

## Reidsville Wants Suit Dismissed

By ANNE FARRIS  
Daily News Rockingham Bureau

REIDSVILLE — The city of Reidsville requested Thursday dismissal of a court suit involving a former school gymnasium-cafeteria so the city can renovate the building.

The city requested that a superior court suit be dismissed by September so it can renovate the Franklin Street building with a \$25,686 federal senior citizen grant allocated to Rockingham County Fund, Inc., city attorney Albert Post said.

The one-year grant, which expires Sept. 30, was funded to the private, non-profit corporation last October to establish a senior citizen complex, Fund Director Ron Norwood said Thursday.

Norwood said city use of the grant was not final because the Fund and the Reidsville City Council still must discuss contract agreements. The city requested the dismissal because it does not want to be involved in a legal question over who owns the building if the grant is used.

The city filed the request in Rockingham County Superior Court in response to a June 12 civil suit filed against the city by a local grocer who says he bought the property for warehouse space.

Jacob B. Balsley III, president of Reidsville Grocery Company, Inc., bought the building in March for \$27,665 from the Reidsville school board. But the city, which wanted the building for a recreation and senior citizen center, acquired the building March 19 for public use under the state right of eminent domain. The council voted to pay \$29,048 for the

(See Reidsville: D-2, Col. 1)

# Magann's Contract Bought

By SCOTT SHANE  
Daily News Staff Writer

In an act that could prove a watershed in the history of the Guilford County school system, the county school board Thursday voted 4-3 to remove Superintendent Douglas Magann by buying the remaining year of his contract for \$55,000.

Chairwoman Ann Talbert, who as recently as two months ago described Magann as a "hardworking, bright, creative educational leader," read a statement explaining the board majority's decision.

"Over the past year differences, some subtle, others more pointed, have arisen between members of the board and the superintendent," Talbert said. "These differences have occurred privately and in meetings of the school board to the extent that they have interfered with the orderly administration of the public schools.

"These differences go to the very heart of the proper relationship between a board and a superintendent as they jointly endeavor to govern and administer the public schools," said Talbert, whose election to the chairmanship April 7 marked the ascendance of the faction that was ultimately Magann's downfall. "The differences have become so great, the relationships between board members and the superintendent have become so acerbated, the necessary feeling of mutual trust and respect so diminished, that the board has become convinced that the public schools can no longer be administered in this atmosphere."

Talbert declined to be more specific.

Vance Pegram, who nominated Magann for the superintendency in 1978 and seconded the motion to remove him Thursday, said after the vote, "I feel the wisest decision for the future of the children in this county was made, and I think time will prove that out."



Ann Talbert:

"The differences have become so great ... the public schools can no longer be administered in this atmosphere."

Douglas Magann:

"That difference has never been articulated and I'm not sure I can do it myself."



Carolyn McGee, perhaps Magann's most outspoken critic on the board, declined specific comment on the reasons for her vote, saying anything she said might hurt Magann. "I will not say anything detrimental to the man. I just really wish Dr. Magann well," she said.

Betty Smith, the Guilford College real estate agent who defeated incumbent and Magann backer Bill Gragg in last November's election, said Talbert's statement was sufficient explanation for the majority decision. "It's all been done in the best interests of the system," she said.

Magann's three supporters, former Chairwoman Evon Dean, Nancy Jo Smith and Dot Lambeth, repeated their criticism of the decision to remove Magann, citing the majority's failure to specify the superintendent's alleged shortcomings.

"This is a sad day for the Guilford County school system," Lambeth said before casting a no vote. Later she

added, "Since there are no charges (against Magann), I think the people deserve to know where these funds are coming from, because it's (enough to pay) at least three or four or five teachers."

The 1981-82 budget of the county school system, which is not yet final, probably will eliminate more than 50 teaching positions.

Board Attorney John W. Hardy replied, "The funds are available." He said \$12,000 paid to Magann Thursday came from the 1980-81 budget, with the remaining \$43,000 to be paid July 2 from the 1981-82 budget.

Randy Friddle, budget officer of the county schools, said later all \$55,000 would come from the local property tax revenues allocated by the county Board of Commissioners. He said he does not know what other items will be bumped from the budget in order to pay Magann.

Magann, 39, was not in the board room when the meeting began at 10

a.m. He appeared at about 11:15, when members returned from the hourlong closed session in which they discussed the contract agreement worked out this week by Hardy and Magann's attorney, Richard G. Singer of the N.C. Association of School Administrators in Raleigh.

The superintendent stood near the door to the packed board room with his arms crossed, puffing on a cigarette and watching impassively as the board voted to end his three-year tenure at the head of the 25,000-student county school system.

After the meeting, in a brief press conference held in the school administration library, Magann likened the negotiated end of his contract to a divorce. Technically, he noted, he was not fired. The board could only dismiss him outright by charging that he had violated his contract, a claim he could contest in court under state law.

Instead, he said, "the board gave me an ultimatum last Friday." His

only alternative to accepting the board's offer to buy his contract, he said, would have been "to continue in a lame duck situation, continue the travesty we've had in the last six or eight months."

Asked for his view of the causes of the rift, he said, "Any time an organization reaches this point there are many, many, many factors." Later, he listed "philosophical differences" with the board, but he said, "That difference has never been articulated, and I'm not sure I can do it myself."

