

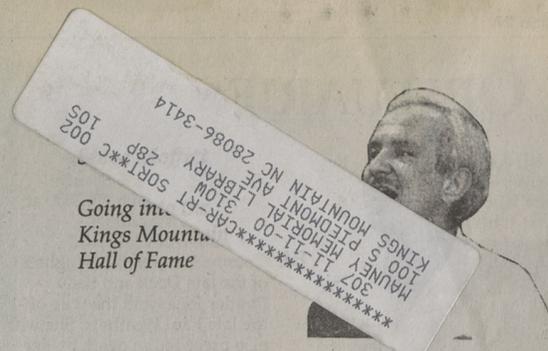
KINGS MOUNTAIN The Herald

Thursday, March 23, 2000

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Since 1889

50 Cents



COMMUNITY

Commissioner forum at KM Woman's Club

The Kings Mountain Woman's Club will host a forum for Cleveland County Board of Commissioners candidates Monday, March 27 at 7 p.m. The meeting is open to the public. 8A

KM woman shot, husband kills self

A Sunday afternoon shooting left at Kings Mountain woman in serious condition, and her husband dead from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound. 3A

CCB announces merger with bank

CCB Bancorp, which operates a bank in Kings Mountain, has announced a merger with National Commerce Bancorporation. 3A

Mayor wants your help with cleanup

Mayor Rick Murphrey announced the first phase of Operation Spring Cleanup at Tuesday night's City Council meeting. 3A

KM Little Theatre play opens March 24

The Kings Mountain Little Theatre is preparing for "Five Tellers Dancing in the Rain." It opens March 24 at 7:30 p.m. at the Kings Mountain Woman's Club. 7A

SPORTS

Canoeing popular in Cleveland County

You don't have to drive far or go to great expense to enjoy some great water sports. The Broad River Greenway and other public facilities within a short driving distance of Cleveland County offer quality canoeing, kayaking and other recreational opportunities. 1B

Mountaineers top Pisgah in baseball

Kings Mountain's bats came alive Saturday in a 14-2 nonconference victory over Canton Pisgah at Lancaster Field. 4B

Students prepare for Special Olympics

Kings Mountain school children are preparing for the annual Special Olympics competition in April. 3B

KM soccer team has streak snapped

Kings Mountain High's girls soccer team had its unbeaten and unscored on streaks snapped by Forestview in last week's Gaston County Tournament at Ashbrook. But the Lady Mountaineers bounced back to finish third and now have their sights set on conquering their county rivals in this week's Cleveland County Tournament at Crest. 3B



A capacity crowd filled the auditorium at Cleveland Community College Tuesday night to hear attorney Gil Middlebrooks give his report on school merger.

Moving toward merger

County commissioners vote 4-1 to begin plans

BY ALAN HODGE
Staff Writer

School merger took a giant step towards becoming reality Tuesday evening when the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners voted 4-1 to give their attorney Gil Middlebrooks the go ahead to begin drawing up plans for combining the county's three school systems into one, Willie McIntosh cast the sole negative vote.

The vote came at the end of a lengthy presentation by Middlebrooks where he spelled out the case for merger. Middlebrooks' report to the commissioners consisted of 125 pages of data he had gathered from the Kings Mountain, Shelby City, and Cleveland County school boards, The Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh, the Cleveland County Chamber, the U.S. Department of the Census, various educators, and the Institute of Government. Of the reports total length, Middlebrooks' executive summary covered just nine pages.

Cost to the county for Middlebrooks' services have amounted to \$16,000 as of the end of

February, according to assistant county manager David Dear. The final bill has not been tallied.

Prior to Middlebrooks' hour-long Power Point presentation, the chairmen of the county's three school systems were allowed to address commissioners. Speaking on behalf of his fellow board chairmen, Tommy Green appealed to the commissioners for the chance to work out a solution to the issue of merger without engaging in merger itself.

"We are three united but individual school systems," Greene said. "We are open to investigating any avenue in lieu of merger. Is there anything we can do to stop it?"

Greene went on to present seven ideas the school boards have been working on to achieve some of the goals that commissioners say merger will address, without actually merging.

In response to Greene's plea, commission chairman Jim Crawley said he would think about it.

"We would be remiss if we didn't consider your opinions," Crawley said. "But on first hearing your ideas is not the time."

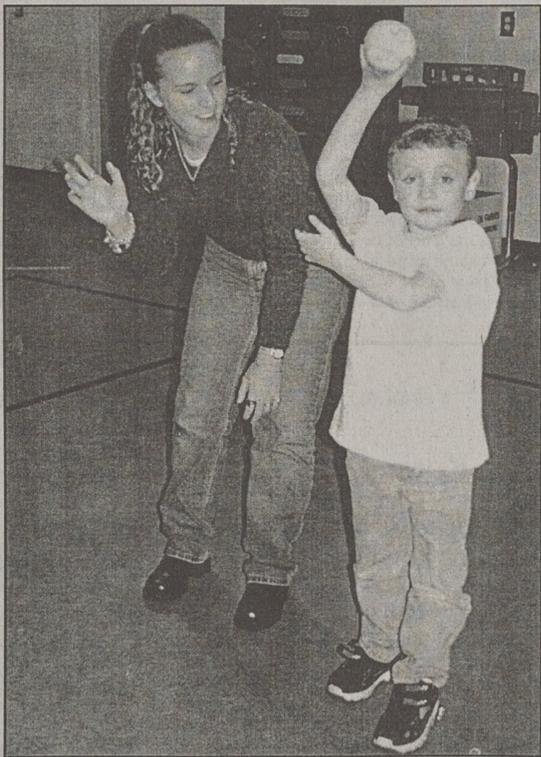
Moving on to his portion of the meeting- which packed the auditorium at Cleveland Community College- Middlebrooks began by acknowledging that merger was "a contentious issue." He then began to lay out the pros- mostly pros- and the cons of merger, as well as the criteria he used to draw his conclusions. Issues Middlebrooks looked at in a broad sense included utilization of existing facilities and capital outlay, administrative, organizational and operating cost concerns, and educational programming and achievement.

