

Will Council cut its own pay?
5-A

Attend Rotary spaghetti supper prior to Friday's football game
6 -A

Inmates to help beautify KM
15 -A

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Sheriff race heads hot election card

Kings Mountain and No. 4 Township voters face a crowded ballot at the polls Tuesday but the good news is that only nine races are contested.

Top interest is centered locally in the sheriff's race, the county commission contest, the state legislative seats for the 37th Senate and 40th House Districts and for U. S. Congress in the 9th District.

Polls open at 6:30 a.m. and close at 7:30 p.m. at East Kings Mountain (Community Center); West Kings Mountain, (National Guard Armory); Bethware, at David Baptist Church Fellowship Hall; Grover at the Grover Rescue Squad; and Waco at Waco Town Hall, School Rd.

With the high interest in the county contests and particularly those involving local candidates, the activity at the polls is expected to be heavy.

The choice for sheriff is between two candidates, both with law enforcement experience but each with a different agenda to protect and serve Cleveland County.

Dan Crawford, the Democrat and a special agent for the State Bureau of Investigations, says he wants to implement more in-house training for deputies and use the savings plus any other available county funds to hire more deputies and institute community policing.

Ward Kellum, Republican, retired state trooper, wants to di-



CRAWFORD KELLUM

rect the public's fear of crime into volunteer action and solicit private donations to establish a satellite office beginning in Kings Mountain and establish mobile command centers in drug infested areas.

The tight race for two county commissioner seats is between

Democrats Ralph Gilbert Jr., the incumbent, and R. Patrick Spangler Jr. and Republicans Jim Crawley and Johnny Short.

Most of them agreed in recent forums that the commissioners should have implemented an elections plan that included district seats - rather than limited voting - to address minority concerns.

All said they are concerned about the budget pressures the county has faced during the past year and all said they share a concern that the current divisiveness on the DSS board has become unproductive.

Each offers a different type of leadership experience.

Short, a former Casar mayor, would press for a new reservoir



DAVIS WESTMORELAND

in Upper Cleveland County, among other things.

Crawley, retired manager of the local compact disk plant, said his broad experience with Cleveland Tomorrow and Executive Roundtable and Cleveland Chamber have put him in touch with concerns on

economic development that ought to be a priority for the commissioners.

Gilbert has served one four-year term. The retired land appraiser feels he has developed a reputation for being accessible and responsive.

Spangler is co-owner of a business equipment company in Shelby and says his business experience and work with civic clubs has prepared him for public office.

The six candidates for three seats in the N. C. House-Republicans Dean Allen, Debbie Clary and John Weatherly and Democrats Andy Dedmon, Jack Hunt and Edith

See Election, 7-A

Cashion refuses to quit

A Cleveland County resident, Rodney Spencer, asked for County Commissioner Joyce Cashion's resignation as chairman of the Department of Social Services Tuesday night.

"He demanded confidential information on a case that I would not give him," said Cashion, of Kings Mountain.

"You better believe I'm serving out my term which won't expire until next July," she said at the meeting of the Cleveland County board.

Cashion said that Spencer asked for the resignation of three DSS employees earlier this week.

Cashion, the first woman to serve on the county board of commissioners, will complete her service in December with the swearing-in of her successor. Cashion, a Democrat, was defeated in the May Primary.

Commissioners also heard presentations by two other area residents, Pat Carpenter and Allen Lingerfelt, representing Citizens Against an Airpark. Lingerfelt is chairman of the group.

The board recessed until Wednesday, November 9, at 7 p.m. when members will conduct a forum with nine candidates vying for two minority seats on the county board of commissioners.



Kings Mountain Farm Center on Shelby Road was gutted by fire apparently caused by an electrical malfunction early Saturday morning. Firemen rescued a number of small animals.

Fire guts KM Farm Center

Firemen and EMS paramedic Jimmy Hensley rescued small animals from a fire at Kings Mountain Farm Center Saturday morning, injecting oxygen to survive them and erecting tents around the cages with their own clothing.

About a dozen small animal and birds perished in the blaze which apparently was from an electrical malfunction.

Fire Marshal Beau Lovelace is still investigating the fire which was spotted by Cleveland County officer David Crowe on routine patrol. Crowe kicked in the door where pets and supplies were housed and used a fire extinguisher from his car.

Bethlehem firemen used lights to enter the building and

hand some of the animals in their cages to other members of assisting fire departments from Kings Mountain and Oak Grove. Also on the scene were the American Red Cross, the county fire marshal and Kings Mountain Police.

Kings Mountain Fire Department Frank Burns said that the fire started in the rear west side of the Shelby Road building.

A dispatcher with local police quickly called the city water, gas and electric departments and Dennis Bolin, owner of the business. Since Bolin, doesn't use power from the city, only a representative of the gas department came to the site to cut off gas.

