KINGS MOUNTAIN

The Herald

Thursday, April 20, 2000 | Vol. 112 No. 16 | Since 1889 | 50 Cents

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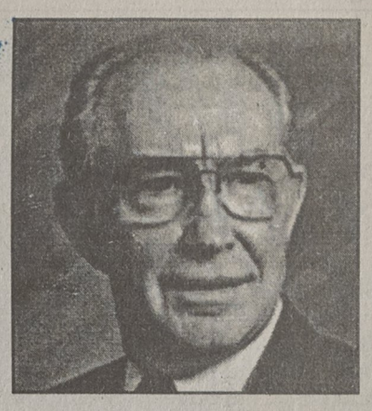

Merger done deal

ALAN HODGE / THE HERALD

About 150 protesters marched outside Malcolm Brown Auditorium at Shelby High School in opposition to school merger Tuesday evening. The march was peaceful yet boisterous in its opinion that schools in Cleveland County should not be merged.

KM to appeal decision to state and may seek court injunction

BY ALAN HODGE
Staff Writer

What many folks had long considered a done deal became reality Tuesday night when the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners voted 4-1 to merge the county's three school systems into one. Willie McIntosh cast the lone dissenting vote.

Reaction by the capacity crowd in Malcolm Brown Auditorium at Shelby High School was explosive and angry. At least a dozen members of the Shelby City police and Cleveland County Sheriff's Department guarded the auditorium stage following the vote.

Kings Mountain District Schools superintendent Bob McRae said an appeal to the State School Board would be forthcoming in response to the vote. McRae also said that the potential for further legal action existed. A group of Kings Mountain parents have also retained an attorney to represent their interests in the merger

The evening began with over 150 protest marchers picketing outside the auditorium in opposition to merger. Several carried brooms as symbols of the "clean sweep" they hoped would occur when the commissioners come up for reelection.

Prior to the actual vote, over 80 citizens were given the chance to express their opinions on merger. About 20 of that number favored the issue.

"I support your move to improve the quality of education in Cleveland County," said Chuck Earley of the Cleveland County roundtable.

Jim Allen of the Cleveland County Chamber legislative action committee also gave merger his endorsement.

"I hope you will do what should have been done a long time ago," Allen said.

Another citizen who spoke for merger was John Barker.

"I commend you for what you stand for," Barker said. "This decision will move us forward."

Another Shelby resident, Stough Wray, spoke for merger by telling the commissioners they had "sacrificed a lot" to vote in favor of merger.

ALAN HODGE/THE HERALD

Kings Mountain High School freshman class president Wesley Griffin was just one of over 80 people who addressed the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners Tuesday night regarding merger.

The Shelby City Council also went on record to support merger by issuing a proclamation to that effect. The resolution was read aloud by council member Andrew Hopper.

Though these and a few other folks spoke in favor of merger, the vast majority of parents, teachers, and students at the meeting took their three minutes each to lambaste the commissioners for their perceived lack of concern of the will of the people. Outbursts following these speeches became so frequent and loud that commission chairman Crawley threatened to "clear the house," and "vote on it now," if the crowd didn't simmer down.

Ron Humphries of Kings Mountain accused the commissioners of "trampling on the Constitution" and "laying siege to the values of democracy." When Humphries told the commissioners that they had "awakened a sleeping giant" and "don't tread on us," the crowd went wild with fervor.

East Elementary School principal Jerry Hoyle provided one of the most electric moments in the three-hour brouhaha when he took commissioners to task over the fact that they hadn't included educators in their merger analysis report.

"You didn't bother to listen to us, you hired a lawyer," Hoyle said to loud cheers. "Joe Cabiness, would you hire a doctor to study merger of your bank?"

The crowning touch - literally- to Hoyle's impassioned words came when he threw a paper Burger King crown on the stage and invited Crawley to crown himself monarch.

Kings Mountain school board member Stella Putnam took her turn at the podium to remind commissioners of a potential sticking point in their plans to merge. The possible bugaboo is the fact that about 200 students who attend Kings Mountain schools actually reside in Gaston County. Putnam reminded the commissioners of a 1976 decision by the North Carolina attorney general recognizing the Gaston Country/Kings Mountain Schools relationship. The Kings Mountain schools plan to use this strategy in their appeal to the State Board of Education.

"Merger violates state law," Putnam said. "The attorney general's decision is legally and morally binding."

Many of the people who spoke at Tuesday's meeting were concerned parents and ordinary citizens who felt that the interests of money had overruled the interests of the children. Their heartfelt pleas to the commissioners to stop the merger train were eloquent in their simplicity.

"You are voting for merger because your business buddies in Shelby can't sell real estate," said Grace Costner.

Parent Lisa Sisk went to the speaker's stand with one child on her hip and one in tow.

"We are the common people," Sisk said simply. "You need to listen to us."

