



# More spending cuts may be necessary

The bottom line is that the city has about \$450,000 on hand, excluding Powell Bill monies for streets, is paying its bills on time but spending will have to be cut if utility revenues don't improve.

That was the financial report of Interim City Manager Gary Hicks to City Council Tuesday night.

"You've made a good start and took the bull by the horns but you've a long way to go," he said, apologizing for not having good news to report.

Hicks said that revenues in both the electric and gas utilities are down from this time last year and water/sewer is slightly up which means that revenues will have to be monitored closely and steps taken to tighten expenditures.

He recommended and the Council approved 5-0 (Councilmen Rick Murphrey and Jerry White were absent) that all departmental financial transfers and all requests for additional funds for expenditures must be approved by the Council and that all transfers and amendments to the budget be approved at the time

they are needed rather than at the end of the fiscal year.

Hicks said he didn't want to take what was Council's prerogative away from them and this procedure would help him to keep a tighter grip on the finances as well as keep budget figures up to date.

Also, Hicks said the auditor answers to Council, not to him and not to the city finance director Maxine Parsons.

"Darrell Keller was hired by you and works for you and not for the staff," he said.

"Feel free to call on Darrell at any time. I don't control Council and I don't control the auditor."

Hicks said at the end of six months he will ask Keller for a full financial report.

He hastened to add that he wasn't criticizing past administrations but "this is just the way I think it will work."

"I don't want to be spending money and then tell you about it after it's spent," he said.

Councilman Phil Hager and Dean Spears praised Hicks for his stand. "This is long overdue and will help us get back to par," said Hager.

Hicks said that no checks will be drawn to contractors until they sign off after the work is completed and only after approval of the city attorney. He said that he had discovered that in at least two instances recently this procedure was not followed.

"We will make sure that what is spent is in accordance with the General Statutes," he said.

Hicks said the city would not spend Powell Bill fund for anything other than for what those funds are designated and that expenses will be strictly confined with no transfers from one account to the other.

Parsons reported that the cash flow at June 30, 1995 showed \$1,143,979, including \$616,453 in budgeted reserves and underspending of the budget of \$192,000 for salaries for positions that were not funded and underspending of capital outlay of \$300,000.

Electric revenues for the month of June were

\$606,622, down from \$601,629 in June last year and \$7,207,950 for the period July-June, compared to \$7,381,299 for fiscal year 1992-93.

Gas revenues were \$253,705 in June, down from \$321,637 in June 1994. The total for the fiscal year was \$4,367,148, down from \$4,872,972 for fiscal year 1993-94.

Water/Sewer revenues for June were \$302,960, down from \$403,807 in June 1994 but up for the year. The total for 1994-95 was \$3,930,985, compared to \$3,785,013 for fiscal year 1993-94. Water consumption was also down in 1994-95, from 1705.85 in 1993-94 to 1633.428 in 1994-95. For the month of June the total was 139,851 compared to 173,250 a year ago.

She gave these cash figures by department for the period ending June 30, 1995 as follows: general fund, \$64,707; water-sewer, \$1,019,659; electric, \$17,691; gas, \$24,952; and sanitation, \$16,970.

Parsons said the city is paying its monthly bills on time.

## Obesity presents problems

The last words that Porter Dellinger Jr. said to his wife were that he loved her.

Anita Dellinger remembers the gentle man she affectionately called "Doodle Bug" as a man with a big heart and a man who laughed with those who hurt him with remarks about his size and told him to "stop eating."

Dellinger, 35, weighed 698 pounds. He died August 6 after suffering respiratory problems July 28.

His grief-stricken widow and four children hope their public story will help others to seek extensive health checkups early and she hopes that one day there will be accommodations at not only hospitals but at funeral parlors for men the size of her husband.

Porter had been treated since 1991 for venous stasis ulcer but blood tests were good, his blood pressure was perfect for a male his size and there was no indication that he had a hole in his heart and lung problems.

"I was shocked that the first words I heard from his doctor was that Porter would not make it," said Mrs. Dellinger, 38, of First Street.

