

KINGS MOUNTAIN The Herald

Thursday, February 19, 2004

Vol. 116 No. 8

Since 1889

50 Cents

*****CAR-RT LOT**C 008
307 11-11-05 0002A00 9P 85
MAUNY MEMORIAL LIBRARY
100 S PIERMONT AVE
KINGS MOUNTAIN NC 28086-3414

at Bethware
Elementary

1B



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT



Local firemen fight a house fire during training exercise Saturday. Below is T.J. King of the Kings Mountain Fire Department.

Saturday burn helps prepare younger firemen

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Maintenance needs on an older home outpaced the owners ability to make repairs. Local firefighters, especially new recruits, needed training. Using the home on Carpenter Street for a practice burn Saturday benefited both parties.

"She gets rid of it and we get some practice out of it," said Kings Mountain Fire Chief Frank Burns.

The homeowner will be responsible for hauling away debris left after the fire, according to Burns.

Saturday firefighters from Kings Mountain, Grover, Bethlehem and Oak Grove gathered at 7:30 a.m. dressed See Firemen, 3A



Four commissioners say they want to cut tax rate

By GARY STEWART
Editor of The Herald

The four Cleveland County Commissioners attending Thursday night's meeting at Kings Mountain City Hall to discuss property revaluation said they are committed to lowering the county's tax rate.

Commissioners Mary Accor, Ronnie Hawkins, Tommy Bridges and Jerry Self, along with County Manager Lane Alexander and employees of the county's tax assessor's office were holding the third of four town forum type meetings across the county.

Approximately 40 area residents attended and asked questions about the revaluation process.

The county recently revalued property for the first time since 2000. State law requires revaluation at least once every eight years, but according to Tax Assessor Jerry Green Cleveland and many other counties have opted to revalue every four years to keep assessments more

consistent with fair market values.

Green said rapid growth in some areas and slower growth in other areas, as well as zoning, can affect value of property. He said about 3% of property value decreased, 17% remained about the same and 80% increased. On average, the percentage increase from 2000 to 2004 would be in the "15 to 20 percent" range.

Revaluation notices were sent out in January and the deadline for appealing was originally February 12. But, Green said the county has opted to extend the appeal period and will accept appeals until the Board of Equalization and Review adjourns. That Board usually begins meeting April 1 and adjourns in May, he said. Persons wishing to appeal their value may do so by returning the lower portion of their revaluation notice. They can also call the Tax Assessor's office.

The appeals process could take up to three months, and will begin with

See Tax, 3A



GARY STEWART / HERALD
County Commissioner Jerry Self addresses audience at Thursday's meeting at City Hall on property revaluation.

Gaston says no to redrawing lines

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

A plan to change the Cleveland County Schools lines to include the Gaston County portion of Kings Mountain has failed.

Gaston County Schools' board voted Monday night seven to two against the measure.

The vote was the first step in what many in Kings Mountain hoped would be a vote by the General Assembly to redraw the lines.

Before the General Assembly would

vote on what is considered a local matter, all members of the Gaston and Cleveland delegations would have to support it.

Cleveland County representative Tim Moore said the Gaston representatives he spoke to told him they would only support the measure with the approval of their school board.

"There is nothing the legislature can do," Moore said Tuesday morning. "The legislators from Gaston County have made it clear if the local school board opposes the matter it won't support the legislation."

Gaston Representative John Rayfield did say last week that he did not see a problem with redrawing the lines.

Before Cleveland County Schools merged to include Kings Mountain District Schools and Shelby City Schools, KMDS encompassed students living in the Gaston County portion of Kings Mountain.

Under that arrangement, Gaston County was required to funnel per pupil money to KMDS for approximately 200 Gaston County students living inside the Kings Mountain city

See Gaston, 3A

Mayor: Ponder allegations effort to get severance pay

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Kings Mountain Mayor Rick Murphrey has issued a public statement saying that allegations the city forced City Manager Phil Ponder out of his job are an attempt on behalf of Ponder to receive severance pay.

"Mr. Ponder's actions are an attempt to have the city pay severance. It now appears that the issues Mr. Ponder is raising can only be resolved by the city agreeing to pay him severance pay to which he is not entitled or to defend his claim in a court," Murphrey wrote.

In the Feb. 5 edition of the Herald, incoming council members Brenda Ross and Jerry Mullinax said that Ponder told them members of the previous council made five demands.

Those demands include:

■ Ponder was releasing too much information in his weekly memo.

■ Ponder should not have given an interview to Channel 33.

■ Ponder should use city funds to repair a drainage ditch on private property.

■ Ponder should hire an assistant city clerk without interviewing anyone else.

■ Ponder should use city funds to repair a car allegedly damaged on a city street.

Ponder allegedly is leaving because he felt forced by the council to meet the last three demands which he deemed inappropriate.

Murphrey denies Ponder was forced out. "On Dec. 1, 2003 I requested a meeting with Phillip Ponder to discuss several areas in which his job performance could be improved. This meeting was not held for the purpose of terminating Mr. Ponder. The primary purpose

See Mayor, 3A

Meeting on interim CM set tonight

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Kings Mountain City Council had planned to vote on hiring an interim city manager Monday night but that meeting was rescheduled because a private citizen did not receive notification.

Earlier this year, Wayne King paid \$10 to be placed on the city's "sunshine list." People on this list are notified 48 hours prior to all meetings except emergency meetings.

According to the city, King was not mailed an agenda for Tuesday's meeting due to a clerical error. When he complained, the city rescheduled the meeting until Thursday at 6:30 p.m., giving more than the required 48 hours notice.

King said he did not intend for the city to reschedule the meeting but merely wanted to bring it to officials attention that a law had been broken.

According to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.12 "The public body shall also cause notice to be mailed or delivered to any person, in addition to the representatives of the media listed above, who has filed a written request with the clerk, secretary, or other person designated by the public body. This notice shall be posted and mailed or delivered at least 48 hours before the time of the meeting. The public body shall charge a fee to persons other than the media, who request notice, of ten dollars (\$10.00) per calendar year, and may require them to renew their requests quarterly."

There are currently four people on the list. King said he requested to be placed on the list because he wants to know what actions government is taking.

See Meeting, 3A

Moore: Firing rumors 'bull'

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

During Monday's utility committee meeting, newly elected utility committee chairperson Rick Moore denied rumors that council members are planning to fire department heads.

"That's a bunch of bull. Council is not wanting to get rid of any employees," Moore said. "Whoever said that told something that's untrue."

Former city Councilman Gene White placed an advertisement in last week's Herald which discussed the departure of City Manager Phil Ponder and alleged threats to jobs.

A portion of that ad read,

See Moore, 3A



'Whoever said that told something that's untrue.'

Councilman Rick Moore