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Commissioners To Seek Manager Funds

By H.D. KOONTZ III
The News Record Editor

The county manager form of government may be coming to Madison County. The county's Board of Commissioners Monday night agreed to send a letter to Speaker of the House Liston Ramsey requesting state aid in establishing a county manager's office.

"We've got to have a county manager and get out of this good ole boy system," said Commissioner Reese Steen Monday night.

"We've got a \$10 million a year business and we need to have somebody in charge."

The state has a program whereby \$75,000 in seed money can be made available to localities considering starting a manager's office. The annual amount decreases each year until the county can handle the expense itself.

Steen's suggestion was to "use what political clout we have" - the speaker resides in Marshall - to get state aid.

Steen said the county's \$10 million budget has grown to the point where it's like a small industry and added that no industry would stay in business long without having a manager in charge.

"I'm a commissioner and I don't even know who's making the decisions or where the orders are coming from sometimes," Steen said.

Board Chairman Robert Capps agreed, saying, "This is definitely something to look into. If we can get the money from Mr. Ramsey, we'd be foolish not to do this."

Commissioner John Hensley also voted in favor of the motion. Steen also suggested the county consider establishing a county employee personnel policy to define jobs and salaries so equal pay is given for equal work.

No action was taken on that matter.

In another matter, Dr. Otis W. Duck of Mars Hill asked the commissioners to support the efforts of the U.S. 23 - I-26 Corridor Association, which is pushing for an alternate, interstate highway quality road from the Tennessee border where that state's I-26 portion will end to Asheville.

The current U.S. 23 highway from Sam's Gap in Tennessee to Asheville would be unsuitable for conversion to an interstate-quality highway, Duck said.

The Tennessee portion of I-26 is scheduled for completion in 1992. Duck said U.S. 23 in Madison County has 14 intersections, 43 curves,

numerous school bus stops, steep grades and narrow shoulders.

The association says there have been 106 traffic accidents, 41 injuries and four deaths on the 11 miles of U.S. 23 between Sam's Gap and Mars Hill within the last four years.

Duck said the association is seeking the support of all localities in Western North Carolina for the alternate route, which would be a more direct path from the border to Asheville.

In a related matter Steen said the county needs to ensure that the new highway does not become an advertising billboard for other communities. He said the state legislature must help in restricting advertising signs along what is now a "scenic highway" in Madison County.

"I want something said and done about the billboards," Steen said. "This is a beautiful county and we've got everything to lose if we let the billboards take over."

Steen said he did not object to advertising logos on interstate exit signs. He said federal regulations do not address the potential billboard problem.

In other matters the commissioners:
• Learned from engineer Larry New, representing a firm planning a 80-bed

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Grapevine Road has a new bridge and is now open for traffic.

Schools Waiting For The Numbers

By H.D. KOONTZ III
The News Record Editor

The upcoming school year's operating budget will have to wait for state budget numbers before the Madison County Board of Education gives the fiscal plan its final approval.

The next meeting is set for Aug. 23 at 7 p.m. in the Madison County High School auditorium.

Director of Instruction Bobby Jean Rice told the board Monday the state figures had been delayed because the legislature did not adjourn this year until mid-July.

A number of personnel items took the majority of the board's time,

spent mostly in closed session, Monday.

The board unanimously approved Latrelle Robinson, a former school teacher and now operator of Momma's Country Kitchen, as a substitute teacher for Mars Hill Elementary School.

After its three-hour closed session, the board accepted the resignation of Judy Peek as an employee of the Mars Hill cafeteria.

The board approved hiring Wanda English as cafeteria worker.

Also, the board approved Bruce

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Freak Storm Soaks Big Pine

By H.D. KOONTZ III
The News Record Editor

An isolated evening thundershower dumped 5.5 inches of rain on the Big Pine Community in Madison County last Thursday.

No one was hurt, but personal property damage was estimated at \$150,000, said Eddie Fox, director of emergency services for Madison County.

Only one home got any water inside, and that was contained to the basement, Fox said.

Residents called the flash flood - Big Pine Creek rose over bridges within 10 minutes and crested at about eight to 10 feet above normal - the worst such drenching in more than a decade.

