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## INSIDE

**Prom - A memorable night, 1B**

2011 Homecoming Queen Priscilla Jordan with Paul Ledford



## SPORTS, 1C

**Training partners finish 1st, 2nd, 3rd in OTM triathlon**



# City eyes ways to improve space along tracks



This is a scene hand-drawn by Holly Black of the city's Codes Department showing a proposed enhancement of the railroad side of S. Battleground Avenue in downtown Kings Mountain.

ELIZABETH STEWART  
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City leaders are eyeing ways to improve the entire block of S. Battleground Avenue at the railroad side.

"We've been talking with railroad and Department of Transportation officials along with the Keep Kings Mountain Beautiful committee about an 'enhancement program'," said Mayor Rick Murphrey.

The mayor said one interest of the committee is to make the area "more walkable." The beautification efforts will include a lighted fence, extended sidewalk, hanging baskets of flowers on posts which create a balustrade effect, and a safety wall where you press a button to cross in the one block area on Battleground from Mountain to Gold streets. The project will be funded with Main Street money remaining in the current year budget and the down-

town project is in collaboration with Main Street officials.

The city is advertising for an employee in the newly-created Main Street Administration department with a salary of \$50,846 plus \$11,154 for operation expenses. This employee, to be hired by July 1, would be involved in the beautification project.

Murphrey said city leaders are also discussing with railroad representatives and Department of Transportation officials the safety of all railroad crossings.

A public hearing is set by city council for June 26 at 6 p.m., to decide whether or not to close for good a dangerous railroad crossing with a history of crashes by truck drivers ignoring posted signs.

The city has barricaded the Oak Street crossing where a driver barely escaped his 18-wheeler May 4 when a 7,400 ton freight train smashed into it.

See BATTLEGROUND, 7A

## Library sets sight on new \$7-8M home

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A Jacob S. Maune Memorial Library site study committee ranks the corner of Cherokee and Mountain streets as the No. 1 site choice for a proposed new \$7-\$8 million library, exclusive of land cost.

Dr. Jeff Maune, library board chairman, told city council last Wednesday at a budget work session that property owners had not been approached about selling properties. The site committee likes the entire block that runs from the former Sagesport (old Fulton's Department Store) and including properties belonging to the Cleveland County Red Cross (the old Herald building), Plunk Tire (the old Winn-Dixie building) and Smith properties (the old Western Auto building).

See LIBRARY, 7A

## City employees to see bump in pay in 2012-13 budget

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The city's 180-plus full time employees will get a little extra pocket change if the city council, after a public hearing on June 14, approves a 2% across-the-board cost of living (COLA) increase in the \$34.4 million dollar budget proposed by City Manager Marilyn Sellers.

Sellers is not proposing a merit increase for employees. The last COLA increase was in 2008-2009.

During a marathon budget presentation before city council last Wednesday night, both Sellers and Mayor Rick Murphrey praised the staff for their diligence during the downturn in the economy. Although most new jobs had been frozen until this new year budget, the

city of Kings Mountain had no layoffs and several departments were reorganized and working well and one department, Codes, had relocated to the Public Works building.

Utilities Director Nick Hendricks heads up the Electric and Natural Gas departments and Public Works Supt. Jackie Barnette also heads up the cemetery department. The city is advertising for one employee in the newly-created Main Street Administration department for which \$62,000 is budgeted, included \$50,846 for salary.

Sellers said the big obstacle in balancing the \$34,498,279 budget (less \$211,000 from last year) was the cost to the city for health insurance. Last year the city's tab for claims for health insurance was \$30,000 a week and the proposed budget allots \$40,000 a week



MARILYN SELLERS

and adds a new insurance provider. Murphrey said the proposed \$34.4 million budget is one of the best budgets he's seen in his 19 years at city hall. "I'm very proud of the city's general fund balance, which is 27% of the city's expenditures

See RAISES, 7A

## No property tax increase in proposed county budget

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Good news for Kings Mountain property owners and their Cleveland County neighbors: no increase in property tax is proposed in the 2012-2013 budget prepared by new county Manager Eddie Bailes.

Bailes, 45, comes to the job with 23 years experience in management. He heads a staff of 800 full time and 200 part time employees in 25 departments of Cleveland County government.

He was assistant county manager for seven years and before that human resource director for the county for eight years. County commissioners hired Bailes for the top job May 1 after four



EDDIE BAILES

months on the job as interim manager.

County commissioners, during the interview process, found Bailes' resume tops of all those reviewed.

"I am impressed with all aspects of the community, the great partnership with other municipalities and the strong leadership, teamwork, and vision of county commissioners as we work together for our citizens," said Bailes.

He said that the current

property tax is 57 cents per \$100 valuation, the lowest since 1971. Commissioners are eyeing a property reevaluation in 2014.

Bailes presented the budget proposals at the recent meeting of county commissioners. A public hearing and vote on the budget is slated for June 5 at 6 p.m.

The proposed budget anticipates approximately \$60 million for the general fund and a total approximate budget of \$100 million dollars, depending on flow of federal and state monies. "It's been a difficult budget due low unemployment in the county and the downturn in the economy, no new programs are funded, but the good service will continue for our citizens," said Bailes.

He said county employees haven't had a cost of living raise in four years but he is projecting bonuses for county employees and

See COUNTY, 7A

### Truck catches fire on Hwy. 74



KYRA TURNER / HERALD

Firemen from the Bethlehem Fire Department put out a fire in a tractor trailer on Highway 74 near Ingles Tuesday night, May 15, about 10 p.m. The N.C. Highway Patrol was at the scene in addition to the Kings Mountain Fire Department which stood by.

## City budget earmarks funds for 3 new programs

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City leaders are introducing three pilot programs in the proposed 2012-2013

budget which city council will consider in June.

A "Smart Meter" program, the city purchasing initially 1500 utility meters, is expected to expedite util-

ity savings for the city and its customers; fiber optics to connect all government buildings and save communication dollars; and a man-

See CITY, 7A



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