

# The Herald

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## Filing, election delayed

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
Staff Writer

Candidates are not complaining about a two month delay in the primary election.

The state Board of Election voted Monday to move the primary election from May 4 to July 20. The delay comes from a suit filled by several Republicans alleging district lines are unfair.

That means the filing period is moved from Feb. 9 through Feb. 27 to April 26 through May 7.

County Commissioner Ronnie Hawkins said he was on his way to the Cleveland County Board of Elections' office Monday to file for re-election when he thought to call Elections Director Debra Blanton. She told him they had just received word from Raleigh on the delay.

County commissioner Tom Bridges said he also plans to file for reelection. Commission Chairwoman Mary Accor was out of town and could not be reached for comment.

Blanton said candidates "appear to be accepting it as a normal process."

Blanton said her staff was prepared for filing to have begun Monday. However, the delay will give the state Board of Elections more time to mail updated campaign reporting manuals, she said.

In addition to the county commission seats, the register of deeds, one soil and water conservation district seat and three district court judgeships are up.

All three of Cleveland's legislative districts - the 110, 111 and 112 - are up. Other state level offices include the governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state auditor, treasurer, superintendent of public

See Filing, 3A

## Revaluation meeting tonight at City Hall

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
Staff Writer

Cleveland County Commissioners will be in Kings Mountain tonight to answer questions about property revaluation. The meeting begins at 6 p.m. at Kings Mountain City Hall.

The county revalues property every four years. County manager Lane Alexander said it is too early to calculate what the average revaluation will be.

The last revaluation was See Meeting, 3A

## Going to Asheville

# Engineer resigns



FISHER

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
Staff Writer

With less than two months on the job, Kings Mountain City Engineer Carson Fisher is resigning.

Fisher will work for the state land quality section in Asheville. He will supervise mine permitting, erosion control and dam safety.

Fisher denies the upcoming departure of City Manager Phil Ponder influenced his decision.

"This has absolutely nothing to

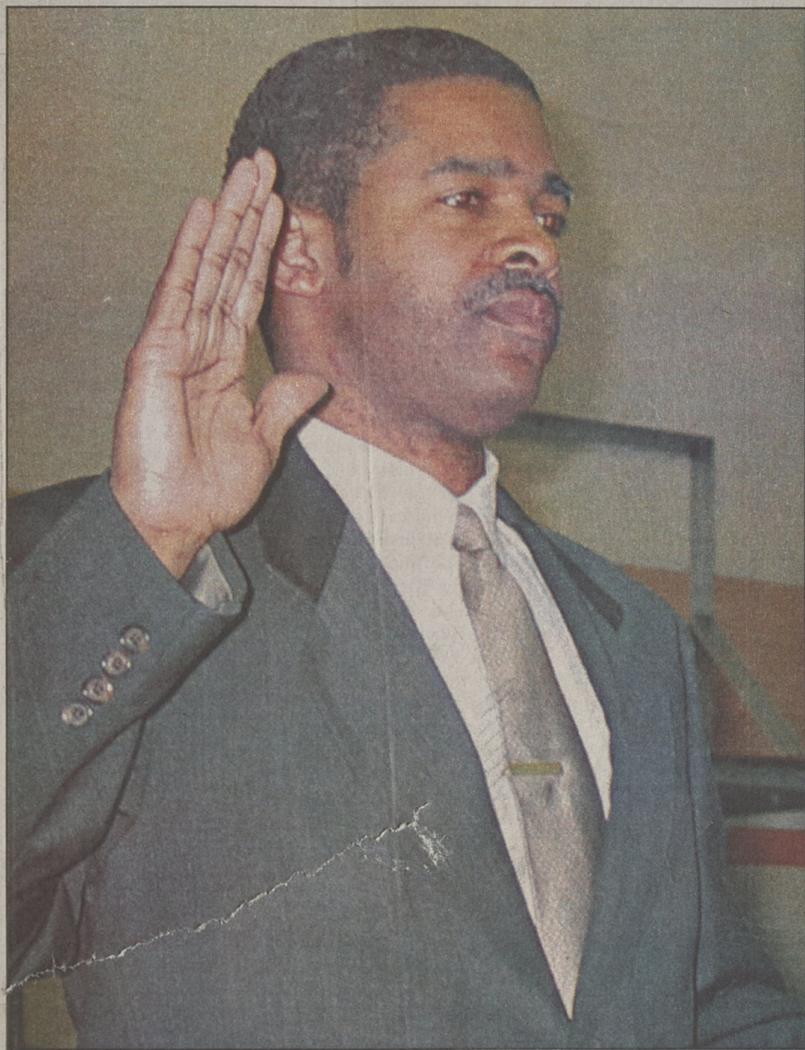
do with anything that happened in Kings Mountain since I've been here," he said Friday, his last day on the job.

Fisher said he applied for the job before accepting the one in Kings Mountain but due to the holidays no offer was made until January.

"I hope it has not created a problem. I enjoyed working here," Fisher said.

Fisher, an outdoor enthusiast, has long wanted to move to western North Carolina.

"I love the mountains," he said.



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD  
Terry McClain takes oath of office after being appointed to the interim Cleveland County School board.