Wiley T. DuVall, tobacco specialist, said he remembered just one other flash flood in the area that was worse.

"And that was 11 years ago," DuVall said, while surveying tobacco damage on Dean Roberts' farm Friday.

Dayton Wild, who resides on South Fork Road, said there was little warning when the storm broke.

"It seemed like it all happened at once," Wild said. "And I mean it didn't let up."

The rain began at 5:45 p.m. and by 7 p.m. more than five inches had been dumped on the area.

Big Pine was the only Madison County community to get as much rain.

"It was pretty freaky, that much rain in that short a time," Fox said.

No livestock was lost. "I've not even heard of a dog or a cat being gone," Fox added.

Although flood damage was extensive, Fox said there probably would not be any federal or state aid available for the victims.

"The area is not big enough to qualify for federal funds and there are no state funds to help these people," he said.

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Big Pine Residents Survey Flood Damage To Bridge

Weaverville Fire Guts Bruce Auto

An early Monday morning fire caused \$45,000 damage to Bruce's Auto Shop on Reems Creek Road.

Weaverville Deputy Fire Chief Doug Sims said the department received the call at 3:54 a.m. and arrived on the scene a few minutes later to find flames pouring through the roof of the building.

No one was injured. Sims said the building was valued at \$150,000.

He said the fire apparently started in the office-storage area. Cause of the blaze has not been determined, he said.

The Buncombe County fire marshal is investigating the fire, but Sims said arson is not suspected.

Firemen from the Woodsin and Reems Creek fire departments helped fight the fire.

About 15 firemen had the fire under control within 20 minutes, Sims said.

Wolf Laurel Wants Own Town

By H.D. KOONTZ III
The News Record Editor

Wolf Laurel residents want their own town.

At a special Wolf Laurel Homeowners Association meeting Monday night the residents agreed to petition the state legislature for incorporation as a township.

Also, the association agreed to employ lawyer Jack Steie, of Pettie, Siveton and Richardson law firm, to investigate a possible branch of control by Beech Mountain Development, the original developers.

Joe Earman, association president, said there are about 100 permanent residents at Wolf Laurel now, about 50 homes and 1,000 property owners, some of whom live outside the state during winter.

The permanent residents have had problems with security and road

course to a Florida-based realty group.

Negotiations are underway now for the sale of the ski slope portion of the resort to Beech Mountain Development.

Earman said the homeowners "decided to pursue the incorporation of Wolf Laurel into a town by going to the legislature this fall. As the developer pulls out, we have no choice but to take care of the roads ourselves."

"That's the only way to maintain our roads," Earman said.

"We could end up five or 10 years down the road with nobody to take care of our roads. It's horrible."

"We want it so we can take care of ourselves without putting a burden on the people of North Carolina or the state of Florida," Earman said. "We don't want a state of any kind to be

Mars Hill Agrees To Use Zoning Leaflet

By H.D. KOONTZ III
The News Record Editor

The Mars Hill Board of Aldermen and Planning Board decided at a joint meeting Tuesday night the town should provide leaflets explaining the town's zoning law to developers.

The idea of the leaflets is to prevent misunderstandings and delays in business and residential development in the town and just outside the town limits.

The town recently experienced problems with developers wanting to build commercial facilities in areas zoned for residential use.

Bruce Murray Jr., a member of the planning board, said "...developers feel like we're stalling and putting them off" by not giving them a quick decision on zoning and other requests.

"Our job is to head off any problems," he said. "But the developers are convinced we're just dragging the feet."

The town recently required each

western town limits on N.C. 213.

The aldermen eventually rezoned a larger area totalling 36 acres, not all owned by Payne, to clear the way for the new business.

Town Manager Darryl Boone said a lot of developers "would like the permit yesterday and start today."

Boone said it would be ideal to have one man to do the zoning enforcement and ensure developers adhere to the letter of the law, but the town cannot afford establishing such an office.

Boone suggested printing leaflets with the ordinances applied but clearly, such as the one used in Brevard, to guide developers through the process.

Under the current system, developers can build just about anything without any town official being involved. The only check is when the town is doing a zoning review.

"I think the town should be able to do that," he said.

The town recently required each