

Commentary

THE NEWS RECORD

Editorials

Asheville Water Woes Show Need For Caution

For opponents of a proposal that the town of Weaverville lift its long-standing moratorium on the extension of any new water lines outside the town limits, the city of Asheville's recent water woes couldn't have come at a better time. For Weaverville officials, who have suggested that opening up the town's water system to new customers outside the corporate limits could create additional revenues to help finance an independent water system for the town, Asheville's problems only serve to underline the need to proceed with caution.

The Weaverville Town Council last month agreed to spend \$10,000 on an engineering study designed to determine whether the town's water distribution system can supply water to hundreds of potential customers located outside of the Weaverville town limits. Since 1974, the town of Weaverville has been unable to provide water service to anyone outside the town limits, thanks to problems the town has had supplying a sufficient amount of water to residents who do pay town taxes. Two consecutive years of summertime drought have worsened the problem and have forced the town to implement temporary water conservation steps.

The recently approved study comes on the heels of last year's agreement with the Asheville-Buncombe Water Authority, which town officials say will provide Weaverville with all the water it can use until the town can develop a new independent source of water.

Weaverville Mayor Reese Lasher has been the most vocal supporter of lifting the water tap moratorium as a means of generating revenue to fund improvements to the Weaverville water system — improvements that would include the tapping of a new water source, perhaps the Ivy River. New customers located outside Weaverville's town limits would be charged a higher rate than municipal residents, and that would mean extra money that can be set aside for future improvements, Lasher has said. Without the additional revenue from non-

municipal customers, Weaverville residents would probably have to pay the cost of those improvements — either through higher water rates (and rates increased 27 percent last year) or higher property taxes.

Opponents of Lasher's plan to lift the water tap moratorium will undoubtedly point to Asheville's recent water problems. Some 1,000 residents of Asheville were without water for more than a week because of the problems. How can the Asheville-Buncombe Water Authority supply Weaverville and northern Buncombe County when it can't even supply the city of Asheville, those opponents will say.

The problem in Asheville, however, was not a problem of supply. It was a problem of distribution. The city had all the water it needed, but a faulty valve at one of its reservoirs resulted in a draining of the supply. The water was there, but water authority officials simply couldn't get it to those affected by the interruption of service.

Asheville-Buncombe Water Authority officials have said they have enough water to supply three Weavervilles. The question that remains unanswered is this: Is Weaverville's water distribution system up to the task of funneling that water to customers both inside and outside the town? That is exactly the question that Weaverville officials want to have answered by the recently approved study.

When that study is complete, the mayor and council must examine the results carefully and then determine whether they should lift the 14-year-old water tap moratorium. Last week's events in Asheville should serve as proof of the importance of an up-to-date water distribution system. The Asheville-Buncombe Water Authority may have enough water to serve three Weavervilles, but it won't do the north end of the county any good if the town of Weaverville is unable to get that water from reservoirs to homes.

Workfare Can't Work Without Services

Almost since the inception of the welfare system, people have looked for ways to make it work better. Clearly, reform of our welfare system in Madison County must be a top priority of our county officials and Social Service administrators.

Conservatives and liberals alike would agree that real welfare reform has been frustratingly slow in coming. The disagreement remains in how we go about that reform. Many conservatives say that welfare provides disincentive to work and should be completely abolished while liberals contend that the disincentives to work are the result of an unrealistically low minimum wage, a restrictive Medicaid program, inadequate child care and deficiencies in other social support programs. Some would have the minimum wage raised and Medicaid benefits extended to working mothers to ensure a standard of living that is currently unavailable to either welfare recipients or minimum-wage workers and to ensure health care for working mothers and their children.

The concept of "workfare" has emerged as a compromise plan that is acceptable to both liberals and conservatives. In theory, workfare is a better idea than the current welfare system in that it allows people to receive the assistance they need while offering the opportunity to be productive, contributing members of the community. But workfare in theory and workfare in practice in Madison County are two different things.

The workfare program works under some major assumptions. The writers of the program assumed that the other social support programs necessary to make workfare work are already in place and functionally properly. In Madison County, they are not. Our county day care system is inadequate and poorly administered. Our countywide transportation system is anything but countywide. The county day care

centers are closed 12 days each year.

Worse than the inadequacies of the child care and transportation system is the attitudes held by county and Social Service officials. The remark was made by one county official that "Workfare is already working." Working, because one recipient of welfare, when presented the workfare proposal, remarked that she might as well get her own job. When asked if this recipient had minor children or transportation, the official didn't know and hadn't bothered to ask.

If this is an example of how workfare works, it doesn't work at all. Social support programs were instituted to enable those in desperate circumstances to have a better quality of life.

The majority of jobs made available to welfare recipients under the workfare program are minimum wage jobs with little or no hope for advancement and offer little or no opportunity to learn skills.

When workfare forces people out of the social support programs without a thought as to what circumstances it forces them into, workfare doesn't work for the people it is intended to benefit.

