

The Herald

Thursday, January 25, 2001

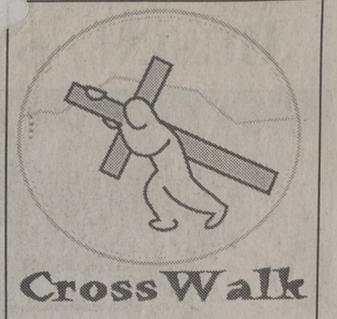
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What to do with lakes?

Conservation group to ask KM Council to table sale of old city water lakes

By GARY STEWART
 Editor of The Herald

Kings Mountain City Council may make a decision on whether or not to sell the old City and Davidson lakes at its meeting next Tuesday night at 7 p.m. Or, the Council may decide to once again table the matter to receive more information on how a recently-organized conservation group proposes the property be developed and maintained.

City Council and its Utilities Committee have been discussing the possible sale of the lakes for years, and quite often during the past year.

The City recently received an offer to purchase from Sea Island Land Corp., but after lake resident Bobby Maner and city resident Mike Smith

made presentations at their December meeting Council decided to table the matter until January 31 to receive information on how Sea Island intends to use the property.

A "Friends of the Lake" group was recently organized by a handful of area citizens to oppose the sale of the lake, and members of that group will attend next week's meeting to ask Council to again table the matter - this time for up to a year.

Shirley Brutko of Friends of the Lakes said members of her group will present Council a plan of action for possible use of the lakes for "passive recreation" such as fishing, hiking, biking, jogging, horseback riding and picnicking.

She said the group is willing to work with state and other agencies to seek grants to finance the project, as well as the possibility of the State of

North Carolina acquiring the property to hook in to its State Park trail which will connect Crowders Mountain and Kings Mountain State Parks and the KM National Military Park. In earlier Council meetings, City Manager Jimmy Maney pointed out that the State was offered the lakes "free of charge" to include in the park trail connector, but the offer was refused.

Brutko said the Friends group will grow in numbers and financial support if the matter is tabled Tuesday night.

"Our phone is ringing off the hook," she said. "People are eager to make this a reality."

On several occasions during the past several months, Council has voted 5-2 to continue pursuit of selling the property. Carl DeVane and Bob Hayes have been the two members in opposition.

The city recently advertised to sell by the upset bid process, and the only bid received was \$630,000 by Sea Island. If the City refuses Sea Island's offer, it may have to reimburse Sea Island for studies and work already done at the lakes.

Now, some Council members say they are willing to listen to the Friends' proposals, but that doesn't mean they've changed their minds.

Clavon Kelly, who is a member of both the City Council and Utilities Committee and has pushed for years for the City to make a decision on the lakes, said he will go into Tuesday's meeting with "an open mind," but that citizens will have to convince him that the lakes can be an asset instead of their current liability to the city.

See Lakes, 3A

1 killed, 2 injured in shooting

By GARY STEWART
 Editor of The Herald

Kings Mountain Police Detectives are in the process of interviewing up to 30 possible witnesses in the shooting death of a Shelby man Sunday at a trailer at 437 Hillway Drive.

Demyris Sentell Roberts, 21, of 322 Morrison Street, Shelby, was found dead of apparent multiple gunshot wounds to the head and facial area when police arrived at the scene shortly after 3:18 a.m.

Also shot were Ishmar Edward Smith Jr., 42, of 2319 Sunset Street, Gastonia; and Marlando Jones, 24, of 1400 Kings Road, Shelby.

Smith was admitted to Gaston Memorial Hospital in stable condition. He was found lying in the yard with an apparent gunshot wound to the leg, according to a report filed by Sgt. L.B. Ware.

Jones was taken to Kings Mountain Hospital with an apparent gunshot wound to the chest. He was later air-lifted to Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte.

Lt. Derek Johnson said at this time there is no motive. All three of the victims were shot with a handgun, he said.

Johnson said an autopsy was performed on Roberts' body Monday at Gaston Memorial Hospital, and police are awaiting those results.

Meanwhile, Johnson and other officers in the Criminal Investigative Department, including Sgts. Lisa Proctor, Shane Davis and Maurice Jamerson, are trying to inter-

See Police, 3A



ALAN HODGE/THE HERALD
 A rider since the year 1919, James B. Hobbs of the Oak Grove community knows a thing or two about horses. Even at the age of 95, Hobbs still trains horses and teaches folks to ride.

James Hobbs has been training horses since he was 14 years old

BY ALAN HODGE
 Staff Writer

If ever there was a person to whom the old saying "there's something about the outside of a horse that's good for the inside of a man" applied, it's 95-year-old James B. Hobbs of Kings Mountain. A horseman since the year 1919, Hobbs was riding when the U.S. Cavalry

existed, and he can still straddle a steed with the best.

Born on a farm in East Tennessee, Hobbs got his first horse from a neighbor at age 14. His talent with equines was evident early on.

"The neighbor had a horse that hadn't been handled in a long time," Hobbs said. "He told me if I could catch it then it was mine. I took it home with

me that day."

