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## 75-Cent County Property Tax Proposed

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

Madison County residents would see the property tax rate fall by 24 cents for every \$100 worth of property they own, under a proposed budget for the 1988-89 fiscal year.

That's according to a budget recommendation prepared by county finance officer Ralph Rice, who is proposing a total county budget of \$11,018,576 based on a property tax rate of 75 cents per \$100 assessed

valuation.

Currently, Madison County property owners are paying tax at a rate of 99 cents per \$100. But even if the Madison County Board of Commissioners adopts Rice's recommendation, that doesn't necessarily mean that taxpayers can look forward to paying less tax next year.

The recent revaluation of property in the county has resulted in some tax values increasing by as much as three times the 1987-88 amount. But

other landowners saw their property values increase by only a small percentage. The varying impact of the tax revaluation on individual property values will mean that some folks will have a higher tax bill, while some will have a lower tax bill.

County officials had hoped for a tax rate lower than the 75 cents per \$100 recommended by Rice, but the total countywide impact of the valuation was not nearly as great as an-

anticipated, Rice said.

The 1987-88 budget will be based on a total county tax base of more than \$391 million, according to figures provided by Rice. That compares to a tax base of about \$207 million last year.

"The tax base is at least \$60 million lower than we had hoped. We had hoped that it would be at least \$450 million," Rice said.

Based on the new tax base, an ad valorem tax rate of 75 cents per \$100

would bring in \$2,645,099 in revenues, Rice said. In 1987-88, the 99-cent tax rate and \$207 million tax base generated \$2,249,271 in revenue, he said.

Rice's proposed budget of \$11,018,576 is \$1.2 million more than last year's approved budget of \$9,821,778 and \$904,392 more than the amended budget of \$10.2 million.

Of course, Rice's proposal is cur-

rently just that -- a proposal -- until the Madison County Board of Commissioners takes action to approve the final budget picture. The commissioners have scheduled a public hearing on the budget for 1 p.m. Monday, June 27, in Madison County Courthouse.

By law, the county is required to have an approved budget in place by July 1.

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## Brown Satisfied With Budget For The Coming Year

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

The Madison County Sheriff's Department could be back up to full staff -- and may even be able to add a deputy -- under a proposed budget prepared by the county finance officer.

Ralph Rice, finance officer, has recommended that the Madison County Board of Commissioners give \$286,420 to the sheriff's department for the coming fiscal year.

That amount, if approved later this month by the commissioners, is some \$78,500 less than the \$365,000 requested by Sheriff Dedrick Brown,

but \$51,291 more than the total amount of county funds allocated to the sheriff's department in 1987-88.

Brown and the county commissioners became embroiled in a controversy earlier this year when commissioners criticized the sheriff for spending more money than allocated to his department.

Commissioners told Brown to lay off three deputies in order to keep from spending more money than the county had on hand. Brown instead laid off four dispatcher/jailers and closed Madison County Jail. He later re-opened the jail with a volunteer staff.

Rice's proposed \$11 million budget would provide enough money to the sheriff's department to allow Brown to rehire the dispatcher/jailers, retain his four deputies and perhaps add another deputy.

Rice said he has been working closely with Chief Deputy Dal Peek on the new budget.

"Hopefully, we've got something here we can both live with," Rice said. "They're not getting as much as they want, and I'm trying to look at it through both the taxpayer's situation and their request."

The proposed \$286,420 allocation would provide enough money for

salaries for four dispatchers and would allow Brown to keep the jail open, Rice said. Brown had said if he does not receive sufficient funding from the county, he would be forced to close the jail permanently.

In fact, Brown may be able to hire an additional deputy if he can make minor cuts in other areas within his department, Rice said.

Brown said is "pretty well satisfied" with the budget proposal.

"We're working together pretty good," he said. "We're pretty well satisfied with it so far. We still have a few things to iron out."

Brown also said that not all of the

proposed \$286,420 allocation would be coming out of Madison County taxpayers' pockets.

"About \$67,000 of that is from other sources -- from feeding prisoners for the state, from grant money, from the Forest Service and from the towns for the PIN (Police Information Network) system," he said. "So we'd really be getting about \$219,000 from the county."

Other county departments did not fare as well in the proposed budget. Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Rice's recommendation is in the county ambulance service.

Rice has recommended that the commissioners allocate \$309,462 to the ambulance service -- \$45,000 less than the service received in 1987-88 and \$74,000 less than requested for the



Sheriff Dedrick Brown

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Madison High Lady Patriots softball team celebrates its victory. The Lady Patriots captured the state 2-A softball championship with a 9-2 victory over the Clayton Comets.