Sgt. Mark Simpson, Ptl. Lisa

Capps, Ptl. Bob Myers, and reserve officer and city fireman John Wright responded along with volunteers from three fire departments. The blaze was reported at 1:07 a.m. and firemen left the scene at 5:30 a.m.

Bolin had a number of guinea pigs, hamsters, birds and rabbits in the building.

KMFD Chief Frank Burns said the fire originated in the attic area and if had not been spotted early would have resulted in high dollar damages.

"Another 15-20 minutes would have made a big difference," he said.

Bolin had operated the business in the old Masters Funeral Home for several years.

The business is closed for repairs.

Maney: There may be other mistakes

The city's Director of Utilities Jimmy Maney said in a memorandum to elected officials and City Manager Chuck Nance under date of October 24 that he has "reasons to believe that there are other utility accounts being billed and adjusted incorrectly."

"However, I cannot say this is the tip of the iceberg or if it is the iceberg. This along with a few other accounts may be everything."

Maney did not elaborate further but reported the findings of a billing audit completed after 2 1/2 weeks by the city's electrical consulting engineer, Maney and Electrical Supt. Scott Buchanan.

Maney said that actual historical readings and printouts of the eight electric accounts audited were the foundation of the data used.

Maney gave some of the report during last Tuesday night's City Council meeting, noting specific reasons as to how the overbilling of \$113,264 and underbilling of \$143,028 could have happened.

The consultant who investigated the eight customer bills which had improper multiplying factors said that of the questions that arose, the five most important were:

If the meter readers were key-punching in the right readings with correct decimal input.

If the multipliers were being used on both the KW demand and KWH energy charges:

See Maney, 10-A

Attorney gives names to press

City Attorney Mickey Corry Thursday released the names of the eight municipal electricity customers with demand meters who were found to be over-billed or underbilled during an audit by the city's electric department's outside consulting engineer, Electrical Supt. Scott Buchanan and Utilities Director Jimmy Maney.

Corry said the amounts reflected may not be figures the city intends to attempt to collect for underpayment.

Corry met with City Manager Chuck Nance, Finance Director Maxine Parsons, Maney and Councilman Jim Guyton, chairman of the utilities committee, at 4 p.m. Thursday and then released the list to the Kings Mountain Herald, Shelby Star, and Gaston Gazette in a faxed memorandum to each newspaper.

The names were not released at last Tuesday night's Council meeting at the advice of the city attorney citing legal matters.

The Gazette requested the information under public record laws.

A local businessman also called the N. C. Attorney General's office on Tuesday prior to the Council meeting with questions concerning Kings Mountain City Council and the Open Meetings Law. A

See Corry, 10-A

Nance to ask for consultant

Kings Mountain City Manager Chuck Nance said he will recommend to City Council Tuesday that an independent consultant be hired immediately to audit all utility accounts, including gas, electric, water and sewer.

The recommendation comes after disclosures of high dollar billing discrepancies in eight electric utility accounts with demand meters.

The biggest discrepancies involved two of the city's biggest industries.

Ruppe Hosiery on Gold Street and Charles Street was underbilled \$120,289.33 during a 19-month period February 1993-August 1994.

Wix Corporation was overbilled \$51,952 for the period September 1992-November 1993.

Maney said at the recent City Council meeting on questioning of Councilwoman Norma Bridges that he could not be sure how the errors occurred. But he said they had to be manually done.

He and Finance Director Maxine Parsons disagreed over whether the errors were made by meter readers or billing department clerks. They agreed that errors had been made and the errors were being corrected.

Complaints by two industries to Maney led to the investigations of the discrepancies which occurred during a complicated, computer-based billing process that charges customers based on demand and calculations of the amount of electric energy used called "multipliers." Nance asked

Maney and Parsons to conduct an in-house audit. Maney called in an outside electrical consulting engineer.

"Its time to quit finger pointing and get the matter cleaned up and we are doing that," said Nance.

"We have to treat everybody the same and pay back the money we owe and try to collect even though we made the mistakes," said Nance.

He said if the city is able to collect from any of those involved, a city ordinance allows the customer to pay the accumulated balance over the period in which the bill was accumulated.

Some of the eight audited accounts have been erroneously billed for 27-32 months.

The city codes specify that if a customer has a kilowatt demand of under 50kw that the city can only go back 150 days and if the customer's bill is over 50kw demand the city can only go back 12 months to collect.

"The city may have some problems collecting because the errors are the city's fault," he said.

"We will audit all existing accounts to keep this kind of thing from happening again."

Nance said that although auditors in the past had suggested an in-depth look at billing, the problem was not an easy one to detect.

See Nance, 10-A



STATE SUPERINTENDENT VISITS - State Rep. Jack Hunt and State Supt. of Public Instruction Bob Etheridge standing left to right, watch as Kings Mountain High students William Strickland, Derek Moore and Josh Lowery, left to right, work with computers at KMHS library Thursday morning. Etheridge was in the area to visit schools and meet with educators and students.