

COUNCIL

From Page 1-A

a lady with two sick children and financial difficulties had come to her about her utility bills and eventually had her service disconnected by the city.

"This bugs me to throw money away when we're going out and cutting people's utilities off," she said. "We need a better system."

Mayor Scott Neisler noted the "seventy-five hundreds here and the six hundred thousands there" that have been mis-billed would have created the eight percent fund balance required by the Local Government Commission to give the city a clean audit.

Although no official action was taken, Councilman Rick Murphree suggested that Ollis meet with the Finance Director and City Manager and bill the golf course for the amount called for in the contract.

While \$7,500 is not pocket change, the real eye-opener came later when Mrs. Bridges questioned the status of a 1990 Cleveland County mapping project to which the city was to pay \$107,318 for maps of its natural gas system. Gas Superintendent Jimmy Maney reported that to date the city has spent \$90,000 toward the project and hasn't received anything for its money.

Maney explained in detail how he and Finance Director Maxine Parsons had uncovered the problem. He said the eight-phase county-wide project was to be completed by January 1, 1995, and that the Kings Mountain phase was supposed to be completed by August 1, 1991.

According to Maney, he got involved in the situation after the North Carolina Utilities Committee cited Kings Mountain for violations in its mapping system. He said the city's mapping has not been updated in 25 years, but after the violation he remembered that in the past the City Council had approved participating in the county mapping project. After being instructed by Council at a recent retreat, he and Parsons began investigating and found that \$90,000 had been paid to the Pennsylvania engineering firm conducting the mapping but that the payments had been credited to Cleveland County's account.

The contract entered between the county and the engineering firm called for the firm to provide various maps and aerial photography for \$1,188,461. Kings Mountain was to be phase 7 of the project and the city was to pay \$10,000 for vertical ground control mapping, \$60,360 for digital planimetric mapping, \$36,100 for digital topographics, and \$858 for the bond for a total of \$107,318.

Maney said he and Parsons found that from 1990 to 1994 the city was billed a total of \$90,000 and that another \$17,000 was budgeted to be paid this year. He said the invoices stated only "amount now due" and did not make any indication of any work performed.

Maney said he began contacting the county and the engineering firm recently and found out that no one was in charge of the project, and that at some time "it just got put in a drawer somewhere." He said he found out later that the man originally in charge became ill and the payments the city was making apparently were credited to the work going on in the county.

"As a result the Kings Mountain project has just been laying there and they haven't done much with it," he said. "How it all got mixed up, I don't know. Somehow the work was confused with the work

going on in the county."

Maney said he was assured that the engineering company would get the problem straightened out, but city officials say they want their money back and suggested that City Attorney Mickey Corry and City Manager Chuck Nance

take the necessary steps to get it returned.

Maney said because of the gas system violations he has had to contract with another firm to satisfy state requirements. "I can't wait on the county and what's going on with these maps," he said.

Maney said he did not act on the city's behalf when it entered into the agreement with the county, but that he was just "trying to tie up loose ends" and find out the status of the project. He said he was amazed to find a \$1.2 million project that "nobody can tell you about."

Councilman Ralph Grindstaff said the city "had an Engineering Department" at the time and it should have been the "engineer's responsibility to follow up on this. I don't like this kind of spending and not getting anything for it. I want to city attorney to get involved in it and if they're not going to give us results, get our money back."

"If the county picked up \$90,000 in credits, they're using our money to pay their bills," Councilman Dean Spears noted.

Councilman Jerry White said the city's phase 7 was supposed to be completed in 1991 "and I don't want their business. They're five years late."

Maney said after the meeting that he would take his findings to the City Manager and City Attorney and it would be their responsibility to make a proposal to Council on collecting the money.

In other action Tuesday, Council:

- Approved reimbursing developer Jim Lybrand \$1,699.50 for street work and \$12,767 for water system to the new Ashley Park Subdivision upon occupancy by the homeowner of the first home constructed and verification that all 15 stipulations of the engineering consultant's findings are met.

- Re-appointed Dean Spears, Phillip Hager and Jim Guyton to the Utilities Committee.

- Appointed Rick Murphree to the Isothermal Planning and Zoning Commission Board of Directors.

- Designated Easter Monday as a holiday for city employees.

- Approved advertising for an exchange of 1,200 feet of surplus 3-inch fire hose to the Town of Grover for a 1952 model brush truck.

