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Town To Get \$1.6 Million Grants Four Sources Tapped To Expand Marshall's Treatment Plant

By H.D. KOONTZ III
The News Record Editor

Marshall's proposed sewage treatment plant expansion project is expected to begin within one year and quadruple the overloaded plant's capacity.

N.C. House Speaker Liston B.

Ramsey sent the news to the town this week that \$1,603,262 for the project has been approved.

The money is sorely needed, Ramsey said, because the town has been under a state moratorium prohibiting new residential or industrial sewer hookups.

The present system, with its 85,000

gallons a day treatment capacity, cannot handle what wastes the town produces now.

The proposed project will expand the plant to a capacity of 400,000 gallons a day.

Ramsey's leadership got some of the money from the last General Assembly session, to the tune of \$365,000.

The Speaker said three other funding sources will be tapped to complete the financial end of the project. "It's a very complicated procedure," Ramsey said.

Besides the state money Ramsey pushed through the legislature, the town has won approval of \$449,578 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Also, the town will get \$620,000 from the U.S. Department of Commerce, division of Economic Development Administration.

And, another \$200,000 will be supplied by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Bill Gibson, director of the Region A Land-of-Sky Regional Council at Bryson City, said it was the "team effort" with the Region B office in Asheville that made the project possible.

Gibson said the General Assembly money and EPA funds "are secure" and that mere "technicalities, or red tape," must be ironed out on the other two sources.

"We expect the rest of the money by the end of September," Gibson said. "Certainly, within the next 60 days or less; it may slide into the next federal fiscal year. Washington said Tuesday it would be done, but that's verbal, not in writing."

Assuming all the pieces of the financial pie fall into place, final specifications and plans for the expansion should be prepared within 60-90 days.

Then, the town can advertise for competitive bids on the construction, probably around the first of the year.

Then, bids can be reviewed during the first of February.

"In reality, we're talking about major construction beginning in March, or a little later, depending on the weather," Gibson said.

Board Of Ed Endorses Plan State Board Next Stop For Consolidation Plan

By H.D. KOONTZ III
The News Record Editor

A resolution endorsing Madison County's controversial school consolidation proposal was approved by the Board of Education Tuesday night.

The vote was unanimous.

Nearly 50 visitors waited two hours while the board dealt with routine agenda items before emerging from a closed session to vote on the consolidation proposal, which must now be approved by the state Board of Education.

No time limits are included in the proposal, as some parents and others had believed, concerning the closing of Spring Creek Elementary School and the reduction in enrollment at other elementary schools.

Board member James L. Baker Jr., a former board chairman who resigned that position earlier this year, read a prepared statement prior to the vote in which he called the past few months "...the most frustrating, agonizing and difficult situations I personally have endured."

Madison County stands to receive

about \$5.5 million in state aid if a new consolidated middle school in the Walnut-Marshall area is built for grades 6 through 8 throughout the county. No site has been selected and no timetable has been established for such a transition.

The proposal also calls for the eventual closing of Spring Creek Elementary and the consolidation of that school's elementary K through 3 enrollment, now just more than 90 pupils, with the Hot Springs Elementary School.

Again, Baker and Board of Education lawyer Forest Ball emphasized no timetable has been established for closing Spring Creek. It had been believed earlier that the Spring Creek school would be closed at the end of this school year.

Pupils in grades 6 through 8 at the new proposed consolidated school at Hot Springs will be allowed to attend the new middle school, when built, in the Marshall-Walnut area upon request by parents or guardians.

Also, the proposal calls for the reduction of Marshall Primary, K through 3 only, Mars Hill, Laurel,

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Sheriff Dedrick Brown shows some of the more than 13,000 plants seized

HUGH KOONTZ PHOTO

Pot Haul Growing State, Local Effort Sweeps Madison County

By H.D. KOONTZ III
The News Record Editor

Law Enforcement authorities are cutting the grass on Madison County's mountains.

But this summer it's the illegal type - marijuana - that state agents and county deputies are clearing from some of the most remote and rugged areas of the county after spotting the bright green crops from a state police helicopter.

To date, 108 plants a day since May have been cut by Madison County deputies working with A.L.E., state Wildlife and Forest Service agents.

Madison County Sheriff Dedrick Brown said this summer's marijuana clearing operation was coordinated with the Crime Control Office at Raleigh.

More than 13,000 plants have been cut and burned since the operation began.

N.C. Highway Patrolmen helicopter pilots flew 10 days over the rugged, mountainous terrain, with Madison Chief Deputy Dal Peck spotting plants from the air.

Marijuana plants stand out like Christmas lights amid the natural foliage of the area and a crop with just one or two plants can be seen.

Brown said there were four A.L.E. agents, two Wildlife officers and one or two Forest Service agents involved in the search.

"If we had to pay for the helicopter, at \$100 an hour, plus the man-hours put in, it would cost the county about \$25,000," Brown said.

