

Citizens give Myrick earful on school merger

BY ALAN HODGE
Staff Writer

With some help from Shirley Brutko and Kathy Falls of Kings Mountain, the issue of school merger appeared Tuesday evening on the plate of Representative Sue Myrick during her Town Hall meeting at Town and Country Barbecue restaurant.

The subject came up during a question and answer period in which Rep. Myrick asked the 40 or so folks who had come to see her if there was anything on their minds. Brutko immediately brought up the merger problem.

"We have a situation in this county where 80 percent of the people are against school merger," Brutko said. "We have worked hard for over 100 years

on our schools to make them the best."

Brutko went on to ask Myrick if there was anything she could do directly to intercede in the merger fight.

"Let your voice be heard on this issue," Myrick said. "The wheel that squeaks gets the grease. Too many people are apathetic today. Speak up because you never know who might be listening that can help. If your elected officials are not listening to you, get someone else in office who will."

Anti-merger ramrod Kathy Falls also spoke to Myrick about the political situation in Cleveland County.

"We are grasping at any means possible to stop merger," Falls said. "We are not being heard by the county commissioners. The chairman, Jim Crawley, even said he didn't

rule by public opinion. That's the type of person we're dealing with."

Following Falls' comments, help from an unexpected quarter appeared in the room when Patrick Gartland, Southeastern Regional Director for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said he knew Phil Kirk of the North Carolina State Board of Education and would try to set up an appointment so that merger opponents could tell their side of the story before final approval.

Prior to the merger discussion, Myrick had given a short address in which she touched on several issues currently on the burner in Washington. Myrick's main topics were taxes and health care.

"We voted in the House to eliminate the marriage penalty for double income households

with no children," Myrick told the audience. "Now it's up to the Senate to work on the issue. We are trying to work on the tax laws in small bites rather than one big chunk. Another item that that received attention is making sure the Social Security Trust Fund is secure. We are determined to protect that money so it can't be used for anything besides Social Security."

Myrick also said the government had a goal of eliminating the federal debt by the year 2013. She also said that any surplus tax monies should be returned to the people rather than being left in Washington.

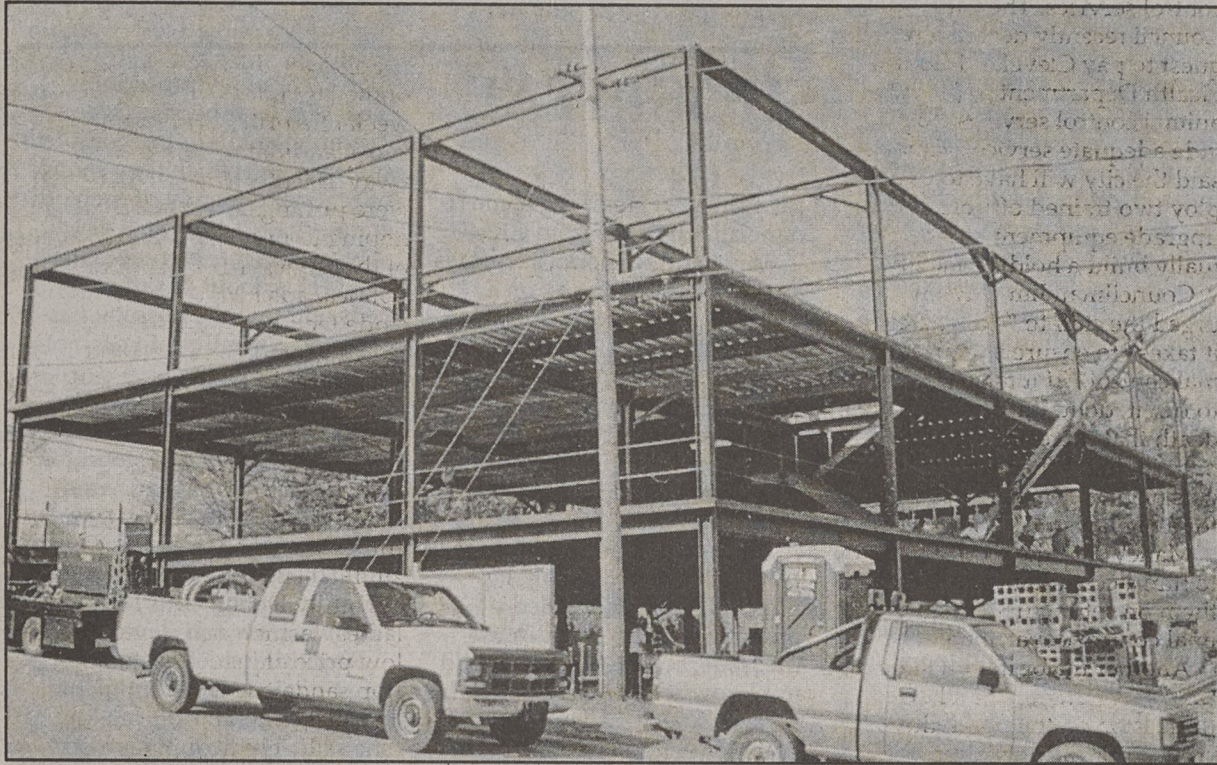
Myrick also reported that medical care for the elderly was getting a close look in Washington. Prescription drug coverage for the elderly was a topic she addressed.

