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New fire district burning residents wallets

Homeowners in the new county fire district south of the city are feeling the pain in their wallets since insurance costs spiraled with insurance classification change from the state, they told city council at the recent meeting.

"It's killing us, we need help from Kings Mountain," said Bobby Maner, of Police Club Road.

His neighbor, Mike Badger, of Alex Owens Road, also spoke during the meeting.

The neighborhood outside the city limits along Highway 161-Lake

Montonia Road, the old city water lake area and all the way to the South Carolina line - has been put in a Class 10 designation by the state Department of Insurance. Insurance companies are canceling fire insurance policies and costs to residents are sky rocketing.

Kings Mountain Fire Chief Frank Burns says he is sympathetic with the residents. Burns said the city has been in negotiations with county officials for months and offered a contract to provide fire protection for the area.

Kings Mountain has had a mutual aid agreement for years with Bethlehem Fire Department, the primary responder to the 161 area, and responds to fire calls. "We can get there first because it's closer," he said. "But if a fire occurs there and in Kings Mountain at the same time KMFD is primary responder to Kings Mountain. Our first responsibility is to Kings Mountain taxpayers.

"We haven't been sitting around here doing nothing, we're working on a resolution to your problem," mayor pro tem Rodney Gordon exclaimed.

Several other residents of the outside city fire district were in the audience last Tuesday at city hall as Badger and Maner spoke of the community's plight.

"We want to be in the Kings Mountain fire district," said Badger. "We eat, work, own businesses here and we're neighbors to Kings Mountain."

Burns explained that the 161 (off York road) area has been served by the county's Bethlehem Fire Department once considered by the state's insurance department a district six

miles from the houses it served. That all changed when insurance companies started using gps locators and found the distance from Bethlehem in the county was more than six miles. Insurance Service Office (ISO) set the insurance rates which went from a class 9 to class 10, policies are being canceled and rates went up. "These folks want the county to contract with the city for fire protection," he added.

Chief Burns held in his hands a sample contract that is still to be considered by the county.

Inappropriate student/staff relationships rare in our area

BY ALAN HODGE
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In addition to the other things parents have on their minds when they send their kids off to school are those disturbing cases where teachers or other staff members engage in what are often termed "inappropriate relationships" with students.

Fortunately, cases where school staff members prey on students in a sexual way in Cleveland and Gaston counties are rare.

"Cleveland County Schools has had no teachers suspended or fired for this reason in recent years," said Donna Carpenter, director of public information for the district.

In Gaston County, a case in January saw a Bessemer City High School bus driver, 33-year-old Kwanda Carpenter, charged with two counts of sexual activity with a student by a school employee after allegedly engaging in a sex act off campus with two boys, ages 16 and 17, last October. The male students allegedly tried to extort \$60 from Carpenter via a Facebook post but they ended up being charged with blackmail.

"Carpenter was dismissed from her bus-driving duties effective January 11," said Gaston County Schools spokeswoman Bonnie Reidy.

The only other recent case in Gaston County where a teacher was disciplined for alleged sexual activity with a student or students took place in February 2012 when East Gaston High teacher Bradford Wayne Mulkey, 32, was arrested and charged with indecent liberties with a child.

See STUDENTS & STAFF, 5A

Relay sets goal of 100K

Kings Mountain Relay for Life will have a goal of \$100,000, according to Co-chairman Frank Burns, Chief of the Kings Mountain Fire Department.

"We're aiming high and we can make it," said Burns who is co-chair with Tammy Wyatt.

Team captains will choose their members from interested citizens at Monday night's 6 p.m. meeting of the planners at Fire Station 1 beside of City Hall downtown.

The closest amount raised to the goal of \$100K from Relay for Life was four years ago. Last year Kings Mountain citizens raised \$56,000.

The Relay for Life celebration will be held May 3 at the Kings Mountain Walking Track.



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Chamber Awards



Dr. Steve Baker, left, and Dr. Brian Baker of Baker Dental Care are pictured with their Emerging 10 award which they received at the Cleveland County Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Banquet held on January 24. See the full story on page 8A.

Photo by BETH BROCK

City receives clean audit

The City of Kings Mountain has received a clean (perfect) audit of its books for the 14th straight year.

Aaron Smith, accountant with Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A., told city council last Tuesday night that the audit is an unqualified opinion of the city's financial statements which is the best opinion that can be given in an independent audit.

Mayor Rick Murphrey credited the record to the strong commitment of employees.

Smith discussed some of the financial highlights for fiscal year 2012 for city council, including information on property taxes, fund

balance and current year revenues and expenditures.

