

The Herald

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Group fighting to save KM lakes

BY ALAN HODGE
Staff Writer

Even though final approval could come at the January 30 Kings Mountain city council meeting for sale of Davidson and City lakes to Sea Island Land Corp., a group calling itself Friends of the Lakes is trying a last ditch effort to get that idea reconsidered.

Consisting of Shirley Brutko, Carl DeVane, Dennis Patterson, Tim Plonk, and Mike Smith, the group feels that the lakes should not be used for commercial or housing development, but rather kept as a natural resource area to benefit citizens now and future generations to come.

"The city has been designated a gateway to Crowders Mountain State Park and Kings Mountain National Military Park and State Park," Brutko said. "With that in mind, we need to be looking at preserving our pristine areas such as the lakes. The city wants a greenway and the lakes are in a logical place for this."

Brutko says she's for the city council taking more time before deciding to sell the lakes to Sea Island. The price that they have offered is \$630,000. Brutko wants her group to have time to check out the possibility of getting grant money. The lakes are located within one-half mile of the new land corridor that will connect the three parks.

Another Friends of the Lakes member is Tim Plonk. He thinks the lakes offer too many recreational opportunities to be sold for development.

"Kings Mountain needs a place like the Broad River Greenway," said Plonk. "A place where people can go fishing, hiking, and biking. I would be bad if the city sells the lakes then later on wishes they had them back."

Councilman Carl DeVane said he felt that chances were good the vote to sell the lakes could be delayed at this point. Like Brutko and Plonk, he said the proximity of the lakes to the parks was a crucial matter.

"The lakes are a gorgeous piece of property close to where the new trails will go," DeVane said. "I think they will be of more use to the city for recre-

See Lakes, 5A

City freezes gas rate for month

BY ALAN HODGE
Staff Writer

Though Christmas has come and gone, it's spirit is lingering around City Hall in Kings Mountain.

This time, instead of their being brightly wrapped presents under a tree, folks who get their home heating natural gas from the Kings Mountain utility department will get a gift of sorts when they open their bills at the beginning of February.

"Even though our natural gas suppliers have increased our wholesale rate 34 percent, we will not pass this on to our customers for the gas they use in January," said mayor Rick Murphrey. "The price customers will pay will be based on the December wholesale rate."

Murphrey said that the decision to "eat \$100,000" as he put it, came after review of the city's 2000-2001 budget and overall financial condition.

"The rising costs of heating are causing a hardship on everyone, especially our citizens who are on a fixed budget," said Murphrey.

The cost of heating by natural gas has skyrocketed this winter in all parts of the nation. In some states in the Midwest, the cost of heating with gas has risen over 100 percent. A special fund set up by the Department of Energy in Washington to help folks pay their gas bills has already started running dry.

Gas suppliers blame low reserves and increased demand due to below average temperatures for the rise in prices.

"Even though we are going to hold the line this month on gas prices, we want to urge everyone to do an energy audit of their homes," said Murphrey. "This includes checking items such as insulation thickness and weatherstripping around doors and windows."



Mayor Rick Murphrey

"The rising costs of heating are a hardship on everyone, especially our citizens who are on a fixed budget."



Rev. Robert Eng speaks out against video poker establishments at Tuesday's meeting of the Kings Mountain Board of Adjustments at City Hall.

Merger lawyers' fees already over \$300,000

BY ALAN HODGE
Staff Writer

Besides the tariff extracted in frayed nerves, lost sleep, and general upset, how much has it cost to wage the war over school merger in Cleveland County? Since the struggle first flared up in December, 1999 until the present, quite a chunk of change.

Like him or loath him, the guy that the former set of commissioners hired to mastermind the merger of all three Cleveland County school systems—Charlotte attorney Gil Middlebrooks—received \$135,465 for his services from December, 1999 when he was hired un-

til his resignation last month.

