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Interim City Manager says KM on right track

Hicks: Turn around takes time

After nearly two weeks in the chief executive's chair in the city Gary Hicks is getting acclimated. The Gastonia resident and retired city manager of Gastonia, never liked retirement because he could not stay busy enough, so he returned to city government last year at neighboring Lowell and then took the interim job when Chuck Nance left Kings Mountain recently.

He plans to look at the day-to-day operations and analyze the financial picture as first priorities in his new job.

"I have always liked my job because I like people and Kings Mountain will be no exception," he said this week. Hicks, 57, began his work experience in city government first as a city planner in Charlotte in 1962-63 and as land planner for the City of High Point from 1963-65. He prepared planning studies for cities on a contract basis in 1965-67 and came to Kings Mountain and pri-

But Hicks said the Council took the fiscal year and he has some ideas he will share on how to accomplish that with Council. "It's always been my philosophy to share my ideas with my Council before talking about it in the newspaper," he laughed. At the August 29 meeting of Council Hicks said he and Finance Officer Maxine Parsons will present a report on the shape of the city's finances for year ending June 30, 1995.



Gary Hicks, the city's new interim city manager, talks about goals as he relaxes in his office at City Hall.

See Hicks, 10-A

Remember Park Yarn

Life in the Park Yarn Mill Village centered around the mill, Ted Weir's store, Park Grace School and John Gregory's Little Church on the Hill. Those were the memories that more than 125 people attending Saturday's first reunion at Depot Center remembered with much affection. "The late Ted Weir and Bert Blanton were like a Mama and Daddy to me," said Harold Flowers, who got the idea to hold the reunion and got the help of Johnnie Moore Bingham, Helen Whetstone, Bonnie Frederick, Margie Flowers Bowers and Chester Campbell and they started



Baxter and Helen Short, Pete Smith, Dana Trammell with young Zachary and Alice Eubanks are pictured at one of the dining tables at Saturday's reunion of Park Yarn Village resident and mill workers at Depot Center. Crowds had lunch at tables laden with vegetables, meats and desserts.

See Reunion, 9-A

SRO crowd applauds vote

County to Williams: Get off DSS Board

Eighteen hours after he was ordered to step down from the board of the County Department of Social Services by the unanimous vote of the county board of commissioners who appointed him, Robert A. Williams of Fallston says he won't step down. "I still have work to do on that board," Williams told The Herald. Williams contends that under state statutes 153-A76 the county board is prohibited from altering the manner in which board members are elected. The county commissioners voted Tuesday night before a standing-room-only crowd to ask for Williams' resignation, issuing a statement of "no confidence" and if he refused to take legal action to remove him from the seat he has held since 1993.

Tuesday night Chairman Cecil Dickson, who along with Commissioners E. T. Vanhoy and Sam Gold had originally supported Williams, made the motion to issue a statement of "no confidence" and to ask for his immediate resignation.

The motion also included that in the event Williams will not resign that the county attorney implement immediate legal action for his removal. No one in the audience spoke after the vote was taken but the applause was loud and Dickson called for order. But Commissioner Ralph Gilbert took the floor and after his remarks the applause was loud. Dickson called for order. Williams was not present.

Williams says allegations made against him by his ex-wife were proven false in court and when he took the job at the urging of three commissioners he publicly stated that he would step down if allegations against him were proven true. "I have won every case I have had in court and I have not been charged with any criminal violations," he said.

Last week Gilbert sought a special meeting of the board to ask for the resignation of Williams after learning about a reported dispute between Williams and a female friend. But Dickson said last Wednesday he preferred to wait until the board's Tuesday night meeting because the social services board did not have a meeting before the regular meeting of the county commission.

Williams said the county board is operating on the theory that an appointed authority can unappoint a member of a board. "The law simply does not allow for that," he said. Williams said he was appointed to help oversee the county's largest agency, the Department of Social Services, an agency that all county commissioners need to be involved in, he said. "If they can remove me then why can't the public remove the elected officials on grounds of "no confidence." They were put there by the voters.