About 20 men total were involved in this summer's operation.

The haul, it said on the street for \$1,500 a plant (assuming each plant yielded about one pound) would be valued at nearly \$20 million.

Even though he knows there is probably more of the illegal crop growing in Madison than the county, Brown said it's all worth the effort.

"Look, I'd see it's worthwhile because the pot is growing in other areas that produce a lot of profit," the sheriff said.

Governor Hikes Arson Reward

By H.D. KOONTZ III
The News Record Editor

The ante has been increased in the reward pot for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons who set fire to the Madison County Courthouse Labor Day eve.

The office of Gov. James Martin increased the amount by \$3,000 Monday, Sheriff Dedrick Brown said after receiving a letter from John C. Hunter, counsel for the governor.

The N.C. State Bureau of Investigation earlier offered a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons who broke into the courthouse through the tax collector's office and set fires in the Register of Deeds office and the County Clerk's office and the main courtroom.

The fires set in trash cans inside the two offices extinguished themselves,

but the blaze inside the courtroom caused extensive damage to the drapes, judge's bench, walls and floor.

Smoke and water damage was evident throughout the building.

No records were destroyed; nothing has been reported stolen.

Even small change sitting in coffee fund cans inside the offices was not touched, which puzzled law enforcement officers investigating the blaze.

No motive for the act has been established.

Brown speculated the fire might have been set by someone who felt he had been treated unfairly by the county court system.

The fire was initially spotted by junior fireman Jackie Ramsey, Brown said. The call came in at 12:24 Sept. 5.

Ironically, the fire was started in a

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Junior Livestock Show

The Western District Junior Livestock Show and Sale held last weekend at Fletcher included the participation of some Madison County youths: Renee Tweed, Jennifer Tweed, Ricky Allen, Keith Griffin, Andy Bridges, Jason Stone, Eric Allen, Laura Ponder, Shawn Lesley, James Carver, Stephen Carver and Joel Fluty. The Madison group won the Herdman trophy.

Board Supports Homeowners

By H.D. KOONTZ III
The News Record Editor

A resolution supporting the efforts of some Wolf Laurel homeowners change the resort to an incorporated town was endorsed by the Madison County Board of Commissioners Monday afternoon.

John Beck, representing the Wolf Laurel Property Owners Association, said there were more than 80 year-round residents at the resort community originally developed by Bald Mountain Development Corp.

Beck said "...a percent of the permanent residents are in favor of that incorporation, an act which must be approved by the state legislature.

Beck said the property owners group would approach the Yancey Board of Commissioners for a similar resolution of support next.

The property owners association represents 624 land and homeowners in the resort area and there are about 300 homes now at Wolf Laurel.

John Earman, president of the association, wrote in a letter to the board explaining the situation whereby Bald Mountain Development "...is planning on" its control of the resort.

The golf courses, restaurant, bar and all other amenities have been sold, along with the surrounding real estate, to a new owner.

"Without the developer, the permanent residents are faced with operating the resort area and providing services needed by both permanent and part-time residents," Earman wrote.

"The fair and practical way to do this is through municipal incorporation," he said.

The new municipality would be known as Wolf Laurel Village, should the legislature approve the request.

"By the action of incorporation," Earman said, "we are confident that Wolf Laurel Village will have financial resources that will see the security of Madison County and its residents."

businesses providing jobs and adding to the county tax base if the area becomes a town.

Beck told the commissioners there was a handful of permanent residents opposed to the move.

"The biggest fear is an increase in taxation" should the area become incorporated.

The property owners association has expressed concern about security and road maintenance after Bald Mountain Development pulls out, Beck said.

He said Sugar Mountain, Grandfather Mountain and Beech Mountain "have similar problems."

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4th grade, and through cutting the availability," he said, referring to this year's new DARE program aimed at educating elementary school aged children about the pitfalls of drug abuse.

"And, we've been more successful than any other county in North Carolina," Brown said.

The most recent marijuana field was discovered in Max Patch, where 790 plants were seized last week.

In connection with that seizure, deputies arrested Donald Anderson, 22, of Clyde, and charged him with manufacturing a controlled substance.

In the Hot Springs area, Jimmy Brown Jr., 32, and Brenda Lee McGowen, 38, both of 1759 NW U.S.

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Hot Springs Must Conserve Water Supply

By H.D. KOONTZ III
The News Record Editor

Hot Springs Board of Aldermen Monday night agreed to impose a mandatory water conservation policy within the town due to the summer's severe drought.

This means town residents are prohibited from washing their cars or watering lawns and gardens with town water until the conservation program is lifted, said town clerk Lillian Whitten.

Also, the aldermen voted to ban the sale of beer and wine on Sundays except during the hours of 1 to 3 p.m.

The aldermen approved, on the second reading, an ordinance prohibiting the consumption of alcoholic beverages on public streets and parks.

The ordinance will be read a third time and approved at the board's next meeting.