Fighting merger has also had its cost. According to Kings Mountain District Schools superintendent Dr. Bob McRae, the law firm of Schwartz and Shaw in Raleigh that they hired has so far been paid \$202,484 for their services. Added together, this comes to a grand total of \$337,949. That's just \$61,000 short of the amount of money it will take to do all the plumbing and piping on the new grades 5-6 school to be built in Kings Mountain.

According to McRae, the money for Kings Mountain's attorney fees comes from their fund balance—a type of sav-

See Merger, 10A

Video arcade owners want rules waived

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Timing is apparently running out on Kings Mountain gaming establishments.

Hoping to get a waiver from the January 31 deadline to come into compliance with city codes or cease operation, owners of nine establishments appeared before the City's Board of Adjustment Tuesday morning.

With a large number of citizens showing up to protest conditional use permits for the establishments, it wasn't possible for the Board to wade through all the applications and the public hearing was continued until January 22 at 9 a.m.

Between now and then, Ken Davies of Charlotte, attorney for arcade owners Mike Heath and Don Johnson, must obtain floor and site plans and other information on businesses owned by Johnson, specifically in the North Piedmont area.

The arcade owners were previously denied conditional use permits from City Council, and they appealed to the Board of Adjustments as a last effort before taking the matter to court. Both Johnson and Heath have sued the city over its new gaming ordinance which went into effect in October.

Johnson and Heath asked that their businesses be "grandfathered" in the new ordinance because they were in operation prior to the adoption of new zoning codes.

Davies said prior to Tuesday's meeting that if the Board of Adjustments approves their request to be grandfathered, his clients will no longer be at issue with the city but will continue to seek relief from similar state statutes.



Libby Blanton speaks out against video arcades at Tuesday's meeting of the Board of Adjustments.

If their request is denied, they have the option of filing suit against the Board of Adjustments in Superior Court.

Bob Myers, chairman of the Board of Adjustments, said it doesn't look "too promising" that the Board will make a decision at its January 22 meeting.

"There's a lot of things that have to be verified," he said. "After we get all the facts we'll do what we've got to do."

See Arcade, 5A

Good news! County, KM get extra doses of flu shots

BY ALAN HODGE
Staff Writer

The past few weeks have seen colds and flu slice through offices and homes in the area like a horde of Mongol invaders. Just about everyone it seems has either been sick or knows someone who has also felt under the weather.

Just in time for the season, flu shots are once again available in Kings Mountain. Places where the vaccine can be had include: Kings Mountain Medical Center, 711 W. Mountain Street, call for appointment, 739-5456; Dr. Pam Shergill's office, 103 S. Watterson Street, 739-3681, walk in; Caromont Medical Center, 214 N. Cleveland Avenue, 730-1226, established patients only. Cleveland County Health

Department director Denese Stallings was contacted earlier this week by the State Immunization Branch with news that they had an extra supply of flu vaccine and were making it available to health departments. Cleveland County's ration of 250 doses was, according to the Immunization Branch, shipped on Tuesday and was set to arrive in Shelby on Wednesday.

Since the vaccine was supplied by the state, the Health Department is not charging for the shots. They will be available at the Health Department office at 315 Grover Street during their hours of 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. You can just walk in and get your shot.

If you start getting that

chilled, feverish, and congested feeling, the first plan of action is to determine if it's a cold or the flu.

The flu is caused by three different kinds of viruses. They usually appear in the fall and linger until spring. Flu is spread through virus particles that are coughed or sneezed into the air. Once the germ gets into your body, look for symptoms within two days. Fever associated with the flu will last three or four days, but the coughing and tiredness can linger for a week or more.

Sure-fire symptoms of the flu include fever, muscle aches, headache, chills, sore throat and cough. Colds usually have one or more of these symptoms but

See Flu, 5A



Attorney Ken Davies, left, talks with client Mike Heath at Tuesday's meeting of the Kings Mountain Board of Adjustments.



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