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KM Hospital withdraws polling site offer

Chairman of Elections Board says sites probably won't change

by ELIZABETH STEWART
of The Herald Staff

Pat Spangler, Chairman of the Cleveland County Board of Elections, said Tuesday that since the Kings Mountain Hospital has withdrawn its offer of a site for a polling place that it's very likely the Kings Mountain polling place will still be the Kings Mountain Community Center.

"I can't speak for the other member of the board but with the congressional elections coming up September 15 and the county commission races still up in the air I don't see how we'll have time to search for another voting site in Kings Mountain," he said.

Spangler, Shelby Democrat, said the Cleveland County Democratic Party has nominated Kingstown resident K. C. Withrow to succeed the

late James Hoskins on the board of elections. Spangler said Withrow has not been officially appointed. Ruth Wilson, Republican, secretary of the board, is vacationing in Alaska.

Citing "negative publicity could set back the progress we have made to restore public confidence in Kings Mountain Hospital," Hank Neal on Friday withdrew her offer to the Board of Elections to use Kings Mountain Hospital as a polling site.

Neal, the hospital's administrator, said in her letter to Director of Elections Debra Blanton that the Hospital Advisory Council had expressed "significant concern over the possibility that the group protesting the site would inflict some public relations damage to the hospital in their fervor to oppose the site change from the Kings Mountain Community Center and because of their advice and opinions I must withdraw my offer to utilize the hospital as a polling site."

"Not being a native of Kings Mountain, I am not

as familiar with local politics as the members of the Hospital Advisory Council," she wrote. "My desire was to offer the hospital as a community resource."

A copy of the letter was forwarded to City Attorney Mickey Corry with a note from Blanton that there would be no submission to the U. S. Justice Department.

"It was my presumption that the Board of Elections was withdrawing their request to change the polling site from the Community Center to the Hospital," said Corry. Ms. Blanton was out of the office and unavailable for comment.

But Corry said his office sent a copy Wednesday morning of the resolution passed unanimously June 9 by the City Council opposing the change of polling places for Precinct 2 voters to the U. S. Justice Department.

Ward 4 Councilman Gene White, who has led the council's efforts to restore the polling site to the Community Center, said he was acting on behalf of

voters of Kings Mountain and said there had been a misunderstanding about the role of the city and the county board of elections.

"We fully realize statutorily they (elections board) have certain powers but we're paying that board \$4,000 a year to run the city election and feel entitled to some consultation since we know the town better than anyone else. It's just common sense to want to sit down with the board and try to resolve issues.

"We can take back the elections on a 90 day notice," he said.

Assuming the Precinct 2 polling place will remain at the community center, White said he will encourage in a motion at the June 30 council meeting a meeting of the elections board with the city council and Mrs. Blanton to try to iron out any real or potential problems voters have with the Community Center site and correct them before the next election.

Library campaign now over the top

The Children's First Campaign for \$524,000 to build a new children's wing at Jacob S. Mauney Memorial Library has topped its goal.

Librarian Rose Turner accepted a second gift from the Kings Mountain Kiwanis Club Monday, a \$2800 check representing the proceeds from the civic club's recent pancake breakfast fundraiser.

Kiwanis President Hal Schwantes said the club had made an initial gift of \$2000 for a feasibility study.

"We are just delighted to hear that the goal has been topped and that more contributions are coming in that will enable the library to do some additional construction of the lower level along with the upper level children's wing," said Schwantes. Under the original capital improvements plan,

the lower level was to remain unfinished and would be available for future expansion. With additional funds, the lower level will be completed and be available as additional meeting space for library functions and other community meetings.

Construction is expected to begin in the fall and the new wing - to be called the Harris Wing in honor of the late Senator J. Ollie Harris, his wife of 62 years, Abbie Wall Harris, and their son, the late John Oliver Harris Jr., a successful Houston land developer, will be completed in 1999.

