

Hearing set in Shelby in NAACP lawsuit 5-A

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Mayor blames Parsons for financial mess

Grindstaff: Mayor playing politics

City Councilman Ralph Grindstaff says Mayor Scott Neisler is playing politics.

Grindstaff said members of the press got copies of Mayor Scott Neisler's Tuesday memorandum responding to the recent audit to Council first.

"The police delivered the copies to Council and I got mine about 7:45 p.m.," Grindstaff told the Herald Tuesday night.

"I haven't had time to study it but I will say that politics should be left out of city fi-

nances, if we have a problem we need to fix it."

Grindstaff said that the city's auditor and professionals from the state treasurer's office have told the city it's in financial trouble.

"If the mayor will show me where the money is and show me that his proposals are the answers to the problem I will vote for his amendments to Maxine Parson's budget for 1994-95."

"This memo is aimed straight

See Grindstaff, 3-A

Parsons: Cash balance is bottom line

"The bottom line is that on June 30, 1995 the City of Kings Mountain had only \$16,376 cash," said Finance Director Maxine Parsons, refuting Mayor Scott Neisler's claims she overstated the city's serious financial condition as she prepared the 1994-95 budget as Interim Manager.

"Two managers are going to manage different," she said.

"And I have never been able to pay bills early."

"It doesn't matter how you manipulate the figures the bot-

tom line is the city is still not paying its bills on time and the mayor's spread sheet on his cash projections for next year don't include the additional \$325,000 for past due bills that must come out of the '94-95 budget."

Parsons said the Local Government Commission has warned the city for the past four years that it cannot transfer funds on paper unless there is money in the bank and a profit margin. She says she doubts the

See Parsons, 3-A

Mayor Scott Neisler Tuesday laid the blame for the city's problems at the feet of Finance Officer Maxine Parsons, claiming the former Interim Manager seriously overstated the financial concerns of the city using "overkill" measures in her 1994-95 budget and paid bills too early.

"Kings Mountain's good name has been dragged through the mud when in actuality the budget is in good shape," said the mayor in a lengthy memorandum to City Council in which he called for a reversal of both the tax and water rate hikes that he insists aren't need-

ed. Neisler will ask City Council at the January 31 meeting, with representatives of the Local Government Commission in attendance, to give its stamp of approval on his suggested amendments to the '94-95 budget.

The mayor said the audit of the 1993-94 fiscal year verifies that the city underspent the budget by \$574,000, a projection made by former City Manager George Wood in the 1993-94 budget.

Neisler also blasted Mayor Pro Tem Rick Murphy, a Vice-President of Spectrum Dyed Yarns, for stalling a 9 percent

See Mayor, 3-A

Judge to hear county lawsuit

A federal judge in Asheville could decide today, Thursday, Jan. 19, if a citizen's lawsuit against the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners will be transferred to a court in Washington D.C.

Judge Richard L. Voorhees, chief judge for the U.S. District Court in Western North Carolina, has set a hearing for today at 4 p.m. in Asheville to consider a motion for a preliminary injunction against a consent decree agreed to by the county commission and the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

In an order issued Tuesday, Voorhees denied a motion for a temporary restraining order (TRO) requested by the Cleveland County Association for Government by the People, a citizen's group that raised more than \$15,000 in about a month to fight the consent decree. In his order, Voorhees stated he could "ascertain the status quo Plaintiffs presumably seek preserve," a requirement for issuing a TRO. He also stated that CCAGP failed to show what irreparable damage may be caused if the TRO was not issued.

During Thursday's hearing, Voorhees may act on a motion made by attorney's representing the county commission, county attorney Julian Wray and Raleigh attorney Michael Crowell. That motion, filed Wednesday morning in the Asheville court, requests that Voorhees transfer the CCAGP lawsuit to the District Court in Washington, D.C. for resolution. If Voorhees grants that motion, the suit would more than likely end up on the bench of Judge Stanley Sporkin, who is handling the original lawsuit brought by the NAACP. In the last paragraph of the consent decree signed this past summer, Sporkin retained jurisdiction of the NAACP lawsuit until it was resolved.



KM Baptist Association Moderator Jim Brackett, Mayor Pro Tem Rick Murphy, Rev. John Houze and Councilwoman Norma Bridges, left to right, break ground for the new People's Baptist Church on Groves Street.

Church breaks ground for building

People's Baptist Church broke ground for its first permanent home Wednesday afternoon in the presence of over half of its membership.

"This is a big day for us," said Pastor John Houze.

The 3,750 square foot building going up on Groves Street is the first phase of the young church's building program. The estimated cost is \$150,000 and Crescent Metals Construction Company is general contractor.

The foundation was poured this week and workmen were on the scene as Houze, Mayor Pro Tem Rick Murphrey, Councilwoman Norma Bridges and Kings Mountain Baptist

Association Moderator Jim Brackett used a new shovel for the traditional breaking of ground.

Brackett said the church had grown from a handful of members meeting at Kings Mountain Depot to 50. The congregation has been meeting recently in a former lodge building on Highway 161 across from WKMT Radio.

