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Citizens to KM: Quit squabbling over 17 trees

Resident says Community Center disgraceful

East School teacher Mike Smith blasted City Council Tuesday night for what he termed the "disgraceful" condition of the Kings Mountain Community Center and questioned the \$300,000 budget for Parks & Recreation.

"Young people deserve better," he told the board.

"If you thought the Center was a source of pride and you wanted it to be a showplace you'd be doing something about it," he said.

Smith said he toured the facil-

ity on Cleveland Avenue Tuesday and came away embarrassed at what he saw. He said the interior is in disrepair and the exterior is cluttered with mess.

Smith also took issue with City Manager Jimmy Maney's assessment that Deal Street pool renovation is not a priority in the 1997-98 city budget.

"I want a commitment that the pool will be repaired or replaced," he told the board.

But Maney said the pool had major leaks and was closed last

summer by the health department. He suggested the city look for about 40-50 acres of land and in the future build a multi-million dollar recreational complex that would include among other things a pool.

"There is no immediate fix to the Deal Street pool situation," he said.

Responding to question of Ward 2 Councilman Jerry Mullinax, Maney said the staff would look into the possibility of expanded use of the Neisler Natatorium

The crowd attending Thursday's town meeting in East Kings Mountain were almost unanimous in their priorities for City Council in the new fiscal year.

+ Quit squabbling over trees in a parking lot and get moving on the Ingles Super Market project on Oak Grove Road.

+ By next summer open the Deal Street Pool so kids can have a place to swim.

+ Clean up the old Pauline Mill area which burned last December.

+ Continue back yard garbage pickup once a week.

+ Make repairs to the Community Center where signs

are now put up that say "gym closed to public."

"I'm mad as h---," said Richard Styers who said backyard garbage pickup was the only service he had ever received from the City of Kings Mountain.

"We can't get our sewage lines or roads fixed," he said. Styers said Kings Mountain citizens paid for Moss Lake with increased water bills and now it's time for the city fathers to reimburse the taxpayers instead of raising department head salaries.

Peggy Gladden said the city should enforce its codes.

East School teacher Mike Smith said he was disappointed

that the city had not repaired Deal Street pool. "We've been told the city fathers are going to fill in the pool for a ball field," he said.

"Some kids can't play ball and we have enough ball fields, we need swimming facilities," he said. But Charles Smith said citizens gave money to the KM Indoor Pool Foundation and the public should have more access to Neisler Natatorium at the high school.

Ward II Councilman Jerry Mullinax, who called the meeting, said he was pleased at the turnout.

See Meeting, 10-A

KM family remembers first casualty of WWI

Memorial Day, a time to honor the nation's war dead, has special memories for the Green family of Kings Mountain.

This week the Greens received an enlarged framed portrait of Pvt. Otis D. Green in uniform which Legionnaires plan to hang in Otis D. Green Post 155, American Legion, so named to honor the fallen hero of World War I and the first Cleveland County soldier to die in that war.

Pvt. Otis David Green was the namesake of his nephew, Otis Green of Idell Street in Kings Mountain.

Otis Green, 78, a World War II veteran of the Peacetime Army 1937-40 and a Gunners Mate in the Wartime Navy, enlisted the help of his son, Dean Green, and his sister-in-law, Frances Green, in having the print copied and in obtaining some family history about the young soldier they never knew. Pvt. Green was also the uncle of Donald and Randall Green, Margaret Neill, Florella Beverly and Virginia Grigg, all of Kings Mountain and nephew of the late Opal, Kenneth and Bud Green.

A native of Boiling Springs, Otis D. Green was born Jan. 23, 1888. He enlisted April 8, 1917 in the regular Army and according to family members

"went straight to war." He died March 1, 1918.

"I remember hearing my late husband say that the family hadn't heard from Otis in months and received a letter from the War Department March 4, 1918 which stated that he was a member of the First Company 18th Infantry Training Battalion, American Expedition Forces, stationed in France," said Frances.

According to faded 1918 clippings from The Kings Mountain Herald "about 2,500 people were here Sunday afternoon to attend the military funeral held over the remains of Otis D. Green, which arrived from France Saturday morning. "A large crowd was expected and it had been arranged to hold the exercise on the campus of the graded school but it looked so much like rain that the meeting was taken to the auditorium. Not more than a third of the folks present could get standing room in the school but hundreds remained on the grounds and joined the procession to the cemetery.

"The casket was draped in an American flag and was borne by six soldiers in uniform while about 50 others in uniform under the command of Sgt. Major C. E. Carpenter marched after. See Green, 10-A



TIME TO HONOR - Memorial Day is a time to honor fallen heroes. Otis Green, a World War II veteran, holds a photograph of his uncle, Pvt. Otis D. Green who at age 30 was the first Cleveland County soldier killed in World War I and for whom American Legion Post 155 is named.

KM considers vote on four-year terms

Voters could decide probably at the polls in November if Council serves two or four year terms, the seven member City Council and Mayor Scott Neisler all agreed Tuesday night.

And that decision would come only after a June 24 public hearing in which citizens would be invited to give input into whether Kings Mountain should change its charter and return to the old system of electing officials every four years on staggered terms.

Council adopted a resolution of intent Tuesday which sets in motion the complicated steps in the process.

Leading off the lengthy discussion at Tuesday's Council meeting, the mayor said citizens changed the terms of office two years ago and Council would have to go back to the people if they wanted to amend the charter.