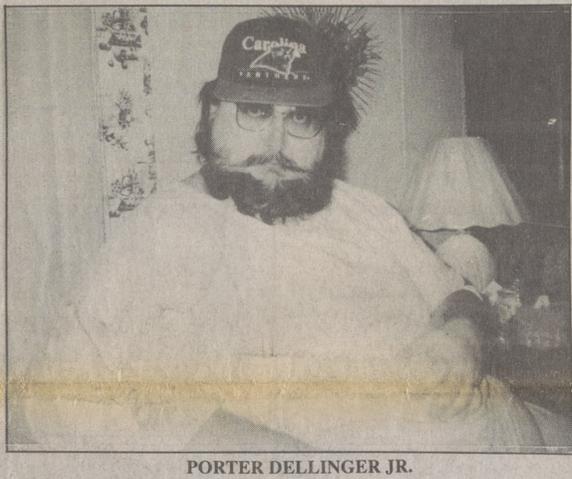
To add to her agony, she could not carry out her husband's last wish to be cremated because of his size. The crematory door was only 36 inches wide.

"I had never gone through anything like this and I was stunned and shocked, although the funeral director was compassionate."

There were no choices for burial. It would have taken two or more weeks for a large casket to arrive and a vault to be built. Another problem was that his body could not be embalmed.

The porch banisters had to be removed for eight people to remove Porter from the house and transport him to the hospital where a bed had had to be ordered to accommodate him.

See Dellinger, 3-A



PORTER DELLINGER JR.

## Inmate labor raises concern

Prison inmates who have apparently been helping city sanitation crews pick up garbage won't be helping any more.

An obviously upset Councilman Jim Guyton, aided by Councilman Phil Hager and Councilwoman Norma Bridges, pushed for an answer on who gave the inmates the authority to do the job but got nowhere Tuesday night.

Interim City Manager Gary Hicks said he assumed that Council had okayed the plan to use prison inmates but Guyton said they were to be used to work on other jobs, not go into backyards of homeowners without supervision.

Guyton and Hager also called for raises for the city's sanitation crews who they say are badly underpaid.

"They are at the end of the totem pole and it isn't easy work pulling sinking garbage," said Hager.

Guyton said the city has budgeted \$34,019 for the sanitation department in the new pay scale and he wants to see that money applied now in raises for the sanitation department.

"We have budgeted 14 people in the Sanitation department and we have an 80 percent turnover."

Councilman Dean Spears said there have been plenty of applicants for the jobs but that those applying can't pass the required drug test.

Hicks said he and the city's personnel director Winston Bagley would prepare a proposal to try to solve the problem but that it would require an increase in pay for those workers.

He also said he would prepare a full status report on how prison workers are being used in the \$1 a day arrangement the city made with the Prison Department several months ago to initially do roofing work at the library and work with Public Works Department supervision.

See Inmate, 6-A

## Citizen not on agenda can't speak at Council meeting

Mayor Scott Neisler called Rev. Kenneth George out of order Tuesday night when George wanted to address Council and was not on the agenda.

"I want to see this gag law stopped," said George after the meeting.

"It's a violation of our rights not to be able to speak at a public meeting and give our opinion on matters that come before the board. Who wants to wait a month to talk about an issue?"

"My tax bill is more and I see so many people who are unable to pay their utility bills and there seems to be no end in sight," he said.

George said he planned to speak on the recent proposal by the city utilities commission to buy additional firm natural gas and possibly pass on those costs.

However, Mayor Scott Neisler said at the beginning of Tuesday's Council meeting that the board had tabled a vote on the utility commission's recommendations until after

the city's natural gas consultants can present their input into the matter.

Retired city planner Gene White, a candidate for mayor in the upcoming municipal election, was on the agenda and cautioned the Council to be certain in its decision-making process for purchase and redistribution to city users, saying that both industrial users and residential users should be treated fair and equitably.

"What are the risks and the long-

term implications? he asked in his prepared remarks.

White recommended that the board table the issue until all the facts are available and until all user representatives and staff and consultants can meet for a decision based on the facts.

White turned the podium around to face the audience instead of the Mayor and Council.

"You know at this important time of year I'm not turning my back on you," he told the audience.

After his presentation Interim City Manager Gary Hicks said it was unfair to use the term "proposed gas rate increase."