## Terry McClain appointed to County School Board

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
Staff Writer

Former Kings Mountain District Schools board member Terry McClain was appointed to the merged Cleveland County Schools board Monday night by a unanimous vote.

McClain fills the seat left vacant when former KMDS board member Dr. Larry Allen stepped down to take the superintendent's post during the merger appeal process. McClain's appointment makes the nine-member board one third African-American.

During the board's January 21 meeting, they agreed the appointment should follow the spirit of the merger plan, appointing someone from the former Kings Mountain District Schools board.

From that board, McClain, Stella Putnam and Jerry Z. Blanton were eligible to serve. Michael Smith lives in the Gaston County portion of Kings Mountain, making him not eligible. Shearra Miller, chairperson of the former KMDS board, also serves on the new board.

Putnam said early on that she planned to run for a seat and did not want to be considered for an appointment. In a letter to board chairman George Litton, Blanton asked not to be considered.

"This is to inform you I will not seek appointment to the new Cleveland County School Board. This decision was not made because of my unwillingness to serve. I feel that Mr. Terry McClain will serve the child

See McClain, 3A

## Superintendent discusses fate of Gaston students

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
Staff Writer

Budgets and the fate of Kings Mountain's Gaston County students were discussed when Cleveland County Schools Superintendent Gene Moore met with the Kings Mountain Ministerial Association last week at the YMCA.

Moore told the ministers that the merged board's \$130 million budget is not sufficient. "That is a lot of money, sounds like a lot of money, but we'll find that won't be sufficient to do the things we want to do," Moore said.

Moore said the merged system will receive the same amount as the separate systems for the next two years. After that, he expects a decline in state monies.

He said the board has not yet taken a position on what to do with Kings Mountain students who live in Gaston County. Gaston County Schools will receive around \$1 million in local, state and federal funds for those students.

Gaston officials have indicated they probably will not release that amount of money to Cleveland. If Cleveland County Schools See Gaston, 3A

## Hicks coming back as KM's interim manager?

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER  
Staff Writer

The Kings Mountain City Council will vote Monday on whether to hire Gary Hicks as interim city manager. The council will meet for a closed session at 5:30 p.m. They will come back into open session for the vote.

The council first discussed hiring Hicks last Tuesday during a closed session meeting.

Hicks worked as interim Kings Mountain city manager from Aug. 1995 to August 1996 when he resigned. In an interview Hicks gave the Herald in 1996, he said, "They like to micromanage." Hicks also said that his differences with the council escalated when he would not follow their direction on personnel matters.

Hicks may be returning to the same situation. Some past council members have made that same charge against current Mayor Rick Murphrey, saying he would not allow outgoing City Manager Phil Ponder to do his job.

Council members Jerry Mullinax and Brenda Ross told the Herald last week that Ponder told them one reason he was leaving was that he was directed to hire someone without following personnel policy.

When Hicks left in 1996, he had the support of then councilman Rick Murphrey, who is now mayor, and then Councilman Dean Spears.

Councilman Jerry Mullinax, who worked with Hicks during his first time in Kings Mountain, voted last week against offering him the position.

"I don't know if he will be a good fit for the city," Mullinax said.

Mullinax said he was not the only council member to vote against Hicks in the closed session meeting.

In 1996, Mullinax was critical of Hicks for not catching utility billing errors which allegedly cost the city close to \$75,000.

Hicks worked as city manager of Gastonia for almost 20 years, retiring there in 1993. He also worked in Lowell in the 1990s and from 1999 to 2002 as interim city manager.



GARY HICKS

Lowell Councilman Sam Mitchem, who served while Hicks was manager, praised him.

"He did a great job while he was here. He left on good terms," Mitchem said. "He's good for a town when it is in a situation like Kings Mountain is in."

When asked why Hicks served such a long time as an interim, Mitchem said that was what Hicks preferred.

Murphrey said that after getting approval from the council, the city will advertise the permanent city manager position and will notify past applicants that the position is open.

Current City Manager Phil Ponder's last day is Friday, Feb. 20. He will start his new job the following Monday as director of budget and purchasing for Gaston County.

Ponder informed Murphrey Jan. 22 that pursuant to a special called meeting between him and the council on Dec. 30, he had obtained employment with another governmental entity.

In an interview two weeks ago, Ponder stressed that this was a letter of notification, not resignation.

## Local man arrested on felony drug charges

A Kings Mountain man was arrested and jailed Friday on three felony drug charges, including felony trafficking cocaine.

Christopher Michael Moore, 25, of 107 North Watterson Street, was jailed on a \$50,000 secured bond.

In addition to the trafficking charge, he was also charged with felony possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine, and with felony possession with intent to sell and deliver marijuana.

In addition, he was

charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and simple possession of a schedule IV controlled substance.

According to Sgt. Lisa Proctor of Kings Mountain Police Department, the arrest was a result of a two-month investigation.

"I had received a lot of complaints from citizens here in the city limits," Proctor said. "We had been doing some surveillance on it and did some controlled buys from the residence,

See Charges, 3A



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD  
State Representative Tim Moore addresses Cleveland County School Board Monday.