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**WORKING ON BASEBALL FIELDS** - Employees of Champion Contracting (top photo) are hard at work fine-grading the new baseball fields at Deal Street Park, but one good day of work is usually followed by a day of rain which turns the fields into a huge mud hole (bottom photo).

**Weather delays construction of ball fields, but city expects them to be ready for play**

The weatherman has thrown the City a curve in its efforts to get new ball fields ready for the youth this summer, but the City is hanging in there and taking its cuts, and even if it takes an extra inning they're determined to see balls flying out of the park.  
The City last year approved building seven new youth league fields - four at the Deal Street complex and three at Davidson Park - and they will more than double the number of fields available to youth league baseball, softball and soccer teams.  
But the rain that has hit the area at least one day of every week this year has put construction behind. This week Champion Contracting is fine-grading the fields at Deal Street and they predict that if they can get five straight days of dry weather they can have that phase of the project completed.  
City Manager Jimmy Maney said most of the remainder of the work - things such as installing light poles, electricity and fencing - will be done by city crews.  
"All lighting and material are laying on the lots and the crews are ready to go," he said. "It's just a matter of bringing it all together."  
All that should come to pass over the next three weeks (knock on wood), weather permitting, he said.  
Maney said there is a slight chance the opening of the season will be delayed, and opening of practice will definitely be delayed because the City doesn't want anyone playing on the fields before they are completely ready. He says he believes in the philosophy "if you're going to do something, do it right."  
"What we will do is look ahead to the all-star dates and figure back the minimum number of games they'll have to play to comply with

all the rules," he said. "We may start a little later but we still anticipate playing the required amount of games."  
With seven fields available instead of the usual three, Maney said he doesn't foresee a problem.  
"When the weather starts getting warmer, coaches like to get started practicing their kids," he said, "but we're not going to do that this year. We're going to go ahead and register players like we normally do but won't have the draft until a couple weeks before the season opens. If we go ahead and draft now they'll get on the fields where they shouldn't be."  
Maney said the City has been criticized for not starting construction earlier, but he said construction couldn't begin last fall because of soccer and the project is more cost efficient if it is contracted as a whole rather than in pieces.  
"We have done a lot of preliminary work behind the scenes that no one really sees," Maney said. "Right now it looks like a bigger mess than it really is. But when it comes together it will come together quick because we have in-house crews to make it happen. We don't have to depend on outside people to come in and set poles and move wire."  
The new fields will feature brick-dust infields and sodded outfields, but Maney did say the sod this year may be temporary.  
Once completed, he said the parks will be something the citizens can be proud of.  
"We'll have seven little league fields when this project is completed, compared to three before," he noted. "Our girls have always had to go to the middle school or wherever to be able to play. One of the reasons we started the schedule so early in the past was because we didn't have the fields to play the number of games we needed to play."  
The brick dust infields, along

**Gary Stewart**  
Editor

with additional drainage, will mean fewer games will be postponed because of rain, he said.  
"We want a good level playing field with good material on it," he said. "If we get that from the beginning it will take care of itself. Even with rain, most of the water will be draining away from the fields. We may not have a rain-out now unless it's just a downpour. They're set up and designed where they will drain better."  
Maney said over 1,000 kids are involved in summer ball in Kings Mountain, including outside-city children who wouldn't have the opportunity to play if sports weren't offered in Kings Mountain. Cleveland County doesn't have county-wide recreation but allocates \$47,000 a year toward the \$400,000 budget so outside-city kids can play.  
"We have almost as many outside city limits kids as inside city limits kids, but how can you say no to a kid?," Maney said. "We can't charge them. If we charged them what it costs to break even they couldn't afford to participate."  
Maney said nominal registration fees are collected from players, but those go to provide officiating. All personnel and other costs of running the program are paid through city taxes.  
The new complex, which will also include a new swimming pool, will utilize the parking at the Community Center. Maney said there will be just a few parking spaces at the "top of the hill" near

what was the old grass little league field, and on-street parking will be prohibited.  
"People may have to walk a little further," he said, "and the main reason for that was to insure the safety of the kids. We have been very fortunate to have that through traffic all these years and kids haven't gotten run over. It can be very dangerous loading and unloading kids and people parking on the side of the road. The police basically turned their heads but they had so many complaints about double parking and people parking on Ridge Street and in illegal parking places. They're going to be very strict this year. They're going to post no parking signs, and if you're caught parking there you're going to get a ticket."  
Maney said the City is considering putting guard rails at the top of the hill at Davidson Park to keep cars from coming off the bank into the playing area.  
"We want to create a safe environment for our kids," he said. "If we can save one from getting run over we've accomplished our job. It doesn't have to be a kid participating in the program, it can be somebody who has come to watch."  
Maney said all phases of the total park project - such as the swimming pool and buildings, will not be ready by this summer, but the City is committed to having the ball fields ready.  
Meanwhile, as the weather warms and players and coaches get the itch to start practicing, he asks for patience.  
"When these fields are finished we're going to have something that we're really proud of and the kids will really enjoy," he said. "This is just the beginning. We'll build on this foundation to improve our facilities each year, and to maintain good facilities. That's what it takes to run a successful program."

**KMPD to begin bicycle patrol**  
Police riding bicycles may soon be a new wrinkle for Kings Mountain in law enforcement.  
Chief Richard Reynolds said bicycles are new tools to fight crime that are working in other communities.  
Reynolds unveiled the new project at Friday's City Council retreat and said he will talk to civic projects and private individuals to fund more bicycles.  
"We will start with two bikes with two officers on each squad to be trained along with COPS officers for a total of 10 officers to man this program," said Reynolds.  
Captain Houston Corn said the idea for using bicycles is to help police get into communities to build rapport with the public. "Police can be in a community on a bike and without a siren or a police car to alert the suspects," he said.  
Reynolds said the program is working in other communities and he sees no reason why it won't work in Kings Mountain.  
"We are committed to be a drug free community," said Reynolds in his presentation. He said that all officers would be involved in community oriented policing, not just those assigned to COPS. He said police would be highly visible in downtown, at shopping centers and in stores located in the various communities of the city.  
"We encourage business owners and citizens to help police solve crimes in their communities," said Reynolds.  
duty here would cut down the time and costs associated with booking suspects in Shelby.  
Reynolds also announced that plans are in the works for a Drug, Assistance Resistance Education program to be initiated at the Kings Mountain Middle School in the Fall of 1998 with focus on the seventh grade. He said the program would take about two weeks.  
Reynolds said when the new police department is up and running that he will request from the court system that a magistrate be assigned to the facility. He said a magistrate on each semester. Currently, the D. A. R. E. program is underway in fifth grades in the elementary schools.  
The Chief said the reorganizations of rank structure in the police department will mean that sergeants will be in charge of squads and the corporal will be second in charge of a squad. Reynolds said the rank of Corporal will be selected in the same way that Sergeants are selected. A person will be chosen on ability, knowledge and seniority, not just seniority alone. A pay scale should be made for the Corporal rank with this person being responsible for a squad in the absence of the Sergeant.  
He also said plans are in the works for a reorganization of reserve units with a clear separation of part time officers and reserve officers. He said duties and responsibilities would be outlined.  
Reynolds said he would present to the City Council a suggestion for a new custom badge for the King Mountain Police Department which would contain city seals and city colors and possibly other landmarks of Kings Mountain. He said the total cost of 476 badges is \$4,180. He said he would like to present the new badges when the department moves into the new law enforcement center.  
Reynolds said the police department is currently using the old water plant at Deal Street for a joint training facility for the police and fire departments. Building searches and repelling are targets of special response teams and police officers also practice building searches and felony stops.

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