See Merger, 3A

Student drug use causes problems

BY ALAN HODGE
Staff Writer

Students need more than a sharp pencil and a highliter to do their work - they need motivation, preparation and focused attention just to name a few skills.

When a student uses drugs these things are often left by the wayside. When a student attends class under the influence of drugs, the effects are felt not only by the student, but by the class as a whole, making the argument that drug use is a victimless crime a little less valid.

It is not uncommon to see changes in grade and behavior patterns when a student begins using drugs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, regular marijuana users are twice as likely to receive low grades as their classmates, which only proves the point that classroom performance is one of the first things to suffer.

What the teachers have to deal with depends on the student's drug of choice. According to the dope, students can be lethargic or wired up.

In today's education system, where time is as valuable a commodity as textbooks, many educators believe that an individual's drug use can stop the whole classroom from learning because teachers must spend their time tackling disciplinary issues. The question arises, what can be done?

The U.S. Department of Education recommends that school officials establish clear, consistently enforced drug-use policies that specify drug offenses, consequences including notification of police and procedures.

Teachers are encouraged to share their thoughts on drugs. Remaining silent, they say, gives students the appearance of indifference or even approval.

Kings Mountain High School, like many other schools across the nation, has not shied away from this display of anti-drug sentiment.

"We stay on top of the problem," says assistant principal Diana Bridges.

Students who do get caught with drugs or alcohol at Kings Mountain High get a 10 day suspension. There is however, a way for these students to get the suspension reduced to three days by taking part in a special program.

Called SOBIR (Student Option Beginning With Intervention), the program is an alternative early intervention branch of CODAP (Community Organization for Drug Abuse Prevention.) CODAP is a non profit group housed at the Cleveland County Health Department. Carol Barr is program director.

"The SOBIR program begins with assessment and education of the student's problem," Barr said. "The student's parents also participate."

And while the teachers and administration are working at schools throughout Kings Mountain and Cleveland County to stop drug use among the student body, it's the students themselves that often feel the most need to do something about the problem.

That, according to some studies, may be the best defense yet.

See Drugs, 3A

Three men shot at KM apartment

Kings Mountain Police are investigating an early-morning shooting Tuesday at Pine Manor Apartments that left three men injured.

According to Investigator Lisa Proctor, three black males were shot about 12:52 a.m. at Apartment 82 at the apartment complex located at 612 Charles Street.

According to police, when they arrived at the scene they found that Chance Lipscomb of Gastonia and Antonio Barnes of Shelby had been shot. Lipscomb was taken to Kings Mountain Hospital, and then transferred to Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte where he was treated and released.

Barnes was transported to Gaston Memorial Hospital and is listed in stable condition.

A Mazda 626 was seen leaving the area and was later stopped by police, and the occupant, Kuriowa Jones of Shelby, had also been shot. Jones was taken to Cleveland Regional Medical Center in Shelby, where he remains in ICU.

Proctor did not elaborate on a reason for the shootings, but said that all three men are considered victims and not suspects.

Proctor said witnesses said "people were getting together at the home." She urges anyone with information about the incident to call her at 734-0444.

According to Proctor, the men ranged in age from 19 to 23.

PRIMARY 2000

GOP candidates list major issues for the county

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

The primaries for the year 2000 elections are scheduled for Tuesday, May 2 in Cleveland County.

Parties will nominate their candidates for the November general election in several areas, including the race for the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners. In addition, residents of the Cleveland County School District will elect three members to its Board of Education in a non-partisan election.

The race drawing the most interest in the county is the Board of Commissioners. Four persons - incumbents Joe Cabaniss and Jim Crawley, and Ronnie Hawkins and David Morrow - are seeking the three Republican nominations. Eight citizens - incumbent Joe Hendrick, and Mary Accor, Tom Bridges, Ralph Gilbert Jr. Ken Jones, Kenneth Ledford and William Bill Walker Jr - are seeking the three nominations of the Democratic party.

Since all eyes are on the Commissioners' race, *The Herald* asked the candidates for the Republican Party to list their top three campaign issues. (The response of the Democratic candidates will be published next week).

Ronnie Hawkins:

#1 - How the County Commissioners conduct their business.

"I am not running solely on the school merger issue. I am opposed to it, yes, but my concern is how the commissioners went about it. No government should go about conducting its business in that manner. There's no reason for a board of commissioners to undertake a project of that magnitude and turn this county upside down in the manner that they've done it. It would have been much easier to say 'we're going to do an assessment. We want the school boards to talk about it, we want information' and do it in a manner where it doesn't scare people; and have the answers before they try to implement something like this. This is not a small undertaking. They've fractured this county with the way they've handled it. They've been so busy hiding behind other organizations trying to promote merger that they couldn't come out in the open and do it like they should have done it."

"Another issue coming out of this will be tax. Taxes are very, very important to people. I honestly believe the people are really upset by what this

See GOP, 3A

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