- Called a public hearing for March 28 at 7:30 p.m. to consider a request by Alltell Mobile Communications (Charles R. Bridges) for a conditional use permit to construct a 180 foot telecommunications tower at 816 Floyd St.

- Re-scheduled a public hearing for April 25 at 7:30 to consider an amendment to the City Sign Ordinance.

- Approved changing the gas utility flex rate to create a floor and ceiling on rates to interruptible gas customers. Utility Director Jimmy Maney said changes in prices recently have resulted in the city selling gas for 75 cents more than the suggested retail rate and that a policy is needed to prevent selling for more than six percent over the city's cost.

- Approved the division of property from one lot to two (approximately 35 acres each) for Sara Lee on Canterbury Road.



PRINCIPAL'S AWARD - These third through fifth grade students at Bethware School were recently awarded the Principal's Award for good citizenship. Front row, left to right, Kristi Hilliard, Steven Brown, Isaac Hill, Amy Robinson, Judy Russell. Back row, Amy Pullen, Kim Robertson, Ashley Miller, Leslie Callahan, Hugh Holland, principal. Not pictured, Jamie Camp.

Hager, Neisler on committees

Morganton Mayor Mel L. Cohen, president of the North Carolina League of Municipalities, has appointed Kings Mountain Council member Phillip Hager and Mayor Scott Neisler to NCLM committees.

Hager was appointed to the Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations Committee, and Neisler was appointed to the Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

The committees study and make recommendations concerning league policies in their areas. The committees meet throughout the year and recommend policies to the League's board of directors. The board, in turn, recommends legislative policies for adoption by the full membership of the League. Municipal legislative policy is adopted annually by the membership at the organization's annual convention.

The League is a non-partisan federation of 508 cities, towns and villages in North Carolina. Founded in 1908, the League provides a broad range of services to member cities and towns.

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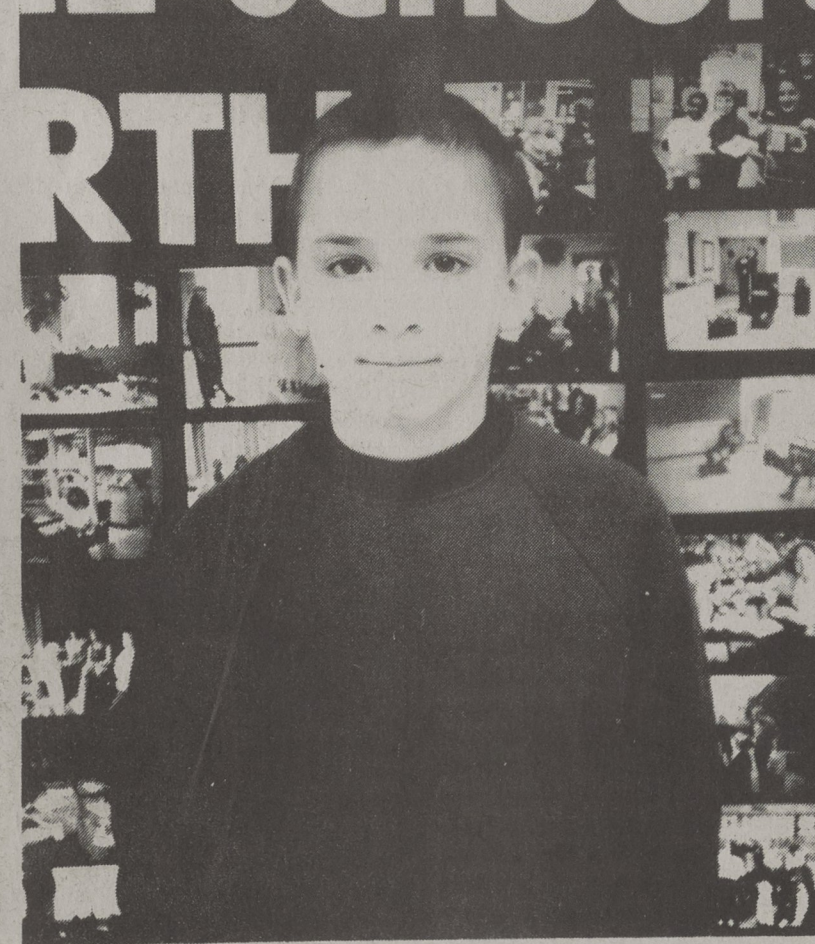
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