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Poker machine permits denied

By BEN LEDBETTER
Staff Writer

During a marathon session before Independence Day, the City of Kings Mountain Board of Adjustments denied four conditional use permits for three fraternal organizations and one business for the use of video poker machines.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9811, American Legion Post 155, Kings Mountain AMVETS and Rick's Ole Country Store were denied conditional use permits from the Board.

Besides meeting various minimal distance requirements from a city ordinance, five additional requirements had to be met for the permits to be granted.

The use requested has to be a permissible use in that area, the use will not harm the public health or safety, it will meet all required conditions and specifications, the use is a public need, property values will not be harmed, and the use will be in harmony with the area.

Several people, including those with the four organizations applying for the permits spoke during the near three hour public hearing portion.

Don Adams, who represented the VFW, started his presentation by questioning the board's bias on the issue.

Adams asked the board if it had any preconceived ideas of video poker based on personal beliefs and if the building codes office had coached the members on how to vote.

Chairperson Bob Myers disagreed with Adams line of questioning.

"The implication you're saying shouldn't be there," Myers said to Adams.

Adams asked for board member and city councilman Clavon Kelly to be removed from the case, since Adams said he had made statements on a television newscast regarding the issue.

Myers declined Adams' request.

No request was made to remove Howard Shipp, who also serves on the Kings Mountain City Council, off the cases.

"I haven't heard anything black and white," Board member Ron Humphries said. "I've heard accusations."

Adams said the board was not making the distinction between an organization having some machines and an arcade business.

"I've been in Kings Mountain 30 years," Adams said. "And I've never seen an arcade."

The Kings Mountain ordinance was for businesses, Adams said, and he said video poker machines are legal in North Carolina.

"Basically, what you've talked about was minimal state law," Board member Herman Greene said regarding Adam's reference to the North Carolina statute.

W.D. Holder who was representing the Kings Mountain American Legion post, said without the revenue generated from the machines, the organization would not be able to continue with some of its scholarships.

Steve Tate, who was representing Rick's Ole Country Store, said reports of people

See Permits, 2A



GARY STEWART / THE HERALD
 City Councilman Gene White stands in the front yard of his home where someone threw an explosive. White is hoping to generate a huge reward fund to help find those responsible.

Blast rocks home of KM councilman

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Kings Mountain Police are investigating a late-night explosion that occurred at the home of City Councilman Gene White on Sunday, July 1.

White said he was sitting in his den watching TV about 10:30 p.m. when he heard a loud explosion and saw a large blue/red flash at the front of his home.

Although there were no remains of an explosive device found, White said persons familiar with dynamite have told him from his description it appears the device may have been a "quarter-pounder," or one-fourth of a stick of dynamite.

There was no damage to White's property or to any persons, but White feels it was done to "frighten and terrorize my family."

Det. Lisa Proctor of the Kings Mountain Police Department said the Division of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) has been notified and will be working with KMPD to try to solve the case.

Proctor said the police have "several leads that we are following up on."

White said some of his neighbors witnessed the incident, and although it was dark and it would be hard to identify the occupants of the vehicle, he feels the case will be solved.

"I am 99 percent certain that I know who paid for this act, and the person that paid for it knows that I know," he said.

White said the blast was so large "you could see it even though the shades" with him sitting in

the opposite side of the house. He said several neighbors also saw the blast and came out to see what happened.

"It was either the world's largest firecracker or the quarter-pounder stick of dynamite," White said. "But it was light enough to get neighbors up and across the street to see what happened. It was so huge it rocked the house."

Two weeks prior to this incident, someone threw roofing nails in the driveways of White, three other City Council members, Mayor Rick Murphrey and City Manager Jimmy Maney. White put up a \$300 reward for information leading to the arrest of persons responsible, and Maney and Murphrey each contributed \$100 to the fund.

White is hoping others will come forward with additional reward money, hopefully to make the fund large enough to entice people to talk.

"Unless somebody comes forward, we don't have a strong enough case to actually indict somebody," White said. "If anybody wants to contribute they can do so, because we need somebody to come forward to testify."

