responded to the blaze.

TVA Pilot Project Requires Approval Of County Board

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

Madison County should have no problem being selected for a special Tennessee Valley Authority pilot program designed to boost economic growth.

The only hurdle remaining to the county's participation in the TVA project is winning the approval of the Madison County Board of Commissioners, said Bob Gonia, county specialist for the TVA's Special Opportunities Counties Program.

Gonia was speaking Tuesday night to the Madison County Chamber of Commerce.

"The only thing that would block it, I would think, would be if the county didn't approve it," Gonia said. "But I have been assured by each of the three commissioners that they will approve it."

Gonia told chamber members last month that in order for Madison County to qualify as one of four counties to participate in the pilot program, he must have letters of approval from the chamber, as lead agency in the project, and from the commissioners.

But county commissioners said last month they would not approve Madison County's participation in the program without first discussing it with Gonia.

Gonia has since contacted each commissioner individually. He and Jeanne Hoffman, chamber chairman, will meet Monday with the commissioners to win official approval.

Gonia and Hoffman will also attend meetings with the boards of aldermen in Mars Hill, Marshall and Hot Springs within the next month to seek their support.

Marshall Man, 17 Charged In Fatality

From Staff Reports

A 17-year-old Marshall man faces a misdemeanor charge after his vehicle crashed into another car Saturday night in Leicester, killing the driver.

Maxwellville, the N.C. Highway Patrol is continuing its investigation into a Feb. 21 accident on U.S. 25-76 in Madison County that claimed the life of a Marshall man.

The Highway Patrol has charged Donald Garland of Leicester with manslaughter in connection with the Saturday accident, said Sgt. Thomas Watts.

The charge, filed Monday, stems from a fatal accident that occurred at about 11:30 p.m. Saturday in the Leicester area of Buncombe County, according to Highway Patrol reports.

Garland was traveling on a rural road in Leicester when his car crashed into a vehicle driven by Victor H. Sloan, 21, of Leicester.

Garland apparently pulled out of an intersection without stopping at a stop sign, driving Sloan's vehicle at a speed of at least 40 miles per hour, according to reports.

Garland's attorney, James