Hobbs came to Charlotte in 1921 and opened his first stable on Tuckaseegee Road in 1931. That operation lasted until 1955 when Interstate 85 came along and took the land. From Tuckaseegee, Hobbs moved his horses to Selwyn Farms in south Charlotte. He and his

See Hobbs, 3A

Superintendent search may be winding down

By GARY STEWART
 Editor of The Herald

The Kings Mountain Board of Education has called a special meeting for 7 p.m. Monday, January 29 to continue discussion related to the search for a new superintendent.

Most, if not all of the meeting will be in closed session.

The Board met last Wednesday to discuss the matter, and continued that meeting until Friday. No action was taken.

Board Chairman Dr. Larry Allen said the Board has interviewed some people, and could be close to making a choice.

Board members had met recently with Allison Schafer, Legal Counsel for the NC School Boards Association, to discuss steps of securing an interim or permanent superintendent to succeed Dr. Robert McRae, who is leaving KMDS April 1 to become superintendent of Randolph County Schools.

It is believed that the new superintendent will be hired on a permanent basis, but without a contract buyout clause since the school merger issue is still in limbo.

Meanwhile, the merger issue is getting hot again after some folks in Shelby have indicated that they will hire an attorney to represent them in support of a merger of the county's three school systems.

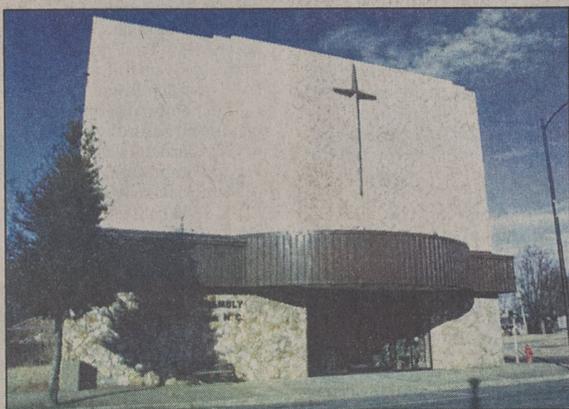
The superintendents and chairmen of the three boards of education were scheduled to

meet in Shelby yesterday, and part of their discussion may have been to determine if they would cooperate in a joint effort to re-draw attendance lines to turn around the declining enrollment in Shelby City Schools if merger is not upheld in the courts. The attorney for Cleveland County Schools has been quoted as saying that re-drawing of lines by three separate systems, if not approved by the General Assembly, could result in hundreds of lawsuits; and some local members of the General Assembly said such action by state legislators is not likely.

Kings Mountain Schools last year filed suit against both the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners and the State Board of Education for their approval of the merger plan. KM received last-minute injunctions against the planned July 1, 2000 implementation of the plan until it is heard in the Court of Appeals. Since that time, the new Board of Commissioners accepted the resignation of their merger attorney, Gil Middlebrooks, and passed a resolution asking that the State Board's approval of merger be reversed and that the U.S. Justice Department not pre-clude the plan.

Dr. Allen said KMDS has received no indication that the lawsuits are being scheduled. "Nothing has transpired from our standpoint," he said. "But

See School, 2A



ALAN HODGE/THE HERALD
 Located at the corner of Mountain Street and Railroad Avenue, the former Joy Theater may soon become the Kings Mountain Performing Arts Center. A group led by Jim Champion of the Kings Mountain Little Theater is in the process of raising funds for the purchase and renovation.

Little Theatre hopes to bring 'Joy' back to downtown Kings Mountain

Old movie theater would be Performing Arts Center

BY ALAN HODGE
 Staff Writer

A long-time Kings Mountain landmark might soon be making a comeback as an entertainment and cultural oasis.

Located at the corner of Railroad Avenue and Mountain Street, the former Joy Theater is the focus of a fund raising campaign by the Kings Mountain Little Theater to transform the structure into a performing arts center.

Originally built by the Pinnix Corp. around 1951, the Joy Theater was aptly named. Over the years it brought some of the biggest stars and films from Hollywood to Kings Mountain. The Joy, as well as the Dixie and Imperial theaters were operated by Charlie and David Cash, the father and uncle of Betty Mitchell.

"The sidewalk out front was green and there was a big marquee on top," said Mitchell.

Since she worked as a cashier

at the Joy in its early days, Mitchell also has a load of other recollections about the theater.

"There were separate entrances for white and black customers," Mitchell said. "There were also ushers with flashlights and a special crying room where people could take their babies."

Mitchell also recalled the upstairs smoking section, projection room, and the fact that you could walk behind the silver screen.

Today, the building houses Gospel Assembly Church. Since the church has made the structure available, the Little Theater group, led by Jim Champion, has launched a campaign to purchase it. Asking price for the theater is \$230,000.

Expenses to convert the theater into the Kings Mountain Performing Arts Center will include renovation at \$70,000, a lighting and sound system at

See Joy, 3A



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