Magann played down the significance of his ouster for the future of the school system. "It's an organization. It's not one man doing anything — the people around this county have worked 20 hours a day for three years on our programs," he said. "I don't anticipate a purge or any dramatic reversal. I may be wrong, however."

Magann said he may release a detailed statement assessing his superintendency and its premature end after he has had a chance to think about it, a week or two from now.

Despite the decision to hold the special meeting on a weekday morning, well over 100 parents, teachers and principals attended. The seven people who spoke all defended Magann's performance and denounced the decision to remove him.

Rupert A. Harwell, a Pleasant Garden resident and father of two children who attend county schools, called Magann "one of the best administrators in the country" and said the school board is "ineffective and worthless."

"The board is a failed board. You've squabbled like children," Harwell said. He urged all seven members to consider resigning on the spot.

Coley Hooker Jr., principal of Union Hill Elementary School, likened Magann's ouster to Christ's crucifixion.

(See Magann: D-2, Col. 2)

ion. "This is so reminiscent of the trial of Christ," he said. "I want to ask the same question: 'What evil hath he done?'"

R. Oakley Winters, director of the N.C. Humanities Committee and parent of three children in the county system, praised Magann for bringing equity to the far-flung rural Guilford schools, where some schools for decades had the edge over others.

Now, he said, "The child playing in the shade of his grandmother's trailer ... has an equal opportunity to the child walking to the country club with his tennis racket in his hand." Winters, who met with about 15 other parents Wednesday night to discuss the schools' future, called for the creation of "an active citizens coalition" to work for better education.

Talbert called a board meeting for Tuesday to appoint an acting superintendent or committee of administrators to run the system until Magann's replacement can be named. She said a time for the meeting has not yet been set.

Several of Magann's top aides privately expressed their disappointment at his departure and said they are exploring possible jobs elsewhere. Since Associate Superintendent Willis B. McLeod left earlier this month to become superintendent of Northampton County schools, more departures by top administrators could mean a wholesale turnover in the management of the schools.

Talbert, McGee, Pegram and Betty Smith all denied rumors that they do not intend to appoint a new superintendent. Talbert said they will work with the N.C. School Boards Association to design a search procedure and

try to appoint a new superintendent this summer.

No member of the majority that voted to buy Magann's contract would express a preference for a new superintendent from inside the system or outside the system. Since several board members have been closely associated with some principals who fought Magann's administration, school watchers have speculated that a dissident principal might succeed Magann.

Magann's own future is uncertain. As part of the agreement that ended his contract, he stated that he has "no immediate opportunities for employment in his field of public school administration." He said his only plan

after he clears out his office this weekend is to take a vacation.

But associates say he is considering various possibilities outside school administration, including entering law school. One administrator said Magann recently has been carrying around a computer printout of facts and statistics on various law schools in the eastern United States. The \$55,000 settlement — his \$46,740 salary and a cash equivalent of fringe benefits — gives him the freedom to consider a career change. Others say he is eyeing possible job openings in the business world. Magann has on several occasions in the past compared the decision-making process in large corporations favorably to the more tedious, more politicized process commonly found in large school systems.

## Democrats Seek Nominee For Human Rights Post

WASHINGTON (AP) — Twenty-five House Democrats have asked President Reagan to "act immediately" to select another nominee for the State Department's top human rights post, Rep. Ted Weiss, D-N.Y., said Thursday.

Reagan's original choice, Ernest F. Lefever, withdrew earlier this month after the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted against his nomination.

In a letter to Reagan, Weiss and his liberal Democratic colleagues said: "We are writing to urge you to act immediately to make a nomination for assistant secretary of state for human rights."

"Any further delay in filling this important post would de-emphasize the important role human rights has

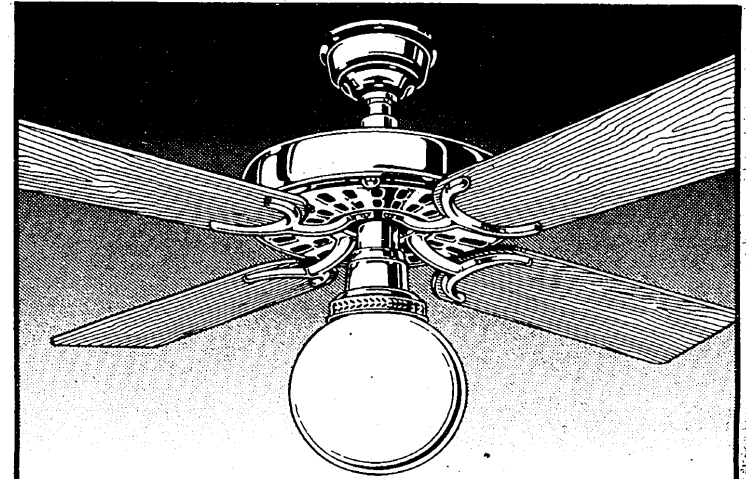
played historically in United States foreign policy," the letter said.

The three-paragraph letter made no mention of Lefever. Opponents of Lefever's nomination had charged that he was insensitive to many human rights issues and was linked to possible conflict-of-interest problems involving a social policy think-tank.

## 22 Fishermen Missing

NEW DELHI, India (AP) — Navy planes searched Saturday for 22 fishermen missing in a severe storm that churned across the Bay of Bengal, the United News of India reported.

The agency said Fisheries Department officials in Madras reported that 500 fishermen earlier feared in danger because of the high winds and turbulent seas were accounted for.



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