

KINGS MOUNTAIN The Herald

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See Page 2A



Drawing of the proposed bell tower for Kings Mountain's Mountain Rest Cemetery.

KM luminary service used to raise money for bell tower

Organizers of the Christmas Eve luminary service at Mountain Rest Cemetery announced today that donations collected during the event will go toward plans to build a bell tower in the cemetery.

Jim Belt, director of James Belt Ministries, said plans are in the works to build a 44-foot high carillon in the cemetery. While the luminary service is for public viewing, Belt said many of those who pass through the cemetery to view the 5,000 luminaries often give a donation to help cover expenses associated with staging the service. All donations after expenses and contributions from the community will help pay for the bell tower, Belt said.

"I'd like this monument to be a memorial for everyone," said Belt, who is organizing the luminary project for the fifth year. "We are hoping this will be a project of love and citizens' involvement will keep the cost down."

Belt said a number of individuals have already expressed interest in contributing to the bell tower project and "with the blessing of the city, this project is going to happen."

Belt came up with the idea of using the luminary service to

See Luminaries Page 3A



Kings Mountain firemen battle blaze Tuesday at home on King Street, above and below.

Photo by Ben Ledbetter

Fires destroy homes on King Street

By BEN LEDBETTER
Staff Writer

Authorities are investigating two house fires which started on the 200 block of Business 74 Tuesday.

The Kings Mountain Police Department, Cleveland County Fire Marshal's Office, and the State Bureau of Investigation are investigating whether the fires were arson.

Financial damages will be determined by Kings Mountain Fire Chief Frank Burns.

Two fires, one at 204 and the other at 208 King St., burst into flames at 2:32 p.m., according to the Kings Mountain Police Department.

"Basically all we know at this time is that we got two house fires. Both of them happened around the same time, one just a little bit later than the other one," Kings Mountain Fire Chief Frank Burns said.

Nobody was in the two houses, which were rentals.

Portions of King St. were blocked off Tuesday afternoon while firefighters fought the blazes. A crowd of onlookers was gathered across the street.

Although the investigation is ongoing Burns said the fires could be arson.

It took firefighters from Kings Mountain, Grover, Bethlehem, Oak Grove, and Number 3 Fire Departments approximately two hours to contain the flames, Burns said. "So we feel like the fires are going to be suspicious in nature," Burns said.

This was the third house on the block that burned, 206 King St. burned in October, and authorities said that is still under investigation.

Cause of the fire has not been determined since the fire department had not been able to get into the two properties to investigate. Small flames were still burning at 208 King Street by 5 p.m. Tuesday.

The fire department arrived on the scene for the first fire at 204 King, then the police department spotted the second one at 208 King.

"By the time we noticed it, both houses were fully involved," Burns said.

An employee of KM Pools, which is across King St. from the two properties, said he saw part of the fires start.

"It was in the side window," Jose Jordan said. "I was out there putting mulch over the

See Fires Page 3A



New school board members sworn in on Monday Night

By BEN LEDBETTER
Staff Writer

Three new school board members took office for their first elected term Monday night.

Terry McClain, Jerry Blanton and Mike Smith were sworn in by Mayor Rick Murphrey.

While this will be the first term as an elected board member for Smith, he is not unfamiliar with the school system, having worked as an elementary school teacher for 25 years.

McClain and Blanton were both previously appointed, having filled vacancies created by the resignations of current County Commissioner Ronnie Hawkins and Kings Mountain Schools Superintendent Larry Allen.

Smith defeated outgoing board member Trace Barnette, who was appointed to fill the vacancy left by Melony Bolin

when she resigned for health reasons.

"It was a privilege serving on the Kings Mountain School Board," Barnette said. "I really learned a lot."

Allen presented Barnette with a plaque during the meeting. Both Barnette and Smith live on the Gaston County side of Kings Mountain.

In other business:
• Shearra Miller and Stella Putnam were re-elected to their current positions as chairman and vice-chairman respectively.

• Heard an appeal from Kings Mountain resident Phil Hager who read a statement asking the school board to drop its merger appeal.

Both Hager and former KMHS basketball coach John Blalock had made complaints about hiring practices at the

See Members Page 3A



Mike Smith, Terry McClain and Jerry Blanton (left to right) were sworn in to office as members of the Kings Mountain Board of Education.

Proctor named Police Chief

By BEN LEDBETTER
Staff Writer

Current Kings Mountain Police Captain Melvin Proctor was named the city's new Police Chief at Tuesday night's City Council meeting. He will replace Houston Corn when he retires January 31.

Proctor is a 14-year veteran on the force and said the department has been progressive toward meeting goals.

"There's some things we're still working on, progressing toward," Proctor said.

One of the things Proctor noted are the grants the department has received and the backing from City Council.

"Our police department has come so far in such a short period of time it's unreal,"

Proctor said. "Probably the last few years have been the most exciting progressive years I've seen up here."

Proctor will be sworn in on Friday, February 1, and will lead about 60 employees, including 49 sworn officers.

"I'm just excited and looking forward to this new challenge," Proctor said. "I've got some big shoes to fill, big shoes."

Proctor's wife Lisa is a sergeant working in the Narcotics office in the Criminal Investigation Division.

City Manager Jimmy Maney, who said he had received several applications for the position, was satisfied with police chiefs the city's had in the past.

"We have been very fortunate to have some great individuals serve in the capacity of police chief," Maney said.

Proctor, a 1982 graduate of John T. Hoggard High School in Wilmington, has served the department in many capacities, including Lt. of the Detective Division and has over 2,800

See Proctor Page 3A



PROCTOR



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