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1995-96 sewer increase not put in effect

Error may have saved KM customers \$59,000

The city's 5800 sewer customers got an unexpected break to the tune of \$59,000 overall when a 3.5 percent across-the-boards rate increase was not passed on last year.

City Manager Gary Hicks said the error occurred in the Finance Department of which Maxine Parsons is Finance Director.

Mrs. Parsons, on medical leave, was unavailable for comment.

City Council had approved the increase last

June in the 1995-96 budget to cover increases in Kings Mountain's costs to Gastonia for Crowders Creek waste water treatment at the Gastonia plant.

Hicks said the error was discovered Monday when he and Water/Sewer Supt. Walt Ollis were comparing and upgrading the rates in the water/sewer budget for 1996-97 which includes a 7.76 percent increase for water and sewer. The budget is expected to be presented to City Council Tuesday night for formal approval.

"I hate this has happened but there is no way that I can find that the rates have been put into the computers and the city finance officer is out of town and unavailable to respond to the ques-

tions," said Hicks.

"The figures just don't show it."

Ollis said the city's largest water user, Spectrum, got the biggest break. He estimated the savings to this plant at \$25,000. Spectrum uses about 2.2 million gallons of water a day.

Hicks said he is doing more investigation into how the error occurred.

Ollis said the 1996-97 budget includes a 7.76 percent increase for water and sewer and he doesn't know if City Council will add on the additional 3.5 increase the city didn't get this year.

"We will just have to eat that loss," said Councilman Jerry Mullinax, who said he is op-

posed to trying to recoup the money from more increases.

Hicks sent a memorandum to Mayor Scott Neisler, the full City Council, City Attorney Mickey Corry and Auditor Darrell Keller late Tuesday evening.

The memorandum reads:

"The City Council authorized a 3.5 percent increase in sewer rates for the 1995-96 annual budget (City Council minutes dated June 27, 1995). This increase should have been effective July 1, 1995. I have reviewed all available records that pertain to this authorized increase. Finance department personnel were never instructed by the

See Sewer, 5-A

100-year-old Mary Keeter still slim, active in church

By ELIZABETH STEWART
of The Herald Staff

Mary Morris Alston Keeter greeted 175 friends and relatives at Kings Mountain Baptist Church Sunday in much the same manner she has endeared herself to them for 100 years.

In her excitement after her birthday party, Mrs. Keeter left behind her walking cane.

The golden years of her life have seen her curtail some of her activities but she still attends mid-week and evening church services with daughter Eoline Hord and nothing pleases her more than company. She takes no medication, is as slim and trim as she was on her wedding day and credits her long life to God and to her family for their care.

An avid reader, Mrs. Keeter can't read as much now but she continues to keep her Bible at her bedside in her bedroom in the house she and her late husband built

on Cleveland Avenue in 1939, a copy of a model home at the 1939 New York World's Fair.

Mrs. Keeter's two daughters and son-in-law, Mrs. D. F. Hord of Kings Mountain and Mr. and Mrs. Randolph Madison of Petersburg, Va., her seven grandchildren and their spouses and 14 great-grandchildren hosted a reception from 3:30- 5:30 p.m.

Mary Keeter's life has spanned depressions, American wars from the Spanish American to the Gulf Storm, and two centuries. She has viewed Halley's Comet twice—once as a girl in 1910 in Bertie County and once in Cleveland County.

In 1896, the year that Utah joined the union and Grover Cleveland was President of the United States, she was born on July 21 to Mary Eoline Morris Alston and Joseph Jefferson Alston in Powellsville in Bertie County near the Chowan River.

See Keeter, 3-A



MRS. J.B. KEETER

Sanitation issue on Council agenda

By ELIZABETH STEWART
of The Herald Staff

The decision on who will pick up the garbage is back on the City Council's lap and on the agenda for Tuesday's 7:30 p.m. Council meeting.

Monday night the city utilities committee of three Council members sent the controversial subject back to the full seven-member Council without a recommendation.

Public Works Supt. Karl Moss defended the city's bid proposal for privatization which was questioned by Council and one of the three bidders last month. He compared the costs, saying the city spends \$456,218 annually which computes to \$11.02 per person for 3,450 households compared with \$7.54 per person for garbage collection plus \$2.15 per person for recycling from the apparent low bidder, Cleveland Container of Shelby.

Don Edwards, an official of Cleveland Container, said the contract provides for no extra fee for backyard pickup at homes of the handicapped and elderly. Those people would apply, based on reasons of health, for the extra pickup. All other household garbage and recyclables would be picked up from rollout containers at curbside. Commercial and business customers would have to contract the service from the contractor.

Councilwoman Norma Bridges questioned the number of households the city now offers backyard pickup and said that number does not jibe with the census population figures which show a total of 3,564 households. She was joined by Councilman Phil Hager in questioning a proposed 10-year contract. Hager suggested that a door-to-door survey be made of the area so that no one would

See Garbage, 3-A

Bridges wants public hearing on sanitation

Councilwoman Norma Bridges said Council moved too fast in awarding a contract for privatization of garbage collection and she is calling for a public hearing on the issue for public input.