The campaign, which gained wide support from the community, was kicked off by a \$100,000 donation from Harris Funeral Home, which was owned and operated for many years by Ollie Harris and is now owned by John

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GIFT TO LIBRARY - Rev. Hal Schwantes, pastor of Central United Methodist Church, presents a check for \$2800 to Rose Turner, Mauney Memorial Librarian, to be applied to the fund for the new Harris Children's Wing. The campaign for funds has topped its goal.

Minette Mills' closing put 90 people out of job

Minette Mills, Grover's oldest industry which since 1890 had employed many families in the community and seen decline in recent years, closed Friday.

Employees reporting for the first shift at 7 a.m. Friday were sent home and told that the 90 workers on two shifts were out of a job.

Gail Robinson, her mother, Jeanette, her father, Jimmy, her brother, Buddy, and her sister, had all worked at Minette over the years.

"We knew the plant was in financial trouble but they told us all along that it was being sold for a continuing operation and our jobs were not in jeopardy because this was a small community and they didn't want anyone to be without work," said Gail, a computer operator with 24 years service.

"We were given no notice until Friday morning after bankers called the owners Thursday at 5 p.m. and told them Minette had to close," she said.

"I guess I'll go out looking for another job."

But Gail's mother, a 37 year veteran of the Grover plant and drawing social security payments may elect to stay home. Mr. Robinson, who started skinning quills for Minette in 1948 at age 16 and learned to weave back in Minette's heyday when some 500 workers were employed, retired from the slasher room in 1988 after 40 years. Robinson's son, Buddy, had worked at the mill for 20 years. A daughter, Joyce Ann Houser, now works for Commercial Shearing in Kings Mountain.

"I remember when we had three shifts running all the time

and making our own yarn," said Robinson who went to work with the founder of the company, C. F. (Cap) Harry. The Harry family sold the plant in 1973 and subsequently built Grover Industries.

"It was a good place to work and most everyone in Grover worked at one time at Minette," he said.

"But things have gone downhill in recent years," said Robinson.

Minette, a manufacturer of upholstery and bedspreads, was plagued by financial problems and, the plant's activity and employment was on the decline.

Minette had been in foreclosure proceedings with Standard Chartered Bank, New York City, for 10 months. Owners, Thomas and Eric Tang, brothers, owe the bank as much as \$4 million on the property. Minette owes the county more than \$200,000 in back taxes, dating to 1994, and the Town of Grover about \$50,000, which represents about 10 percent of the town's budget.

"It really hurts. I really feel bad for those folks who worked there," said Grover Mayor Ronald Queen. "But the company hasn't met its obligations to the community by paying its taxes." But Queen said the county had filed tax foreclosure proceedings on the plant last month but the county did not order the plant closed down.

Queen said the only way Grover will get its money is for the property to be sold. Minette is currently owned by Chinese brothers who purchased Minette in 1982. The mill has changed ownership about four times in the last 25 years.

School Board wants to end discipline problems

A "fairly dramatic" increase in both physical and verbal disrespect by students toward employees has prompted the Kings Mountain Board of Education to set a goal to develop a comprehensive plan to assure improved student behaviour.

Supt. Dr. Bob McRae said the most frequent concern among employees is the growing number of student behaviour problems on campus.

"We simply must demand appropriate respect from students and rein in on student behaviour," he said after the board adopted four goals for 1998-99 at Monday's night meeting of the Kings Mountain Board of Education.

The first goal is to reach expected growth or better as defined by the State Board of Education on all state-mandated end-of-grade and end-of-course tests in all subjects at each school. The third goal is to promote school, parental and community support for high expectations for all students. The fourth goal is to promote the successes of the school system.

McRae said the first two board goals are the strongest and he felt the schools are moving in the right direction and results are proving the worth of the first goal to reach expected growth.

McRae said a community task force will be asked to look at the

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Assistant Superintendent King to retire

Dr. Jane King, Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services, announced Monday to the Kings Mountain Board of Education that she will retire in July 1999.

"Mrs. King's shoes will be hard to fill because she had done so much for Kings Mountain school children," said Supt. Dr. Bob McRae after the board met in closed session to discuss personnel.

"Mrs. King gets major credit for the good work that's been done," said McRae. "It's a major loss for our system," he said of King's retirement.