"This is a year-long process," he said, displaying statistics on a PowerPoint presentation.

Smith said the total fund balance in the general fund had grown from \$2,889,804 in 2010 to \$3,267,677 in 2011 and \$3,934,583 in 2012. The available fund balance in 2012 was 33 percent, compared to 23 percent in 2011. He noted the increase in available fund balance from \$707,588 in 2011 to \$859,746 in 2012. Available fund balance as a percent of expenditures in 2012 was 33 percent compared to 23 percent in 2011. General

See AUDIT, 5A



Hannah Yarborough is sworn in as a Kings Mountain police officer by Mayor Rick Murphrey January 31.

Yarborough sworn in

Hannah Lee Yarborough, 25, became the third member of her family sworn in as a police officer Thursday when she joined the Kings Mountain Police Department.

Yarborough's father, Kevin Yarborough, who retired after serving 36 years in law enforcement in Newton, pinned the badge on his daughter's uniform as other family members looked on. Hannah's grandfather, the late Jessie Coleman, also served as a police officer for many years.

"I grew up in law enforcement and there hasn't been a day that I didn't want to be a cop," said Yarborough as she took the oath from Mayor Rick Murphrey.

Swearing to "faithfully and impartially execute the duties of my office,

faithfully perform my duties to the best of my skills and abilities and comply with rules and regulations of the Kings Mountain Police Department," the new patrolman was all smiles as she joined the mayor in reading the police core of values, the law enforcement code of ethics and the department's mission statement.

"You are joining the best of the best," said the mayor, adding, "they keep us safe."

Murphrey commended police for commitment and dedication. "Police risk their lives every day," he added.

Chief Melvin Proctor and other police department staff participated in the 10 a.m. ceremonies at city hall council chambers.

Grover takes steps toward drainage project

GROVER - Town board Monday night contracted with West Consultants for engineering design for what will be a big street and drainage improvements project on Dogwood Drive, Briarcliff Road and Ivy Street.

"We need to get the ball rolling on this project," said Councilwoman Cindy

O'Brien who made the motion to proceed. The \$25,000 allotted for the preliminary work is the first step in the project for which the town is looking for grants to help pay the cost. Councilman Bill Willis voted against, saying that "we aren't ready to nail down an

See GROVER, 5A

YMCA to host gala

The annual YMCA 'Moon over the Mountain' gala, billed as a 'celestial' event to benefit Kings Mountain Family YMCA's Community Outreach will be held Saturday, Feb. 9, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the Duke Energy Training Facility, 1040 Beason Creek Road (in Cleveland County Business Park on Highway 74 West).

A reception and opening of the silent auction will kick-off the gala. A seated dinner and live auction will start at 7:30 p.m.

All proceeds will benefit the local Kings Mountain YMCA's We Build People funds and initiatives such as Summer Outreach, Open Doors program, Diabetes prevention, Live STRONG at the Y, scholarships for teens and youth sports.

More than 75 items will be up for bids and some of these include: items from Dellinger's jewelry, Disney World and Sea World tickets, golf at Quails Hollow, 10 year membership, sports

memorabilia, Great Wolf Lodge package, Dollywood package, celebrity autographs, books and much more.

Presenting sponsors are First National Bank and Duke Energy.

Harvest Moon sponsors are Carley Family Care, Cleveland County Healthcare Systems, and John O. Harris Interest.

Crescent Moon sponsors are Brinkley Financial Group, Dilling Heating and Air, Florrie and Larry Hamrick, Jr., Harris Funeral Home and Kerns Trucking.

New Moon sponsors are Adventures in Advertising, Phil and Sandi Dee, Scissor-Smith & Company Salon, and Pete Douglas Signature Meals.

"In the Y Spirit we welcome everyone to join us in this gala," said Senior Executive Director Kevin D. Osborne.

For tickets (\$120 couple and \$60 single) and/or information on the gala call the YMCA at 704-9631.

King named senior advisor

Top-ranking Republican Wayne King has been named senior advisor to US Congressman Mark Meadows.

"I am honored," said King, vice-chair of the state GOP. "I feel a deep connection to Western North Carolina and certainly look forward to helping serve the citizens of Western North Carolina and all of North Carolina."

King, who assumed duties Feb. 1, will spend most of his time in the 11th District focusing on constituent service and working with businesses, industries and local elected officials while also having input on operations in Washington.

Meadows said of King, "Wayne's a straight-shooter and will tell you what he thinks."



King



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