"I don't understand the big rush," said Bridges who joined Councilman Jerry Mullinax in voting against the contract when it was recently approved 5-2 by Council.

Bridges said she has a problem with awarding a 10-year contract to a private contractor.

"Was the contract changed after it was voted on by Council" is one of the questions she wants to address at Tuesday's Council meeting when the subject comes up again on the agenda.

Bridges also calls it "unfair" for the city to stop garbage pickup of commercial and business customers who have not had time to budget for the service they would be paying a private contractor.

"The schools will really be hurt by this action," she said after the city utilities committee Monday night failed to make a recommendation to settle the controversy.

Bridges said Council should look at the bidding procedures again since there were questions raised by one of the bidders and rebid the contract if it decides privatization is the answer.

"I'm not saying I am against privatization but I don't think Kings Mountain is ready for it yet," she said.

Industrial park still on hold

Advisors: Don't play politics

Look at the merits of the sites, not politics, was the advice of State Department of Commerce leaders attending a three-hour meeting with the Cleveland County Economic Development Commission Tuesday in Shelby.

When the meeting ended, the EDC was no closer to making a recommendation to the county board of commissioners on the site for a controversial, proposed Cleveland County industrial park.

The EDC delayed making a recommendation for at least a month to give other land owners in the county time to come forward with properties if they want to sell for a park.

"We can't sit on this forever but I recommend that we urge all landowners with land big enough for a park and willing to sell it to contact the EDC Office in Shelby so that we can be on the agenda for the August 20th meeting of the county board of commissioners," Chairman Ed Hamilton said.

A large crowd apparently expecting action filled the first floor conference room and looked at maps and heard a review by EDC Director Steve Nye of 10 sites, mostly farm properties, which are now available.

The EDC had been charged by the county commission last month to evaluate the various sites and make a recommendation to the seven-member county board for a decision.

Bill Stephens, Deputy Director of the North Carolina Department of Commerce, said it's essential that commissioners making the ultimate decision select a site it can sell to clients and look at merits instead of the politics.

Four county commissioners were present: Mary Accor, Jim Crawley, E. T. Vanhoy and Ralph Gilbert.

Stephens was joined by Doug Byrd and Penny Anderson Tuesday on a review of the several sites with the EDC board.

He cautioned commissioners to examine the sites with an eye to a site that is close to the interstate highway system and particularly a site which has water and sewer and such details as close access to the airport, development costs and the identi-

ty of neighbors along the site.

"The size of property that you acquire will demonstrate your faith in your county," said Stephens who said the team stands ready to offer some advice but the decision rests with the county commissioners.

"You have several good sites but you need to look at all the pluses and compare them with the minuses and then choose the one with the most pluses," said Stephens.

Questions came from Gilbert, Shelby Mayor Mike Philbeck and Robert Williams.

Gilbert was very vocal, raising the same concerns he had raised previously at the county commission meeting and objecting strongly when discussion centered on the possible giving

See Park, 5-A

KINGS MOUNTAIN PEOPLE



Jim Belt, left, and his father, Bill

Picking and singing keeps Belts on the go

Bill and Jim Belt share a special love other than that of a close father and son in a close-knit family.

Since they both love gospel music and anything country their motto these days is "have guitar and camper, will travel."

The senior Belt drives 120 miles some weekends to hear his son sing.

Bill Belt, 78, and his bride of four years, Virginia Collins Belt, along with Jim's wife of 12 years, Brenda Ramsey Belt, have been the cheering section for every gospel singing at which the younger Belt has performed the past seven years. Jim admits they are his Number One critics.

Recently Jim moved his musical instruments out of his home on Wildwood Drive to practice at his office on Canler Street. But when Dad comes calling most every morning they sit on the sun porch and more often than not the senior Belt is an inspiration for another of Jim's songs.

It was natural that Jim would write a song about his Dad who follows him to bookings in the mountains and hums right along with him when Jim takes out his guitar and plays just like they used to do in the "good ole days."

Five years ago Jim Belt cut his first album, "Waiting By The River" which was followed by the second "There's A Reason." He wrote all the words to the third album of music, "The Answer." "The Door To My Father's House" will come out in time for Father's Day next year.

The fourth album parallels the love of the Heavenly Father with Jim's earthly father and the words came easily one morning when the senior Belt was recalling that the door was always open for his children to come home. That began the inspiration for song writing.

Jim's first song was actually a poem that was set to music af-

See Belts, 3-A

PICNIC IN THE PARK



Members of the Sisk, Blackwell, Bradley and McAbee families took advantage of a brief break in high temperatures Tuesday to picnic at the Kings Mountain Walking Track. Left to right are Brandy Sisk, Travis Sisk, Deborah Sisk, Trey Sisk, Austin Blackwell, Amber Sisk, Adam Blackwell, Aaron Bradley, Crissy Sisk, Becky Sisk, and Patricia McAbee.