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Tuesday, April 12, 1968

Blacks protest hospital board appointments

By ERIC EYRE

Star Staff Writer

WEDOWEE — Black leaders accused Randolph County commissioners Monday of failing to appoint blacks, women and low-income residents to positions on the county's hospital board, and blasted a Roanoke ambulance driver who they say treats blacks unfairly.

Since its formation in 1949, commissioners said they were unaware of any black serving on the Randolph County Hospital Board.

"I think the commission ought to have full knowledge if all our people aren't represented," said Wilkie Clark, a local leader for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. "I hold this commission responsible."

HOSPITAL BOARD chairman Leon Mote remembered no black or woman serving on the board during his 15 years of service.

But he said several board members could be considered "low-income," including himself.

And he pointed out that no minority leaders have approached him wishing to serve on the board.

"We wouldn't be opposed to anyone being on our board," Mote said. "We've always had a good organization. We've never had much controversy."

Those on the 14-member board serve 5-year terms. Members represent each of the county's 14 voting beats.

When someone's term expires or a position becomes vacant, the commissioner whose district the beat falls within must recommend someone to fill that slot. The County Commission must then approve the recommendation.

THE 14-MEMBER board has the authority to make appointments to four other smaller boards in the county — Wedowee Hospital, Randolph County Hospital, Wadley clinic and the Woodland clinic boards. Members receive no compensation.

The Rev. Lathonia Wright, a local Southern Christian Leadership Conference representative, accused local ambulance driver, Carl Sellers, of having a "bad attitude" and being impolite to patients and their family members.

"Maybe he needs some preaching to," Wright said. "Anyone dealing in the public ought to be courteous. If they can't be, we need to find somebody who can do the job."

Responded Sellers, who heads the Randolph County Ambulance Service, "I'm never ugly to anyone, unless they're ugly to me first."

Roanoke sets up new voting plan

By ERIC EYRE

Star Staff Writer

ROANOKE — Relenting to Justice Department pressures, the Roanoke City Council decided Monday to abandon its multi-member district voting plan in favor of a five single-member district plan, and promised to annex into the city certain black residents left out during previous annexations.

The city's decision ends a four-year battle with the Justice Department and local black leaders, who have always supported dividing the city into five districts — three majority white districts and two majority black districts.

Until Monday night, councilman had favored multi-member districts, under which three white council members would be elected from one district and two blacks from another.

The Justice Department recently objected to the city's voting plan and ruled all annexations made since 1965 invalid, because they never received Justice approval. Residents living in the annexed areas would not have been allowed to vote in city elections.

TWO WEEKS AGO, Mayor Spec Bonner charged the Justice Department with using the annexation issue as leverage to force the

city to yield on the voting plan.

But he changed his mind Monday night and voted for the five-district plan along with Councilmen Mike McDaniel and Jimmy Nolen. Jerrell Hodges and Tommy Fincher voted against it.

"It came down to blackmail," Councilman Fincher said. "They held the annexations up over our heads. They used them as hostage."

Roy Terry, a local black leader, was satisfied with the council's decision but said, "We're just sorry it took this much time and money on the part of the city to react and come up with a logical conclusion that was really the only logical conclusion in the first place."

"There was no reason for it to go to the point that it did."

Ordinances for annexing black residents, who were left out in previous annexations or live in areas contiguous to the city's limits, will be drawn up this week. The council plans to hold a special meeting this Monday to make the annexations official.

By staying with its old plan, the city could have jeopardized its upcoming summer municipal elections, but now officials promise elections will be held as scheduled.

Piedmont discusses insuring police cars

By POLLY SALTONSTALL

Star Staff Writer

PIEDMONT — The city of Piedmont may have found a company willing to insure the city's police cruisers for a reasonable sum, City Administrator Brent Morrison said Monday night.

The company, which Morrison did not identify, has said it would provide \$300,000 worth of liability with a \$250 deductible for a annual premium of \$4,075.76.

Morrison said he plans to offer the contract to local insurance companies. (Please see Piedmont, Page 8A)