"As a commissioner I was not informed of any dialogue between three of the commissioners and Mr. Williams last week but I am delighted to know that some dialogue went on," he said after Dickson read a prepared statement. "It would have been better for all of us if we had all been informed before the meeting took place. I wholeheartedly support the chairman's recommendation."

In his prepared statement, Dickson said: "For the past few months there has been an ongoing discussion between some of the commissioners about replacing Robert A. Williams on the Social Services Board.

4,000 KM students return to school today

Thirty-seven buses roll Thursday morning for the fall opening of Kings Mountain District Schools and the return to books of 4,000 students and over 500 employees at eight schools. "Thanks to the teaching staff, principals and program directors we are ready," said Supt. Dr. Bob McRae. Asst. Supt. for Personnel Ronnie Wilson said that faculties are complete with the addition of 22 contracts to teachers, the employment of nine other classified employees

and the transfer of seven employees. Wilson said the system had moved three teaching assistants to full-time teaching positions. East Principal Jerry Hoyle says his school has gained an additional first grade teacher and kindergarten teacher from the recent statewide reduction in classroom size. "We're just delighted that we could add more teachers," said Hoyle this week as his staff readied to welcome 270 K-5 students. At all plants in the system the

teachers and assistants were putting up welcome posters and getting ready for the first day of school. Teachers were officially welcomed at an early breakfast Tuesday morning at the high school. Wilson said that the system hired Kathy Archer, first grade, Bethware; Shari Mansfield, sixth grade, middle school; Cynthia Black, exceptional children, Grover; Cathy Carr, first grade, Grover; Hubert McGinnis, Choice program, middle school; Hannah

Cole, English, high school; Tammy Yarborough, first grade, East; Margaret Pearson, French and Business, high school; Brian Petras, math, high school; and Betty Blalock, fourth grade. Also Tracie Merchant, first grade Bethware and Kay Lee, second grade Bethware, all former teaching assistants at Bethware; John Wilkes, social studies, middle school; Elizabeth Melton, English, high school; Dan Jones, guidance, Parker Street; Lori Evatt, Smart

See School, 8-A

Additional gas could keep industries open in winter

Local industry has apparently won another round with the city. Monday night the utilities committee recommended that the city buy an additional 1,000 mcf per day of firm gas and spread the additional annual cost of \$100,000 to \$132,000 between the city's 3,000 residential users of natural gas and industry. In effect, the move, expected to be approved by City Council at the

August 29 meeting, would mean that gas would be issued all winter to industrial customers. Previously, six industrial users on the interruptible rate have been cut on and off for approximately 20 days during the winter months and last winter some have switched to alternative fuel. At least one customer closed for a day or two. Interim City Manager Gary Hicks said after the meeting that he

heartily agrees with the proposal by a Chairman and Councilman Jim Guyton and Councilman Phil Hager. The third member of the committee, Councilman Dean Spears, was absent from the meeting attended by 19 people, including a majority of industrial users of natural gas. "It's a no-win situation," said Hicks. "I have qualms about possible

