THE NEWS HERALD PORCHNTON

o.sappointment law rejection Rioge Fige

Burke We are disappointed at the short-sightedness of the Burke County Board of Commissioners who blew their chance this week to insure the preservaadditional of tion

County mountain peaks.

The county fathers, by a 4-to-1 vote, decided not to pass local legislation expanding the scope of the state's new ridge

building and appared, to many mountain crests. In Burke County, that standard protects Table Rock, Shortoff and Hawksbill mountains, all and Hawksbill mountains, all in the upper area of the county. The South Mountains range isn't high enough to The state law sets a minimum height of 3,000 feet elevation (above sea level) for new building and applies, in effect,

high which has additional high ground that might need pro-tection beyond the state provithe state law.
In its wisdom, the N.C. General Assembly provided that sions would have until Jan. 1, - such as Burke any county-

1984 to pass local ordinances to apply to those areas. If such a local ordinance is not approved by Jan. 1, then the state law prevails.

With Tuesday night's vote, that's the way it is here. High Peak, for example, and other mountain ridges in the southern part of the county are now fair game for development, regardless of how this may interfere with the finger of

ict a private of his own run castle and all that. This kind of puristic point of view may be all right when you know (or ers and their individual inten-tions toward not wishing to ciate some of the opposing commissioners' hesitancy to allow a governmental body (in this case, the county commissioners) to restrict a private property. A man's home is his think you know) the landown-We understand and appre-20 development landowner's use amuck. allow

way of changing Without protect: But, as news editor Bill Po-teat pointed out in a column on from future developers, well, this week, this page earlier hands.

lems, especially in the eastern part of Burke where population is growing at a much faster pace than elsewhere in limited building restrictions may bring a host of new probanything can happen... The future without the county.

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prudent, we feel, for the commissioners to address the issue of a tighter county ridge law now than to face futile outcries from potential disgruntled property owners down the road. It would have been more

ter in Morganton taught us anything about land use and condominium construction on Little Sugar Mountain and the once-proposed 10-story retirement cenabout many people's feelings toward conserving our natural the beauties? Hasn't

might preclude another unsightly span of incompatible development such as along Highway 64-70 from Morganton to Hildebran. tion centers, for instance, from being placed next to scenic residential communities and rural churches. And, it avoid a mish-mash of new building in our faster growing areas; it might help prevent garages and animal produc-At some point, we believe the county is going to have to address the even broader is-sue of county zoning. A reasonable land use plan for the county as a whole would help a mish-mash of new

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nature.

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The Burke proposal to rein in the state's ridge law more closely on our mountainscapes county still has until the end of the month to amend its decision. We ask that they restudy would have been a good first alternatives before step toward that deadline. the

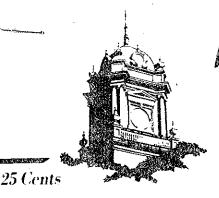
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Cates vows to continue battle for tougher Burke ridge law

By REBECCA MOORE News Herald Staff Writer

Burke County Commissioners' defeat of a proposal to toughen the state ridge law locally was "ridiculous" and an attempt may be made to re-introduce the proposal, Commission Chairman Jim Cates said Wednesday

"I thought it was ridiculous. I don't think it was really thought out," Cates said. "I think I'll make an attempt — make some phone calls — to get it brought back up. I think the equeaky wheel gets the grease."



'I thought it was going to slide right through. It just amazed me.'

---Cates

Cates spoke to about 30 members of the South Mountain Group of the N.C. Sierra Club at Western Piedmont Community College.

County planner Steve Erickson was also at the meeting, which saw club members express their disappointment with the commissioners' 4-1 defeat of the proposal.

"It is the position of the Sierra Club that we are very disappointed — this was a reasonable, logical ordinance to pass," Brian Simpson said. "We are disappointed and concerned."

Simpson, a club member, said the group recommends the "county commissioners reevaluate their position."

The proposal to toughen the law, which was

endorsed by the Burke County Planning Board, would have made it illegal to construct a building more than 40 feet high on ridge which is more than 500 feet above the valley

As it presently stands, the law applies only to those peaks that are 3,000 feet or more in elevation.

Under the state law, which was passed by the N.C. General Assembly in July, only parts of Jonas Ridge and the Pisgah National Forest are protected. In addition, Hawksbill Mountain at 4,030 feet, Table Rock Mountain at 3,909 and Shortoff Mountain at 3,137 are protected by the state law.

If the 3,000-foot limit was eliminated other mountains such as High Peak with an elevation of 2,184 feet, Mineral Springs Mountain and other portions of the South Mountain range would be protected.

"You have between now and the 20th," Cates told the group. "We've done this a couple of times and brought things back up."

The next meeting of the commission is set

* Please turn to page 9A

"Use aide with Lites vows to continue effort on ridge law George Clark. Their phone numbers spend hours and hours, two or three

From page one

for Dec. 20 at 7 p.m. at the Human Resource Center.

"The only person who can bring it back up is the person who was in the majority. If it was possible to muster a little strength - if there is some way to get a couple of people to change their votes."

Commissioners voting against the stricter law were Carrol Austin, Ernest Morgan, Bob Williamson, and

were written on a chalk board during months studying a project and make a the meeting and Sierra Club members recommendation and us commissionwere urged to call and "tell them your opinion of the action of the commission."

Cates was the only commissioner voting in favor of the proposal and he received applause from the group for his action.

"I thought it was going to slide right through — it just amazed me," Cates said. "It's kind of neat that they (Burke County Planning Board)

ers, in our wisdom, can make a decision in five minutes."

County commissioner voted against the proposal because "government is taking over too much of our private lives," Cates said.

"I would like to collect enough money and buy property next to a commissioner and put a little pig farm there and see what they have to say about my rights as a property owner," one club member said, while

another added "make it five-stories."

Sierra Club members said the law is an attempt to control development of the ridge tops in western North Carolina that emerged from the construction of a 10-story condominium on the top of Little Sugar Mountain in Avery County.

Terming the structure on Little. Sugar Mountain an "eyesore" Simpson said the club's concerns go beyond aesthetics to include protecting the sensitive area of the environment, ridges.

"The ridge law is the first step for more comprehensive land planning for ridge tops," Simpson said. "We need to look beyond that in the coming years."

In addition to county officials, Simpson, Morganton attorney Robert Gage and John Middleton served on the panel discussing the ridge law.