McRae said King will retire at the end of September but will be able to stay on contract with the system until next July to help the system work through a transition period.

A former North Elementary teacher, West and North School Principal, supervisor of the Exceptional Children's Program, Director of Instruction at the Central Office, and currently Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services, King joined the Kings Mountain schools 29 years ago. She worked with the state for one year.

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New swimming pool may be ready for July 4 opening

With only 12 working days left until July 4th, workers are running a tight schedule to finish up the new city swimming pool and adjoining buildings at Jake Early Memorial Park.

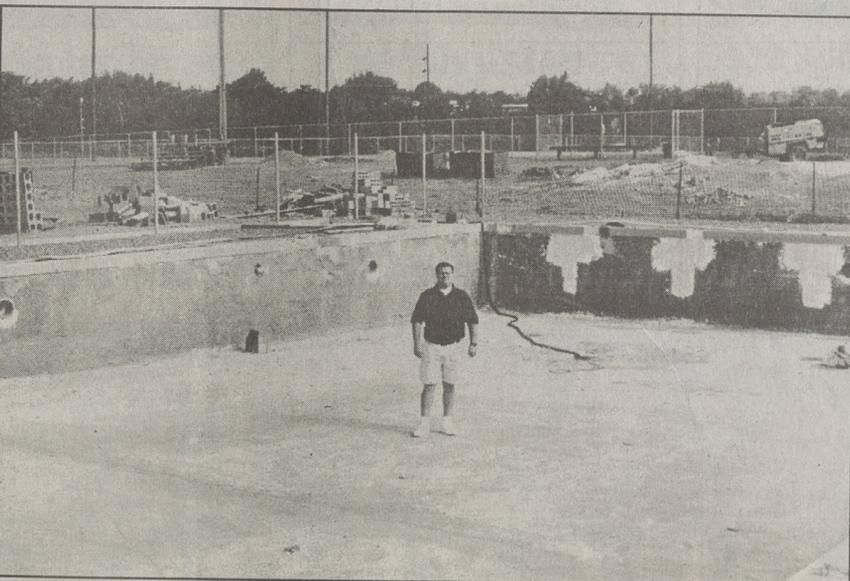
Both City Manager Jimmy Maney and Recreation Director Tripp Hord say architects and contractors have promised that all will be ready, weather permitting, for a big Independence Day celebration. Ceremonies at the nearby walking track and tours of the buildings are scheduled.

"I want to put to bed some rumors circulating in town that the city doesn't have the money to finish up Davidson Park," said Maney. He said the city is in the best financial shape ever and is poised to move forward with capital projects and to begin those projects budgeted for next year. Maney said the city is waiting

on design drawings from engineers before completing the Davidson project and still needs to complete landscaping, some paving and other finishing touches on the Deal Street parks. "We wanted to get the Deal Street park finished as much as possible for ball season and we did," said Maney.

Maney said members of the recreation committee have approved final drawings for the Davidson Park and those drawings are in the hands of the engineer for the project.

Jim Stewart, architect for the new law enforcement center, brought brick and roof color samples to Maney Tuesday for review. The former Regal Building downtown is being painted for police who will soon be moving out of the old police building on S. Piedmont Avenue.



NOT IN THE SWIM YET - City Recreation Director Tripp Hord stands on the site of the new city swimming pool at Jake Early Park. Work is progressing on a July 4th deadline for opening of the new facility.

Gas tax exemption passes second reading

A bill sponsored by Sen. Walter Dalton to exempt eight cities, including Kings Mountain, from a tax on natural gas, passed the N. C. Senate 42-3 Tuesday but it faces a tight schedule since, without the bill, the Department of Revenue directive will take effect July 1.

The bill now goes to the N.C. House, where a committee will review it, and then is voted on and goes to Gov. Jim Hunt for his signature before it becomes law.

"No tax on gas cities" was prompted by a May 5 directive by the Department of Revenue which would have removed the tax exemptions historically enjoyed by eight gas tax cities, including Kings Mountain, Shelby and Bessemer City in this area, Greenville, Lexington, Monroe, Rocky Mount and Wilson, cities that have their own piped gas systems.

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