### Lady Patriots Are Number One

## Lady Pats Capture Conference Title

By BOB KOENIG

It was a weekend to remember, one that April Brooks, Melanie Ramsey, Elke Worley and Sonya Gahagan will surely never forget. The four young ladies received their high school diplomas Friday night and won a state championship the following day.

The four seniors were among a talented squad which captured the state 2-A softball championship with a two-game sweep of Clayton H.S. The victory brings Madison the first state championship in the school's 15-year history.

The Lady Patriots enjoyed the home field advantage in the early rounds of the state playoffs, but were forced to travel to the Raleigh area twice last week to complete their quest for the championship. Between Wednesday's 4-2 opening game win over the Comets and Saturday's 9-2 victory, Brooks, Ramsey, Worley and Gahagan returned to Marshall to receive their diplomas.

The new graduates scarcely have time to savor graduation before they boarded a bus for the return trip to Clayton. Following the six-hour bus ride, the Lady Patriots wasted no time in wrapping up the championship.

Madison took advantage of Clayton fielding mistakes to score three unearned runs in the first inning. Singles from Brooks, Gahagan and an RBI single from Nicki Wallin would give the Lady Patriots all the runs they would need. They would later add three runs in both the fifth and sixth to put the game out of reach.

With their pitching ace Melanie Ramsey on the mound, the Madison defense held the Comets scoreless through the first six innings. The Comets mounted their most serious challenge in the fifth when the first three Clayton hitters loaded the bases.

Ramsey managed to erase the threat with help from shortstop Charlene Norton and a diving catch by April Brooks at first base. Coaches for both teams agreed that the fifth was the turning point in the game.

Lady Patriots assistant coach Jeff Treadway said, "It really took the air out of their balloons when they loaded the bases and couldn't score. Clayton coach Roger Rhodes agreed, saying, 'Their first baseman (Brooks) made a heck of a play, and their shortstop made a great play at the play. We needed something then and we didn't get it.'"

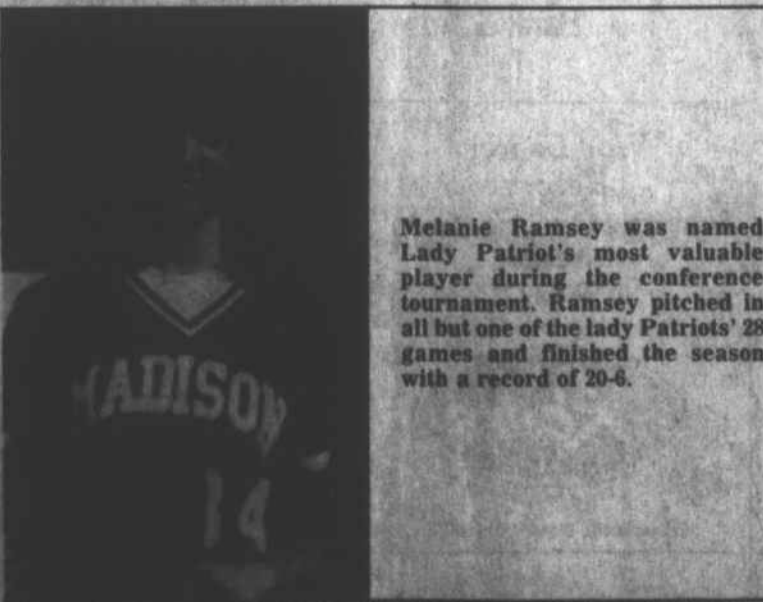
Rhodes credited the Lady Patriots, telling reporters, "They have a great team. They made all the plays."

Madison added three runs in the fifth on singles by Michelle Johnson and Charlene Norton, a triple from April Brooks and a single by Melanie Ramsey. The Lady Patriots added three more runs in the sixth when Monica Cameron led off with a triple. After Cheryl Franklin reached on an error, Melanie Roberts cleared the bases with a three-run homer to clinch the Lady Patriots' victory.

The Comets managed two runs in the final inning on a triple by Tammy Davis and home run by Jennifer Johnson. The game ended when Ramsey and Gahagan hit home runs to give Madison a 9-2 victory over Clayton.

April Brooks, Melanie Ramsey and Michelle Johnson will receive their diplomas at the graduation ceremony on June 18 at Marshall High School.

This is the first state championship in Madison's 15-year history.



Melanie Ramsey was named Lady Patriot's most valuable player during the conference tournament. Ramsey pitched in all but one of the Lady Patriots' 28 games and finished the season with a record of 20-6.