City Attorney Mickey Corry said if the public hearing in June results in Council calling for a referendum that Council could take action in August to call for the election. Corry would then submit the plan to the U. S. Justice Department and if preclearance is given to amend the charter the question of changing terms from two to four year staggered terms would be on the November ballot.

Two year terms of the seven members of Council and the mayor are up in November. The outcome of the term vote, if it is held, would not affect the winners who would serve only a two year term, said Corry.

Councilwoman Norman Bridges asked who wanted to amend the charter and why was the item on the agenda. City Manager Jimmy Maney said several Council members and several citizens had expressed the idea to take the matter to voters again.

"Some felt that everyone had not voted his preference two years ago when a petition was circulated by citizens and re-elected in the two year term for elected officials," said Maney.

Councilman Rick Murphrey said if a referendum is indeed called by Council that it should be coordinated with the general election to cut down on expenses of a special election. All council members agreed and Corry said it would take time to get the plan in the works.

"During the public hearing we may find out that citizens like it the way it is," said Councilman Dean Spears.

"We can certainly get more done in four years but the citizens have spoken and we have to listen," said Councilman Phil Hager.

Corry explained the time frame is important if Council plans to put the question on the ballot in November 1997.

Corry said a new four year staggered term, if approved, could not begin until 1999. He said in November 1999 some elected officials would run for two year terms and some candidates would run for four year terms.

"How would you determine who runs?" asked the mayor.

"I don't know unless you draw straws," said Corry.

"If a newcomer comes on the board it takes him two years to get his feet wet," said Councilman Jerry White.

Corry said public hearing must be called within 45 days after Council adopts the resolution of intent to amend the charter. Council has the authority to allow a referendum or vote on the matter but the date for a special election may not be more than 90 days after the adoption of the ordinance which sets out the amendment and calls for the vote. Under

See Terms, 10-A

Proposed KM budget includes pay raises

Cost of living raises ranging from 3 to 10 percent are projected in the 1997-98 budget for the city's 160 employees. The cost to the city will be \$250,000.

City Manager Jimmy Maney, in a report from the city's ad hoc committee on the new pay plan, said all employees currently earning under \$20,000 will receive a 10 percent increase, employees earning \$20,000 and under \$25,000 will receive a five percent increase and employees earning over \$25,000 will receive a three per-

cent increase.

"The raises are long overdue," said Mayor Scott Neisler at Tuesday's City Council meeting in which the full board supported the pay raise but three members, Councilmen Ralph Grindstaff, Jerry White and Dean Spears, questioned paying 30 percent of the cost of insurance for employee dependents.

Full-time employees also receive retirement benefits and the city pays the full cost of medical insurance for employees. City Council, but not their

families, are included in the medical insurance package.

White, a former county employee, said Cleveland County pays for no dependent coverage for employees. Grindstaff, a state employee of the Department of Motor Vehicles, says the state pays no dependent coverage.

"The city has no business paying insurance for dependents of employees," said Grindstaff who asked Maney to show him the costs and the names of other cities that pay

these type of fringe benefits.

Councilman Dean Spears also questioned the insurance package, saying he also supported the pay plan.

"We have always given some dependent coverage as part of our fringe benefits," said Mayor pro tem Phil Hager. "There's no use in raising some of these folks if we take it away by going up on insurance costs."

The mayor agreed with Hager. He said the costs of

See Budget, 10-A

Downtown stop sign causing confusion

"It's scary," is the reaction of downtown employees to the removal of traffic lights at the intersection of Mountain and Battleground, the old bank corner.

Stella Putnam, who works at Neisler Brothers, says she hears "a lot of tires squealing" and observes cars coming down the hill on Mountain Street too fast and not slowing for the new caution light.

"It was not a good decision on the part of Council and the state Department of Transportation and I am afraid someone will get killed," said Mrs. Putnam.

Other downtown merchants, including Smith & Wilson Attorneys, KM Antique Mall and Jim Childers share her concerns.

"Someone is going to get killed," Childers told City Council Tuesday night.

"It's not worth a life to save money on stop lights," he said, encouraging Council members to watch traffic on any given day at the busy intersection.

"My wife and I run a business on Battleground. You closed three parking spaces and our customers have to park across the street at the railroad. They can't cross the street now to do business at our shop and others because of the through traffic," he said.

Smith & Wilson attorneys, who occupy the old bank building, lost two parking spaces to give motorists more visibility.

But Putnam said it's confusing.

"I saw one motorist who thought the light was malfunctioning and she sat there at the corner for five minutes with car horns honking," she said.

Putnam says it's just as confusing for motorists trying to cross the railroad from West Mountain because the crepe myrtle trees block their view of Battleground Avenue. "That light was taken down too and this is a busy corner," she said.

Putnam said she has seen several close calls. She also questions the new traffic pattern at Mountain, King and Phifer Road. "Police have been giving tickets to students cutting through the parking lots at Revco to try to get to the high school and that's the only way they can get there in early morning because folks turning off King have a straight shot to Phifer Road without stopping."

Putnam said city officials should rethink the new policy which Mayor Scott Neisler says is designed to improve the traffic flow.

Chief of Police Bob Hayes acknowledged his department has had at least five complaints from people who had near misses in busy traffic at the

See Intersection, 5-A



PEAK GENERATION FACILITY DEDICATED - City of Kings Mountain officials dedicated the city's \$2 million dollar Peak Generation Facility Tuesday. From left to right, City Manager Jimmy Maney, Council members Jerry Mullinax, Ralph Grindstaff, Norma Bridges, Phil Hager and Rick Murphrey, consulting engineer Rick Chapman and general contractor Ronnie McDaniel.