

The Herald

Thursday, January 27, 2005

Vol. 117 No. 4

Since 1889

50 Cents

Mountaineers
sweep swim
meet

6A



City extends YMCA contract

Mullinax casts lone dissenting vote, large number of citizens support plan

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Kings Mountain City Council voted 5-1 during Tuesday night's meeting to approve a 10-year contract with the YMCA.

Several residents spoke out in favor of the contract and a few said they opposed it.

Council member Jerry Mullinax cast the lone dis-

senting vote. Councilman Rick Moore was absent. Mullinax said he was not opposed to the YMCA but did not support any contracts over three years in duration.

Single parent Sharon Vassez told council members that she appreciates the positive environment the YMCA provides her two children. She described it as a place which is open to

everyone.

"The Y is not fancy. It's not expensive. No one is turned down," Vassez said.

Vassez works part time at the YMCA and also volunteers there.

According to past board chairman Dale Green, 130 families receive financial assistance with membership fees. The YMCA calls these scholarships.

Steven Surrat said he first

visited the YMCA while doing community service. The staff's consistent good mood caught his attention. Surrat returned to coach basketball.

Retired nurse Cynthia Morris said she liked the dependable programming. Jack Griffin praised the YMCA for teaching children morals.

Shirley Brutko described the YMCA as a place which

bridges racial boundaries. She also said the organization helps produce community leaders.

Shawn Terry said he frequents the YMCA almost daily and credited it for keeping him out of trouble.

Luz Betancur said her daughter enjoys the games, crafts and devotions which are part of the YMCA after school and summer programs.

Greg Grabert gave a detailed cost analysis of the contract. According to his figures, the city would save \$2.2 million over the life of the contract.

Jay Majors and Judy Whisnant also spoke out in favor of the contract.

Lamar Fletcher asked the council to remain in the current contract. That contract gives both parties an annual
See YMCA, 3A

Council updated on emergency procedures

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

A state emergency official updated Kings Mountain City Council on the National Incident Management System Tuesday afternoon.

State and local governments which receive federal money must implement NIMS, according to Tim Miller, director of the western branch of the state Office of Emergency Management.

The system standardizes how local, state and federal agencies making it easier for agencies to assist each other, Miller said. Resources are classified as Type I, II or III making the request process quicker and more efficient.

Locally police and fire officials have already started using the new system. Upper and middle management at the Kings Mountain Police Department have received training. Upper management will attend additional, optional training, according to Police Chief Melvin Proctor.

To be in compliance with federal mandates, the city
See Council, 3A

Cold snap causes problems

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

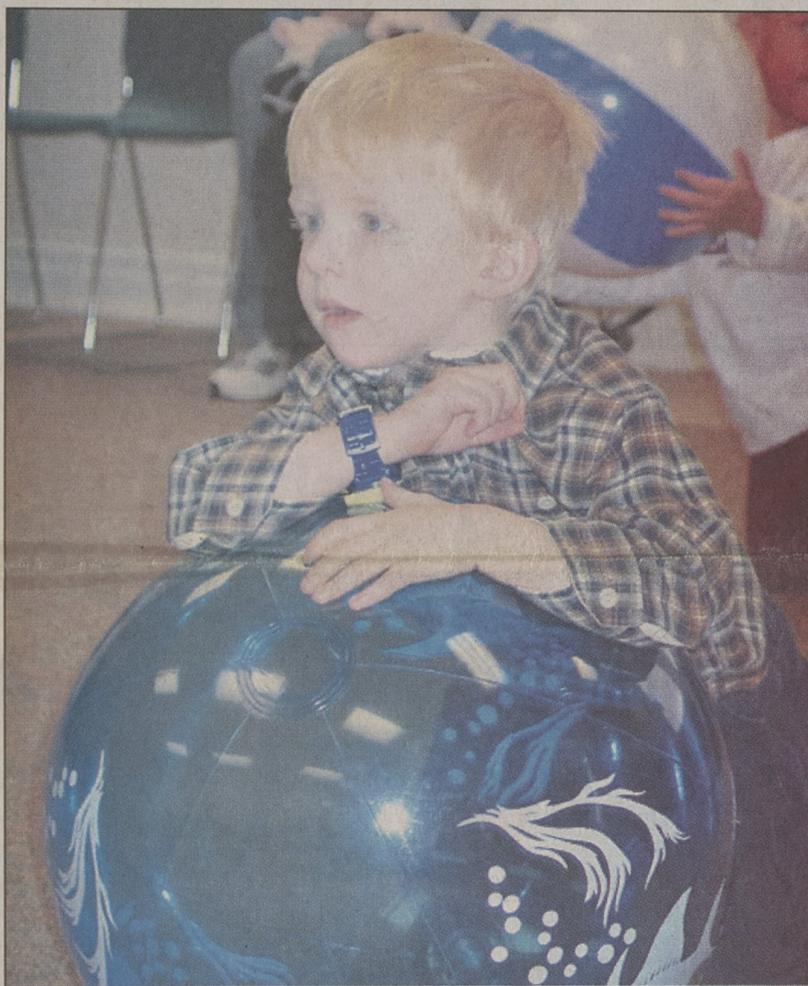
Recent temperatures dipping into the teens resulted in frozen pipes and more requests for help from Kings Mountain Crisis Ministry.