"This is an example of faith," said Brackett of the church.

Ardis Byers and Ginny Caldwell, chairmen of the building committee, spoke of the excitement of the congregation in the building venture.

Houze said worship services are held on Wednesday evening and Sunday morning and afternoon.

The new church is going up on 3.2 acres in a wooded setting on Groves Street and is located on the lot next to the pastor's home. Houze says the church plans to add to the building as it grows.

Houze said the church hopes to add to its membership because the area is heavily populated with young families.

"We hope to begin an outreach program and have faith that we will succeed with God's help," he said.

Nance: Team effort will get city back on track

A freeze on spending and capital expenditures at least until the end of the fiscal year was ordered Saturday by City Manager Chuck Nance who said the city can get back on track only through a team effort.

City Council members left up to the manager's discretion the filling of two major city jobs - police chief and director of planning. Captain Bob Hayes is serving as Interim Chief and Jeff Putnam is serving as Interim Planning Director.

"We have serious financial concerns but we have the expertise here and the experience to work as a group to overcome this difficult period and turn things around," he said, opening a mid-winter retreat of city officials and key employees at 9 a.m. at Moss Lake.

Although the lake front office affords a beautiful picture of the lake threatening storm and heavy rain only added to the gloomy picture of the city's finances portrayed by Auditor Darrell Keller, Finance Director Maxine Parsons, and copies of city accounts spread out on balance sheets for six city council members to view. Councilman Jerry White was absent due to illness. Mayor Scott Neisler was out of town. Aging Director Monty Thornburg was out of town and the only department head absent from the day-long meeting.

Nance said the city has two objectives and one major challenge in order to turn the city's gloomy financial picture around.

+Reduction of the accounts payable debt.

+Reducing the reliability of the enterprise funds and transfers from one account to another

+Building a fund balance which the Local Government Commission has called the

city's attention to for several years and again this year following the 1993-94 audit.

"Unless we have the money we can't close out accounts by transferring from one fund to the other," said Nance.

Nance said the state treasurer's office requires that municipalities keep at least eight percent of the general fund budget in undesignated funds in case of emergency.

"With the city's budget we need to have more than eight percent," said Nance. He suggested that the city needs several million in reserves to avoid a serious cash flow problem.

Nance said the city can get back on track by:

+Taking immediate action to eliminate debt

+Build up a positive fund balance

+Hold off on spending unless absolutely necessary. Nance said he had instituted a spending freeze on capital expenditures in September.

Mayor Pro Tem Rick Murphrey, who presided, said the city can overcome its current problems by:

+Promoting dignity, pride, security, personal growth and job satisfaction at all times with its associates and the community

+A team effort is necessary between Council, department heads and all employees.

Murphrey said he thought the board had taken some corrective action in trying to restore Council's credibility in the community.

"These current problems didn't happen over night and we can't fix them over night," he said.

"We can solve some of these problems as a team and this meeting can be positive and constructive."

Each department head said

See Freeze, 4-A

Worshippers challenged on King holiday

A third generation preacher who was 13 years of age when the popular Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was slain called for Kings Mountain people to take up King's baton and march for the hungry and the love of humanity.

Rev. Luonne Rouse, 39, stood in the pulpit of New Life Christian Center on Parker Street Monday night and told a crowd of worshippers from all black churches in the community that they must "rekindle the fire of the movement begun by Dr. King."

Rouse is pastor of the 545-member predominantly white Disciples United Methodist Church in Greenville, SC and a noted race relations consultant who has won a Young American leadership award from the South Carolina Junior Chamber of Commerce for his work in leading racial harmony in South Carolina.

Connie Rouse said after the worship service that her husband's family had witnessed some of the prejudices that King faced. Mrs. Rouse said her husband's father and grandfather, both ministers, had been denied shoes for their young children by white clerks working in a South Carolina department store in the 1960's.

Rouse recalled the birth of King on January 15, 1929 and his death on April 4, 1968.

Rouse said King marched for the right to vote, against non-violence, for higher wages for the low-paid and for fair treatment and equality to all but Rouse said some of the problems that King taught and preached so eloquently about are still very real.

"His death gave us a holiday to challenge us to pray, love and get right with God," said Rouse. But he said that for 10 years a national holiday to honor King has met opposition of many.

"We must pray for those who condemn us and hear King's call for all to love our enemies."

"In the dark days when the Negro was de-personalized we held on to the unchanging hand of God and God's amazing grace moved an American Society and moved the African American from disgrace to dignity," said Rouse.

Rouse said the key to racial harmony is love.

"Dr. King gave us a victory for justice and good will and today is not a black holiday but a lover's holiday," he said.

See King, 4-A



Connie and her husband, Rev. L. A. Rouse, Mayor Scott Neisler, Rev. Liston Sellers Jr. and Rev. H. L. Rhedrick, left to right, are pictured at the service of worship Monday on the 66th birthday of slain Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at New Life Christian Center.