"Up to one-third of seniors don't have enough insurance to cover their prescription medicines," Myrick said. "We hope to set aside \$20 billion for this purpose by the end of the year."

Myrick's visit to Kings Mountain was part of a two-week tour to hear what her constituents have to say on the issues facing their communities and the nation.



SUE MYRICK



ALAN HODGE/THE HERALD

Work continues at a fast pace on the new three-story E&E Professional Plaza at the corner of Watterson and King streets in Kings Mountain. With good weather, the job should be done in a few weeks.

First Citizens earnings increase

First Citizens BancShares, Inc., reports increased earnings for the quarter ending March 31, 2000. Earnings for the first quarter totaled \$19.5 million compared to \$19.0 million for the corresponding period of 1999, an increase of 2.4 percent.

First Citizens BancShares also recently declared a quarterly dividend of 25 cents per share on Class A and Class B common stock. The dividend is payable July 3, 2000 to shareholders of record June 19, 2000.

Per share income for the first

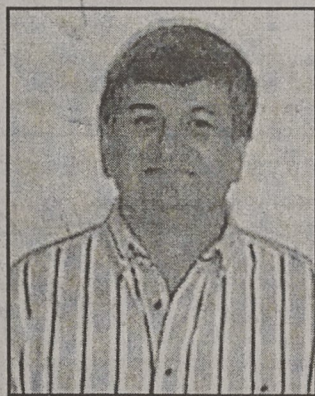
quarter totaled \$1.84 compared to \$1.79 for the same period a year ago. First Citizens' current quarter results generated an annualized return on average assets of 0.81 percent and an annualized return on average equity of 10.68 percent.

Net interest income increased 4.5 percent as a result of an improved net yield on interest earning assets. For the three-month period ending March 31, 2000, the net yield equaled 4.19 percent, up ten basis points from the same period in 1999.

Non-interest income grew by 8.26 percent in the first quarter of 2000 when compared to the same period in 1999. Non-interest income was \$41.4 million and \$38.2 million in the first quarter of 2000 and 1999, respectively.

Non-interest expenses totaled \$96.3 million in the first quarter of 2000, an increase of 5.6 percent over the \$91.2 million in the corresponding period of 1999.

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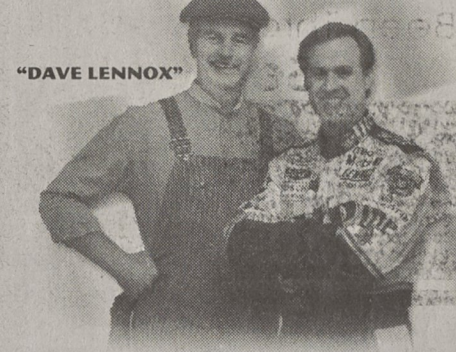
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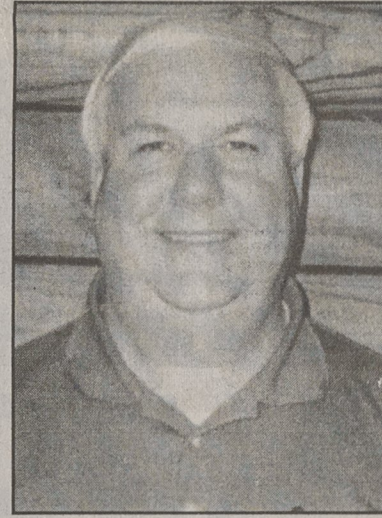
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