The utilization of school facilities was given special emphasis by Middlebrooks. Through a series of charts and graphs he revealed that several schools in Shelby- notably Shelby High- were underutilized and that schools in Kings Mountain exceeded 100 percent utilization. Merger, Middlebrooks said, would even this situation out.

"Kids need space," Middlebrooks said.

See Merger, 3A

BATTER UP



L.J. Stacey from Bethware School limbers up his throwing arm with help from Coach Jennifer Patterson during practice for the upcoming Cleveland County Special Olympics Monday at the Kings Mountain High gym. See story on page 3B

City rejects water line bids

Council delays voting on incentives grants

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

At the request of City Attorney Mickey Corry, Kings Mountain Council Tuesday night delayed approval of an incentives grant request from Commonwealth Industries until the grant is officially finalized.

Corry said the Commonwealth grant will be the first under the city's new Incentives Policy and needs to be done right.

"We are very thorough," he said, "and we're being very cautious because this will be a model for Kings Mountain."

No one spoke at the public hearing called for the purpose of receiving citizen input for or against the proposed grants. It will be continued until next Tuesday's Council meeting. By that time, Corry said, the grant contract will be finalized.

Commonwealth Manager Bob Wright attended the meeting and spoke briefly about his company's plans to locate in Kings Mountain. He said negotiations are under way with owners of two area sites and should be completed within days.

"We're very pleased to be working and bringing a site to North Carolina," he said.

He said most of the employees will be hired locally. Equipment will be delivered in June and production will begin by October 1.

See Council, 3A

Compact residents oppose rezoning

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

The City Planning and Zoning Board voted unanimously Tuesday afternoon to recommend that City Council deny a local trucking terminal owner's request to rezone 12 1/2 acres in the Compact Community from Residential-10 to Light Industry. City Council will hold a public hearing on the matter Tuesday, March 28 at 7 p.m.

Kenny Bridges of Bridges and Son Trucking is requesting the rezoning of property owned by Laura Houser and Catherine Mauney on Dixon School Road, across the road from the former Compact School (Barrett's Floor Covering). Bridges hopes to purchase the property and construct an office building and garage to service approximately 12 trucks.

But over 20 Compact residents attended the P&Z Board's hearing on the matter Tuesday, and presented petitions containing over 170 names of people opposing the rezoning because of the potential of increased traffic, noise and other reasons. Members of Mount Olive Baptist Church pointed out that they had invested over \$200,000 in a new family life center and that Dixon School Road, the only major road through the community, is heavily traveled by young people and older people going to church activities and that the road is heavily-congested anytime traffic is rerouted from nearby I-85 because of accidents or other reasons.

Bridges and Son hauls in-house products for Keebler Cookie and Vermont American and currently operates out of Gaston County. The firm has 20 employees. Kenny Bridges estimates that only about 10 trucks a day would be entering and leaving the proposed terminal.

Bridges said citizens need to be heard, but added that they may be misinformed about some property that adjoins the Mauney/Houser property which is already zoned for heavy industry.

"They seem to think that the mine (Foote Mineral) owns all that property around it, but they don't," Bridges said. "Some gentleman out of Dallas owns it. Foote Mineral doesn't own it and doesn't even adjoin any of that property."

Bridges said if the rezoning is allowed, his property could act as a "buffer" between the Compact residential area and the property already zoned for heavy industry. The land is not inside the city limits but is in the city's one-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction.

See Compact, 3A

GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

In a special meeting Tuesday night at City Hall, Kings Mountain City Council rejected bids for construction of a new 36" water main that will run approximately 3,000 feet from the water plant across Muddy Fork Creek. The project is being re-advertised this week.

City Manager Jimmy Maney said bids ranged from \$750,000 to approximately \$1.2 million, but the low bid contained two errors amounting to over \$50,000. Since the plan has to be submitted to the State for approval, city staff felt it is best to re-bid.

"We had five or six bidders and got some good prices," Maney noted. "We'll try to re-bid and have them back to Council as soon as possible, even if we have to schedule a special meeting. The only holdup may be the delivery of pipe."

Maney said construction could go on as scheduled, but the city may be looking at tying-in the new system during the Labor Day holiday rather than July 4 as previously planned.

Maney said most of the contractors have alerted pipe manufacturers of the situation, and it's possible someone may already have enough pipe on hand to supply the project. He said delivery of the pipe will be a mammoth task and will amount to about 140 tractor-trailer loads.

Carl DeVane, chairman of the Utilities Committee, said if someone has the pipe in place it may still be possible to meet the July 4 connection goal.

"The worse that could happen is not to get the tie-in done and have to push it back to Labor Day," he noted.

See Repairs, 3A



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