Madison County officials should take another look at the workfare program. They should make sure that the other county services are in place and working to the advantage of those who are dependent upon them. Workfare should improve, not worsen, its participants' situations.

As it now stands, workfare can't work and should be postponed until our county officials and the Department of Social Services give immediate attention to these other services. That way, when a workfare program is reinstated in Madison County, it can work for all of us. Before we ask people to cross an abyss, we must make sure the bridge is secure.

Letters To The Editor

Dreibelbeis Asset To Weaverville

To the Editor,

Much has been said about Councilman Bob Dreibelbeis of Weaverville. It has been suggested that he had little knowledge of the Weaverville Town Council and had never been a candidate for the office.

To set the record straight, Councilman Dreibelbeis has been regularly attending the council sessions since 1981 when his neighborhood was annexed by the town. His faithfulness and interest were duly noted. At the urging of other prominent citizens, he ran for office but was not elected.

Councilman Dreibelbeis' interest in the welfare of Weaverville was not diminished. He continued faithfully to attend the meetings. In 1983 he was appointed to the Board of Adjustments. In 1985 he was elected president of the board.

Bob Dreibelbeis is an important asset to the Town of Weaverville. His serving as councilman will be a major benefit to all the citizens of Weaverville.

Nancy Kinder
38 Salem Acres
Weaverville

Vulcan Spoils Motel Stay

To the Editor,

Your readers will note with interest how the Vulcan Materials Co. spoiled our motel stay in Crystal Lake, Ill., some months ago.

Upon checking into the motel, we didn't realize that Vulcan had a plant located approximately three-quarters of a mile away and that they start operations just before daybreak. The noise level originating from the plant made it impossible to sleep at the motel, some three-quarters of a mile away — we moved after a couple of days.

The Vulcan plant was located in a commercial and business area. Certainly, had there been a residential area within three-quarters of a mile from it, it's value would have been depressed by the activity and sound disturbances from the plant.

I'm sharing this experience with Weaverville residents because it brought home the major importance of proper zoning ordinances to any area.

Sincerely,
Onni D. Oksanen
Weaverville

Writer 'Sounds An Alarm'

To the Editor,

I am attempting to sound an alarm. I would be the most despicable man in the world if I did not sound an alarm. God has ordered you and me to do it and said, "When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, shalt surely die; if thou does not speak to warn the wicked . . . that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood

will I require at thine hand." Ezekiel, chapter 33: 8.

The recent World War II should teach us lessons. If a watchman or guard saw a squadron of enemy bombers, would you call him an alarmist if he sounded the sirens? What would you think of him if he said, "All the people are peacefully sleeping. I won't awaken them. They might be alarmed."

Suppose that I walked past your house while you were asleep and I saw a fire in your basement, would you call me an alarmist if I ran with all my might to rap on your door and batter it down to warn you of your danger?

If I saw a car heading down the road toward a precipice while I rocked on my front porch, what would you think of me if, fully aware of the danger, I did not try to stop it?

What would you think of me as a preacher who believes in the Bible's emphatic declaration that you are a sinner plunging into a hopeless eternity, if I did not lift up my voice and cry, "Free from the wrath to come!" I believe God's book. I believe that men are lost and on the way to an eternal hell without Christ. I believe that only faith in Jesus Christ can save these men and women.

Christians, have you caught the visions? Do you believe that there is a judgement coming? Do you believe that the men and women around you are lost in sin and that they cannot be saved without the gospel? Do you believe that? If so, what are you doing about it? Are you sounding the alarm?

The guardians of our country and those who are entrusted with the responsibility of looking out for the enemy and to warn of impending danger must be given the equipment and support they need. Are you, as a Christian, supporting those who seek to warn sinners of their doom? Do you pray for them? How long could we sound the alarm if everyone was as interested as you are and did what you are doing to guarantee that the alarm will not be silenced? God help you to awaken to the danger and get busy for Him!!

M.B. Fisher
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The News Record invites its readers to share their views on subjects of public interest.

Letters, which are subject to editing, should be addressed to The Editor and mailed to The News Record at Post Office Box 369, Marshall, N.C. 28753.

Letters must include the writer's signature, address and telephone number in order to be published. No unsigned letters will be published.



THE NEWS RECORD

Serving Madison and Northern Buncombe Counties
P.O. Box 388-Marshall, N.C. 28753 (704) 648-2741

Cheryl W. Koenig, General Manager
Brenda C. Parker, Advertising Sales/Office Manager
Bill Stodenc, Editor
Randy Cox, Photographer

The News Record is published each Thursday by The News Record, Main Street, Marshall, NC 28753, a division of The News & Observer Publishing Company. USPS 388-648 Second Class Postage Paid at Marshall, N.C. 28753. Subscription rates in Madison and Buncombe Counties: 1 year \$8.45, Outside Madison and Buncombe Counties (in North Carolina): 1 year \$12.50, Outside North Carolina: 1 year \$12.50.

Postmaster: Send address changes to THE NEWS RECORD, P.O. Box 388, Marshall, NC 28753.

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