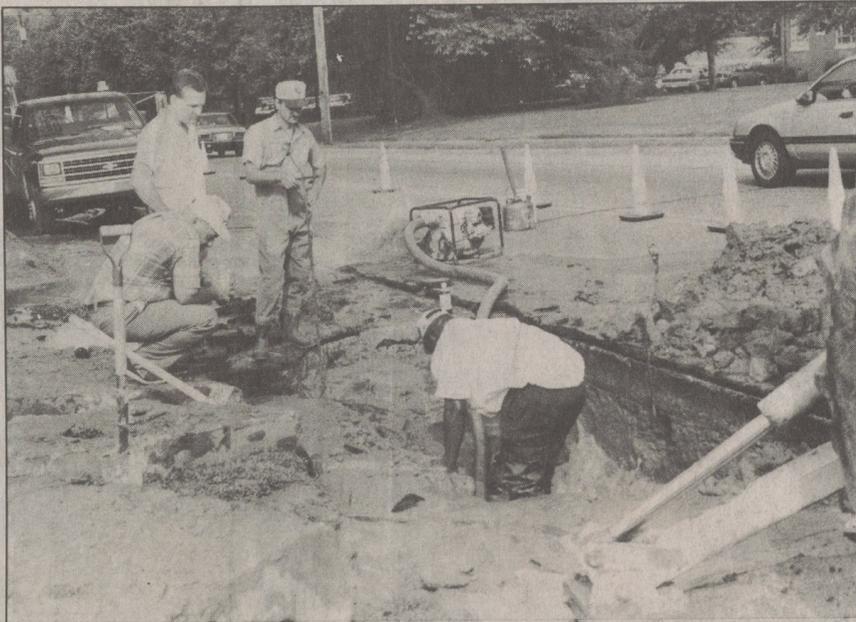
closing of industries due to lack of gas and sending people home from work in the winter time." A new rate study in the works is expected to include fixed costs for natural gas. Guyton said that industry carries 90 percent of the load in the winter months. "We need to be fair and not overburden anyone," said Hicks. See Gas, 9-A

City to add water hook-up at hospital

Walt Ollis, the city's superintendent of water/wastewater operations, said the city will hook up another water connection for emergency water for the Kings Mountain Hospital. Last Friday morning Ollis said he received a call from a maintenance worker at the hospital at 7:15 a.m. that the hospital only had about 56 pounds of water pressure left due to a burst water main in front of the hospital on West King Street. Surgery had to be rescheduled and the emergency room was shut down until 1 p.m. as city workers rushed to repair the pipes. The Gelot Medical Clinic was also out of water as were residents of Juniper Street and Central Carolina Bank. "There is no valve in the old part of the hospital that works, the hydrant in the back of the building feeds off Edgemont Drive and there is no connection between that line and the building," said Ollis. "Even if we have to run a fire hose we don't want the hospital to ever be without water," he said.

No emergency patients had to be rerouted to other hospitals, according to Cleveland County EMS which operates a station directly across from the hospital emergency room. The city has averaged a water break every other week for the past four weeks, three of them requiring major repairs. Ollis said that such breaks are just a matter of course in the operation of the city's water system and that as the pipes age more breaks can be expected. He said repeated breaks can be attributed to aging pipes and shut-off valves located too far apart. On July 11 a 70-year-old water line burst in the downtown area sending millions of gallons of water down the railroad tracks. The second break occurred July 29 when a line on Crocker Road burst, taking more than half the road away. Many customers across the city, including the hospital, were without water for more than two hours. A minor break earlier on Hawthorne Road left no residences

See Water, 9-A



Water Supt. Walt Ollis, foreman Steve Hamrick, Tony Brooks and Willie Inman, left to right, repair a pipe in a burst water line in front of the hospital. The hospital and nearby residents and businesses out of water for six hours Friday.

Board revises conduct policy

A revision by the Kings Mountain Board of Education Monday of the system's code of conduct now makes it comply with a state policy that requires students who take weapons on campus to be suspended. The policy was revised from suspending students for the remainder of the school year to suspending them for 365 days from the date of the incident. The disciplinary sanctions in the new code of conduct reads: Students in grades K-12 who bring or possess a weapon on school property as defined in G. S. 14-269.2 (b) shall be suspended for 365 days. Any reduction of said suspension will be in accordance with G. S. 115C-391 (d). Students in grades 6-12 who bring or possess any other legally defined weapon on a school campus will be suspended for the remainder of the school year. Students in grades K-5 who bring or possess a legally defined weapon other than defined in 3a on a school campus will be disciplined

See Policy, 10-A