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The Herald

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 State 3A
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6A



PLUGGING A HOLE



Contractors for the Department of Transportation work to repair an underground storm drainage problem on Highway 74 near Cleveland Avenue.

GARY STEWART / HERALD

Hope fading for Gaston students staying in CC

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

Cleveland County Schools Superintendent Gene Moore was not hopeful Monday night that Kings Mountain's Gaston County students will remain in Cleveland County schools.

The Gaston County Schools' Board voted 7-2 last week to uphold the current policy which only allows students to transfer out on a one year release.

Moore called it a "disappointing meeting" and said the Gaston board was not willing to work with Cleveland.

"It's like we're fighting a lost cause," said Cleveland County Schools board member Shearra Miller.

Miller invited her fellow board members to tour East Elementary where most of the affected children attend. That tour is scheduled for this afternoon.

Miller said many of the parents are still fighting to keep their children in Cleveland County Schools. Those students live inside the Gaston County portion of Kings Mountain, most within minutes of East Elementary. Under the merger, next year they will be required to attend schools in Gaston County which means a 20 or more minute commute.

Because Gaston does not want to release the funding

which comes with the students, they could have to pay tuition to attend Cleveland schools.

"A lot of these families are going to have a hard time coming up with these funds," Miller said.

East Elementary is located in a primarily economically oppressed area of town.

"It's heartbreaking that Gaston County is not being more cooperative," said board member Terry McClain.

Miller denied that Cleveland County wants the students because of the funding.

"It's not for the money. We're trying to look after these children," she said.

While many of East's students come from poor families, test scores are some of the highest in the state. That is attributed to a dedicated principal, faculty, staff, parents, students and community volunteers.

"It's not a money issue for us. It's a money issue for them," said board member Tommy Greene.

Monday night Kings Mountain City Council passed a resolution unanimously asking that the Cleveland County Schools' attendance lines be redrawn to include all Kings Mountain residents.

The resolution was presented by former KMDS board member Mike Smith. See Hope, 3A

Mayor, City Attorney say council will follow policy

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

Former Kings Mountain City Councilman Gene White asked Mayor Rick Murphrey and the city's attorney Monday night to reign in an elected official who is threatening city employees' jobs.

White was on the agenda to speak during the February council meeting. He asked personnel director Pat Blanton to review employees' rights and requested the mayor and council members to go on record with their position on the issue.

City attorney Mickey Corry said that Blanton, who was in the audience, did not need to speak publicly because it would destroy the relationship she had built with employees.

Corry went on to say that Blanton required all employees to sign that they had read a copy of the city's employment policy.

"That lady has done an excellent job of informing employees," Corry said.

Corry said the council would abide by that policy and Murphrey agreed. "We do," Murphrey said.

White advised employees to document any possible threats and to con-

sult the city manager if they are asked to fulfill "marginal" request.

White also told the council that he thought the city would have difficulty hiring a manager after former City Manager Phil Ponder's controversial departure. He has asked for a six-month severance package from the city.

Interim City Manager Gary Hicks said he did not think the city would have difficulty hiring a permanent manager.

Hicks went on to say, "I cannot imagine anyone threatening them (city employees) and getting by with it."

Hicks named interim manager on 4-3 vote

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

Kings Mountain interim city manager Gary Hicks started work Friday with a narrow majority of the city council behind him.

Thursday night council members Houston Corn, Carl DeVane, Rick Moore and Howard Shipp voted to hire Hicks. Council members Kay Hambricht, Jerry Mullinax and Brenda Ross cast the dissenting votes.

Before the vote was taken council went into closed session to talk about hiring Hicks. DeVane was the only

member who voted not to enter closed session.

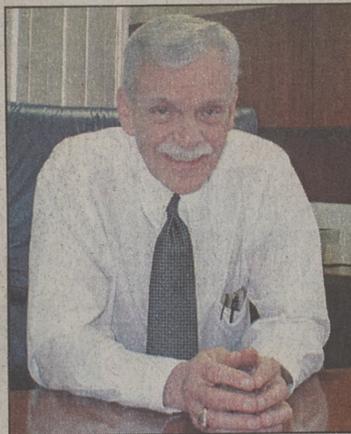
During an interview after the meeting he said entering closed session was not necessary because past closed meetings have been made public.

"There's no need to go back there," DeVane said.

Mullinax disclosed Hicks' name following a closed meeting Feb. 3.

North Carolina law allows city councils to enter closed session to discuss hiring specific individuals.

Former council member Jim Guyton was at city hall Thursday night wait See Interim, 5A



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD
 Gary Hicks begins his second stint as interim city manager in Kings Mountain.

Hicks' employment on week-to-week basis

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

Kings Mountain interim City Manager Gary Hicks started his first day on the job Friday meeting with department heads and some past and present city council members.

In a Friday afternoon interview, Hicks said he will implement what is already in the planning stages and finish ongoing projects.

Hicks is employed on a week to week basis until the city can hire a permanent city manager to replace Phil Ponder. The council split three to four on whether to hire Hicks. "I'm short term. My only responsibility is to keep them informed, keep the employees happy," Hicks said.

He went on to say he would do "everything I can to work in harmony."

Hicks, who is retired, said he was not interested in the See Hicks, 3A

Stack takes over as KM librarian

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

When Sharon Stack's three children were young, she took them to the Summerville, S.C. library where the family lived at the time. That library was growing so fast, patrons were limited to three picture books.

"For three little people that's not good," Stack said. It was at that moment Stack realized how she could make a difference. She decided to become a librarian.

Soon after her epiphany, her husband received a job transfer and the family moved to Alabama. Stack enrolled at the University of Alabama and two years later had a graduate degree in Library Science.

On her first job as a librarian, Stack helped bring the internet to the small Alabama town by writing a grant for funding from the Gates Library Foundation. A visit from philanthropists Bill and Melinda Gates followed.

"That was a lot of fun, getting to meet them," Stack said. The grant meant that early into the internet era, patrons

See Stack, 3A



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD
 Sharon Stack has settled in as new librarian at Mauney Memorial Library

City denies rezoning for day care

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

A Kings Mountain childcare provider said she will probably sell her home following city council's refusal Monday night to grant a rezoning that would have allowed her to expand an in-home childcare center.

Robin Johnson Smith asked the council to rezone her home from Residential Eight to Neighborhood Business so she could expand It Takes A Village, the childcare center she runs from her 821 North Piedmont home. See Day Care, 3A