"They were faced with a potential problem but it's a matter of a business decision and they did not propose a rate increase," he said.

Six industrial customers of the city receive what is called an interruptible rate, a lower rate in exchange for being subject to cut off

See Council, 7-A

## Citizen tells DSS to back off on Roberts Williams

"Quit trying to shove Robert A. Williams out the door," Shelby resident Mary Smith told members of the Board of the Department of Social Services Monday afternoon.

Smith, who said she had never met Williams, praised him for "doing a fine job."

"This is the first time I have seen him in person and I just came here to defend him and say that I am proud of him."

Smith, alluding to Williams' ap-

pointment by county commissioners, said, "You passed on him and now it's time to stop all this and do a better job."

Earlier in the meeting, Williams tried to interject comments but Chairman Rosaline Hunt moved through the agenda in probably one of the shortest meetings in a year of the county board. The meeting opened promptly at 4 p.m. and adjourned at 5 p.m.

Hunt used a kitchen timer and

timed everyone, including herself, allowing each speaker a maximum of five minutes and calling each board member by name and giving each a maximum of five minutes to ask questions pertaining to agenda items.

Before the meeting opened, Williams asked Hunt why his agenda items were not included. Hunt said that she had not received the information early enough to include in member packets and as-

sured him that the agenda items would be on the agenda for next month's meeting.

Reporters covering the meeting said the meeting was one of the smoothest runnings they had seen in recent months. It was the second since Hunt became chairman and since board members Jim Crawley and Jerri Horn were seated with Williams and Stuart LeGrand. It was the first meeting since Williams was asked to step down

from the board by the county board of commissioners.

Williams said after the meeting he has no intentions of stepping down from the board. He says he has more work to accomplish.

Two motions by Williams died for a lack of a second and he also voted against the approval of the minutes, saying they were not in order.

See DSS, 7-A



Senior citizens crowd around Congresswoman Sue Myrick at the Kings Mountain Depot Tuesday on her visit to Kings Mountain to talk about the Medicare health program issue which comes up before the next Congress.

## Myrick meets with seniors on Medicaid

More than 125 senior citizens crowded into the Kings Mountain Senior Center Tuesday morning to share with Ninth District Congresswoman Sue Myrick their concerns about Medicare.

Myrick scheduled the local visit and others in this district to gather input before the next session of the U. S. Congress when health care will be prominent on the agenda.

"Senior citizens are frightened by some of the rhetoric they are hearing about Medicare bankruptcy," she said, noting that the Republicans are pushing options to tailor the needs of the individual in what she called a "preferred provider plan" and "medical savings accounts" to put the senior citizen in control of the health system instead of the government.

Several citizens said they were reluctant to endorse the program until they heard more about it and Myrick said she was at first "a bit leary of some of the proposals" but now that she is studying it she says the plan will simplify the paper-

work and give the person 65 and older the benefit of shopping around for rates from hospitals and doctors and receiving bills so they can check the rates they are charged.

Under the proposed system, she said there are provisions for Medicare to help pay the costs of prescription drugs and eyeglasses.

"Why is Congress cutting benefits for the poor?" asked one elderly lady.

"We're not cutting," said Myrick. "We are increasing Medicare benefits \$900 billion over a seven year budget."

She said that Medicare costs go up at the rate of 10 percent a year and they must be controlled.

"If we just ignore it Medicare will be no more seven years from now," she said.

Carolyn Bell, Senior Center employee, said she was concerned that immigrants who don't want to become American citizens are getting Medicare and Medicaid cards.

"That is something that the

Congress is also addressing," said Myrick.

Myrick said she is also meeting with key hospital administrators in the district to get input into how overbilling can be eliminated in some areas and suggestions on reforming the welfare system.

"We are blessed with good hospitals in this area but there is fraud in just about every profession in the country and that's what we are concerned about also."

Responding to a question, she said the government is looking at putting a limit of five years for a lifetime the length of a persons' dependence on welfare.

Concerned about what Myrick called a Medicare savings account for each customer, an elderly man said that one catastrophic illness could wipe out any savings account. Myrick said that up to \$1 million is provided the insured in the event of a catastrophic incident but the bottom line was to keep costs down.