Customers at Bridges Hardware are purchasing more space heaters, plastic, caulking and other weatherization tools. David Black reports that several people have come in for supplies to repair burst pipes.

Plumber Philip Bollinger reports several calls about frozen pipes. He advises residents to cover outdoor spigots. When temperatures are going to be below freezing for more than 36 hours, leave a faucet running at a drip.

Dennis Wells of the City of Kings Mountain Water Department finds leaving a spigot dripping effective at his own home. Wells' pipes have only frozen once, the one time he failed to leave the water running. He also recommends leaving cabinet doors open to allow
See Cold, 3A

DREAMIN' 'BOUT THE BEACH



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD
Micah Stewart leans on a beach ball during story time at Mauney Memorial Library.

Manager's report: city engineer would be costly

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

A full time, staff engineer would cost the City of Kings Mountain between \$150,000 and \$200,000 annually, City Manager Greg McGinnis told council Tuesday night.

Council requested the report during its November meeting. The city hired an engineer early in 2004 but he left after a few weeks to take a position in Asheville.

According to McGinnis' report, a professional engineer's salary would be at least \$65,000. The benefits package would bring that sum to \$100,000. Other costs would include support staff, conference and seminar attendance and other professional development costs, a vehicle or car allowance, internet access, office space, equipment like CADD computer stations, engineering software, monochrome plotter and printer, relocation costs and cell phone.

The position would be for a civil engineer. A specialized engineer would still have to be contracted for gas, electric, water and sewer projects, according to McGinnis.

No city department heads thought a civil engineer was needed on staff, McGinnis said. Former city managers, representatives from the UNC School of Government and private consulting firms also have told McGinnis a staff engineer is not necessary.

"The driving factor in engineering is projects, and I don't foresee in the near future enough capital projects to keep a city engineer occupied for forty hours per week," McGinnis wrote in his report.

In other business, a Kings Mountain Rotary request was withdrawn from the agenda. The organization had planned
See Engineer, 3A

"I don't foresee...enough capital projects to keep a city engineer occupied."

Greg McGinnis
City Manager

KINGS MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

Attorney Thomasson has seen many changes

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
Staff Writer

Attorney George Thomasson has watched the legal profession change dramatically over the past 50 years.

After a year working for Duke University, Thomasson returned home to Kings Mountain and opened his law practice.

In the early 1950s there were no female attorneys in Cleveland nor Gaston counties. Thomasson estimates over 50 percent of today's attorney's are women.

"That's fine. They are very capable," he said.

Law is more complicated now than a half century ago, according to Thomasson. There are more laws and more frequent changes in existing laws.

"They're changing constantly," he said. When Thomasson opened the doors to his Kings Mountain practice, lawyers, like doctors, were generalists.

"You took everything that came in," Thomasson said.

Until 1968, some misdemeanors - reckless driving, assault on a female - were tried in Kings Mountain. Thomasson served as judge for the Monday afternoon session known as recorders court. Court was held at the old city hall where the current police department stands. Fines could not exceed \$100 and sentences were 30 days or less.

Despite all the changes, Secretary Karen Moss has been a constant in Thomasson's practice for the past 36 years.

"She does most of the work I have to admit," Thomasson said.

While Thomasson took criminal cases earlier in his career, he now limits his practice to civil cases. Real estate sales, refinancing contracts and wills take up most of Thomasson's time. He appreciates not having to appear in court and deal with continuations.

Thomasson is part of what has been called America's "greatest generation." After serving in the Army infantry during World War II, he used the GI Bill to attend Davidson College and then Duke University's law school.

"It's (GI Bill) probably one the best things that happened to the United States," Thomasson said.

The bill helped many soldiers return home to study law, medicine and other professions.

Thomasson worked as city attorney for 11 years under former Mayor John Henry Moss. Several area attorneys including Andy Neisler and Mark Hullender have worked as associates in Thomasson's practice.

The state of North Carolina recognized Thomasson when he reached the 50-year mark in the profession.

"My health is good. I enjoy doing what
See Thomasson, 2A



ANDIE BRYMER / HERALD
George Thomasson has been a busy Kings Mountain attorney for over 50 years.