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Proposed city budget to include pay raise

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The city's 200 plus employees and the seven member city council and the mayor will get more change in their pockets if the proposed budget by City Manager Marilyn Sellers passes after a public hearing by council in June.

Sellers is recommending a 2% cost of living increase for city employees, a raise of \$200 more on the month for city council and the mayor. The present stipends for city council is \$500 a month and for the mayor \$700. The boost in

pay, as proposed, will raise each of the seven commissioners to \$700 per month and the mayor to \$900 per month.

Full time employees, the city council and mayor are all eligible for insurance benefits for which there is no increased costs and no changes in the city's dental and vision plans.

"This is a responsible budget and a balanced, conservative budget," Sellers said as she proposed a \$38,549,669 budget for fiscal year 2014-15, an increase of \$3,126,056 or 8.8% from last year. Sellers praised department heads

for underspending their budgets last year. The proposed budget includes no increase in property taxes (40 cents per \$100 valuation) and no increase in fees. Citizens will still pay a 7.5% water/sewer increase which was implemented last year for three years to pay the \$33M loan from the state for major water and sewer improvements. The first big payment on the loan will be made during the 2015-16 budget year, the amount of debt service at \$1,674,000. After this year, there will remain only one more year (2015-16) that the 7.5% charge will appear on utility bills.

There is no increase in the electric base rate or the natural gas base rate to Kings Mountain utility customers.

Mayor Rick Murphrey said that House Tax Reform Bill 998, effective July 1, may have some impact on natural gas utility bills. City officials are opposing a proposed state mandated sales tax of 7% on natural gas. The city is currently paying zero tax collected but if House Bill 998 is implemented would pay the sales tax directly to the state and the extra charge would be reflected on city utility bills. "We are working hard to see

that this does not happen." Murphrey said the city is evaluating and talking with Rep. Tim Moore and other legislators on how or if the tax would impact city customers. The city is currently paying a 3% electric tax but is 'cost neutral' due to lowering energy cost to customers. The net effect is zero to customers.

The capital outlay budget is proposed at \$1,031,850 for the new fiscal year and includes a new gymnasium floor at the YMCA (the former community center owned by the city and leased by

See CITY BUDGET, 7A

Baccalaureate Sunday night

Commencement exercises for 282 Kings Mountain High School graduating seniors will begin Sunday, June 1, with baccalaureate at 7 p.m. at B. N. Barnes Auditorium and end June 7 with 9 a.m. graduation exercises at John Gamble Stadium. Rev. John Bridges, former interim pastor of First Presbyterian Church, will deliver the baccalaureate sermon. Seven seniors will participate in the service with scripture readings and

prayers. They are: Allen Williams, Molly Short, Spencer Burton, Elizabeth Petty, Mary Asgari, Will Boyles, and Chandler Champion. The Senior Chorus, under the direction of Sarah Fulton with Kathy Holland at the piano, will present special music. Rev. James Lochridge, president of the sponsoring Kings Mountain Ministerial Association, will give the welcome.



MEMORIAL DAY - Pictured on the stage in Patriots Park are from left, Jim Medlin, Curtis Thrift, Mayor Rick Murphrey, Dr. Frank Sincox, Sheriff Alan Norman, Ellis Noell, and KMPD Chief Melvin Proctor. In front of the group Sgt. Todd McDougal, left, and Reserves Commander Thomas Bell, back to camera, have joined Sgt. Bob Myers and Ptl. David Warlick (not pictured) in advancing the colors. (More pictures by Dave Blanton and story on page 5B)

\$16M water line bids to be let

The city will open bids Wednesday (today) from 12 contractors vying to work on the \$16.1 million water line from Moss Lake to Kings Mountain. This is the largest segment of the \$33.8M project for which the city made a no interest loan from the state revolving fund for major water and sewer improvements.

"This would have been Walt Ollis' and Al Moretz' dream," said Joel Wood, making a presentation for the city water/sewer department at a recent budget workshop conducted by City Manager Marilyn Sellers.

The late Walt Ollis was the city's water superintendent for many years and Moretz was a city engineer.

"By the end of this year and good weather we should be done with all these projects except spillway improvements at Moss Lake," said Wood. Spillway improvements are set to begin in January 2015 and expected to cost \$611,120.

During his presentation Wood said the top water customers of the City of

Kings Mountain are Bessemer City, Steag Energy Services, Grover, Firestone, Buckeye Fire Equipment, Solaris Industries, Chemetall Foote, Southeastern Container, White Oak Manor, and Parkdale Mills. The top 10 sewer users are Steag Energy Services, Firestone, Buckeye Fire Equipment, Solaris Industries, Chemetall Foote, Southeastern Container, Parkdale, White Oak Manor, Cleveland County Schools and Patrick Yarns.

Sellers noted that the top 10 electric customers are Patrick Yarn, Parker Hannifan, Ingles Markets, Kings Mountain Hospital, Kings Plush, Steag Energy Services, Cleveland County Schools, Turbo Conveyor, Blanchford Rubber, and Food Lion.

The top 10 natural gas consumers are Firestone, Steag Energy Services, Reliance Electric, Hi-Tex Incorporated, Blanchford Rubber Acquisition, Kings Mountain Hospital, Hanesbrands Inc., Buckeye Fire Equipment, Kings Plush and REA Contracting.

Before Wal-Mart, much rubble

Demolition crews began smashing, ramming and pulling down the old Winn Dixie building last week as two sub-contractors with about 15 workmen used bulldozers, derrick claws and excavators to make way for a new Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market.

The demolition phase of the project is expected to be completed by about June 10. Then new construction will begin. The 40,000 square foot Wal-Mart, which will be tucked back about a hundred yards from the road, will face Hwy. 74 Business. Cleveland Contracting, out

See WAL-MART, 7A



Mayor Rick Murphrey visits the site of the soon-to-be constructed Wal-Mart Marketplace with Jim Tolbert, Project Superintendent with Cleveland Construction, and Tim Morgan with Asset Recovery Environmental.

Photo by ELLIS NOELL

City cemetery low on lots

Three years from now there may be no burial lots for sale at city-owned Mountain Rest Cemetery. City Manager Marilyn Sellers made the statement Thursday night as she gave her budget projections for the upcoming fiscal year that city council will vote on after public hearing in June. Sellers said that burials totaled 1100 last year. "This is just something that council needs to start thinking about and looking into more land for the cemetery," she said.

No tax increase proposed

Cleveland County Commissioners will hold public hearing on the 2014-15 budget Tuesday, June 3, at 6 p.m. in

Commissioners' Chambers of the Charles F. Harry Administrative Building in Shelby.

County Manager Jeff Richardson is proposing a budget with no tax rate increase (the current rate is 57 cents per \$100 property evaluation), the county supplemental tax of 15 cents and county volunteer fire serv-

ice district tax of 5 cents.

Full-time county employees will receive a 2% cost of living raise and the budget projects the hiring of nine new employees, including four new deputy positions. Richardson said in his budget presentation that recent new industry including the AT&T Data Center, Clearwater Paper, Disney Data Center, Duke Energy and Southern Power helped prevent a county tax increase. "Without these

See COUNTY BUDGET, 7A



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