Ramsey, who pitched in all but one of the Lady Patriots' 28 games, finished the season with a record of 20-6. The six-foot hurler, who also ran track and played on the school's volleyball and basketball teams, was named the tournament's most valuable player.

Both Ramsey and teammate Elke Worley, the Class of 1988 valedictorian, plan to attend Marj Hill College in the fall.

The long road to the state championship began with wins at home over East Surry, Newton-Conover and Star Mount. The season's biggest win before Saturday's final came in the playoffs' semifinal showdown with Piedmont H.S.

The Lady Patriots arrived in Madison County with an impressive 24-0 record. They returned home as 24-1 also runs following a 9-7 defeat. A two-run single by Madison catcher Melinda Roberts scored Melanie Ramsey and Monica Cameron for the game's winning runs.

Madison opened the championship final last Wednesday with a 4-3 win over Clayton. The game was tied 3-3 in the bottom of the ninth. Clayton's second game was rained out, forcing postponement to the following Saturday afternoon.

The team returned to Madison County on Friday so that Brooks, Ramsey, Worley and Johnson could attend graduation on Saturday. They then rebounded at the state championship on Saturday. The long and hard road to the state championship was over when the Lady Patriots arrived at the top of the hill at 9-2 on Sunday.

## Tractor-Trailer Burst Into Flames Near Weaverville

From Staff Reports

A tractor-trailer burst into flames on U.S. 19-23 near Weaverville last Thursday when its gas tank exploded.

In an unrelated incident in Weaverville last Wednesday, a large barn used to store farm equipment was destroyed by fire.

The tractor-trailer, hauling cement blocks for the foundation of a mobile home, caught fire near the New Stock Road at about 12:45 p.m. Thursday, said Weaverville Fire Chief John Penley.

John Buckner, driver of the truck owned by Budget Mobile Homes of Asheville, was not injured in the fire.

"He said he heard a noise looked out the back window and saw fire coming out of the back," Penley said.

The truck's 50-gallon gas tank had ruptured and the gasoline ignited,

sending flames shooting up to 30 feet into the air, he said.

"We had a pretty rough fire when we got there," Penley said.

Twelve fighters from Weaverville and Reems Creek fire departments used foam to extinguish the blaze.

The truck was a total loss, Penley said.

In last Wednesday's fire, 75 chickens perished when a large barn filled with farm equipment caught fire on Wooten Cove Road.

The barn, owned by Joseph G. Rice, was destroyed by the fire. Penley estimated damage to the structure and property at nearly \$25,000.

The cause of the fire is unknown and is under investigation.

A total of 17 firefighters from Weaverville, Reems Creek and Jupiter responded to the blaze.

## Madison High Students Receive Diplomas

Nearly 200 Madison High School seniors received diplomas Friday during the commencement exercises in the O. E. Roberts Stadium.

The ceremonies began with the National Anthem sung by Jennifer Gault, followed by the invocation by Tammy Young, Student Council President, Shannon VanEiten gave the welcome.

"We've been one big family, but each will go their own way, yet, no matter how far we go, this is our home. We built our foundations in Madison County," Van Eiten said. During the ceremony, a surprise speaker and guest addressed the graduates. State Superintendent of Education Mr. Craig Phillips congratulated the seniors on a job well done and thanked the Class of 88 for letting him be a part of their celebration.

"It is a great honor to me that you are letting me graduate with you," he said, "for this is my last year and I may not have another chance to do so. I thank each and every one of you."

Senior Class President, Tammy Boone reflected on her years at Madison High. "We have had good times and good friends, but this is what it is all about, the final accomplishments of twelve long years."

Valedictorian Elke Worley challenged the graduates to make the most of their lives. "Whatever it is in college, whatever it is in your own life, whatever it is in your own mind, make it count. Make it count for the people who love you."



Elke Worley Valedictorian

chapter of life, and beginning a new chapter. "Your graduation from high school is a happy chapter of your life which is coming to a close, but a new chapter is just beginning."

"I would like to challenge each of you to step into the future with the kind of enthusiasm that assures a lifetime of success and happiness," he said.

Senior honor students were: Kenneth Randall Anderson, Catena Lynn Baker, Tanya Renee Brigg, Kathleen Ann Bards, Harold Scott Haynie, Susan Lynn Hamerikhouse, Chris Ann James, Kay Ann Higgins, David Allen Johnson, Tom Woods, and Tammy Boone.

They were followed by the Madison High School Band and the Madison High School Glee Club. The ceremony was presided over by Principal Dr. James H. Hester.