White has been an outspoken critic of video gambling and other "illegal" activity in the city, and believes the two incidents at his home is a "message that a handful of people believe they have a right to continue illegal activity in Kings Mountain in spite of the fact that 99% of citizens are not in agreement with their cause."

See White, 3A

OH, SAY, CAN YOU SEE?



GARY STEWART / THE HERALD
 Colby Hughes, 2-year-old son of Jason and Val Hughes, squints in the bright, hot sun to see balloons that were released by one of the vendors during the city's Fourth of July Celebration Wednesday at the YMCA.

Coach sentenced in 5 sex charges

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Former Kings Mountain High teacher/coach David Ballenger drew sentences ranging from 36 to 47 months in indecent liberties charges heard before



Judge Forrest D. Bridges Thursday in Cleveland County Superior Court. He was sentenced to a 12-to-15 months active term in one of the charges, and drew suspended sentences in four others.

Sixteen other cases against Ballenger were dismissed. Ballenger, who was an assistant football and head golf coach for the Mountaineers, was accused of taking indecent liberties with a 15-year-old student in 1999.

Ballenger, who resides in Spartanburg, SC resigned his teaching/coaching positions with the Mountaineers after his arrest last September.

His jail term began immediately following the judge's decisions.

Ballenger pleaded guilty to one count of indecent liberties with a child, and four counts of indecent liberties with a student. He received a 12-to-15 month active sentence in the indecent liberties with a child charge, and received credit for the two days he served immediately prior to the trial.

The judge ordered that he undergo sex offender's counseling (SORE), and upon completion of that, work release was recommended. He is not to have any contact with the victim or her immediate family, and if he goes on work release he is to pay the court costs.

In the four cases of indecent liberties with a student, Ballenger was sentenced to 6-to-8 months in each case, with each sentence serving at the expiration of the other.

Those sentences were suspended and he will be on supervised probation for a period of 60 months. He was ordered to pay the court costs in each case.

Ballenger will be required to abide by numerous sex offender's conditions, including:

He has to register as a sex offender in the county of his residence, has to do a sex offender's treatment program, and he is not to communicate with or be on the premises of the victim or her family.

He is not to be alone with any minor child under 18 years of age, except for his own two children.

See Coach, 3A

Stewart named principal at KM Middle

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

Lynda Stewart was appointed principal of Kings Mountain Middle School, effective

January 1, 2002, at Monday night's meeting of the Kings Mountain Board of Education at Central School. Stewart, currently Elementary Schools Director of Curriculum, will immediately



STEWART

begin serving as an assistant principal at KMMS under Ethel Pedersen. Mrs. Pedersen will become principal of Kings Mountain Intermediate School, a grade 5-6 school now under construction on Kings Mountain Blvd., in January.

The School Board deliberated for an hour in closed session before returning to open session and naming Mrs. Stewart. Jerry Blanton's motion and Stella Putnam's second passed on a 3-0 vote, with board member Terry McClain abstaining.

Supt. Larry Allen said the Board would immediately begin advertising for someone to

assume the duties of Curriculum Specialist, and later will begin advertising for an assistant principal to take over Stewart's duties at KMMS in January.

Stewart was one of eight applicants for the job, and Dr. Allen said all of the applicants were excellent.

"But the fact that Lynda has several years experience at the middle school as an administrator, and most recently experience as a curriculum coordinator for the elementary grades weighed very heavily in the decision."

See School, 3A

New School Board member to be appointed on Monday

The Kings Mountain District Schools Board of Education will hold a special meeting Monday at 8 a.m. at Central School to appoint someone to fill the vacant seat of Melony Bolin, who resigned recently because of health reasons.

The appointee will be sworn in at the board's regular meeting in August.

Supt. Larry Allen said a large number of people had

expressed interest in being named to the board when the Board sought applications to fill seats previously held by Ronnie Hawkins, who resigned after being elected to the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners, and Allen, who had to resign in order to accept the job as superintendent.

With next Monday's appointment, See Board, 3A



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