

# The Herald

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## Kings Mountain Chevrolet closing

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Kings Mountain Chevrolet is closing on April 30, 2007, after nearly three years in business. The Chevrolet dealership, in its location at 615 Broadview Drive, however, has operated in Kings Mountain for over 20 years with different names.

When the most recent former owner Charles Winton drove off the lot, GM was right behind him. Susan Garontakos, manager of dealer communications at General Motors headquarters, said that they decided to close the plant and liquidate its assets after former owner Charles Winton moved to Estero Bay, Florida to open up another Chevrolet dealership.

The company looked at several things

when Winton decided to go to Florida. Garontakos said that they looked at "dealer profitability," facts and figures, weighing with that the history of the dealership changing so many hands over the last several years, the decision was clear. "It didn't warrant us to keep it open when he moved away," she said. "Plus there are eight other Chevrolet dealerships within a 20 mile radius (of Kings Mountain)."

A lot of elderly customers have depended on KM Chevrolet for their car repairs. According to a customer, mechanics have picked cars up to work on when the customers could not make it to the shop. They have also delivered serviced vehicles to people when they were finished. The service and friendly faces that filled the lot will be missed.

Garontakos said that KM Chevrolet

customers will still have the opportunity to go to other dealerships in the surrounding area for service. General Motors will be contacting the other dealerships to let them know and will be sending out letters to KM Chevrolet customers to explain the new situation.

According to chevrolet.com, there are six Chevrolet dealers within 20 miles of Kings Mountain: Fred Caldwell's Chevrolet in Clover, SC, Sonny Hancock Automotive Group in Lowell, Dunlap-Johnson Chevrolet in York, SC, Carter Chevrolet-Oldsmobile in Shelby, Abernethy Chevrolet-Oldsmobile in Lincolnton, and Victory Chevrolet in Mt. Holly.

GM is now the current holder of the KM Chevrolet property. "We will buy the inventory back from the dealer," Garontakos said. "We will sell the

assets." She added that they will also work with the community in regards to what or who will be next to occupy the lot, but it won't be a Chevy dealer.

She said that Winton must have considered the move for some time now. They broke ground on the property of his new Estero Bay dealership in February and it plans to open in September. "He likes Chevrolet because his new dealership is going to be Chevrolet," she said. "He's staying with us. He's just in a different area."

The other 20 employees at Kings Mountain Chevrolet were told a few weeks ago about the dealership closing and were encouraged to find other employment.

Garontakos said that when a dealer wants to move or open up another dealership, GM will sit down with the deal-

ers to make an accurate assessment of the dealerships in the area. The ultimate decision lies with the dealer, she said.

Jim Testa built the dealership, then named KM Chevrolet-Geo, in its current location in 1981. But Testa said that there have been Chevrolet dealerships in Kings Mountain since before his time, probably in the early 1900s. "We've always had a Chevy dealership," he added.

In 1990 he sold it to Homer Baucom and Carroll Gray and the name changed slightly to Baucom Chevrolet-Geo. After a while they sold it to Ray McKenney and another McKenney Chevrolet was born in Kings Mountain. Since then it has changed names and owners three other times: Fred Caldwell's Chevrolet, Diamond Chevrolet and Kings Mountain Chevrolet.

## Gone with the Wind



EMILY WEAVER / HERALD

Darrell Austin Jr. and Melissa Lawrence stand at a huge oak tree - one of the oldest in the city - that was uprooted by Monday's high winds. The winds caused some property damage around the area, and many parts of the city were without power for several hours.

## Gusts over 30 mph send landscapes flying

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A little after 9:30 Monday morning Melissa Lawrence felt and heard a loud "boom." A piece of her chimney fell down near the hearth.

"I thought, Oh no. The chimney has fallen over on top of the roof," she said. But when she looked outside she was met with an uprooting surprise. Stretched across her front lawn and blocking the driveway was one of the oldest trees in town, laid waste by the forceful gale. The massive Oak, which had stood like a sentinel on Lawrence's front lawn at 110 N. Gaston Street, since before the house was completed in 1940, was entirely uprooted from its post.

She said that an electrician for the city was working on lines near her house when the tree fell. "He said it shook his whole bucket," she added.

Down with the tree came the power lines feeding electricity to her house. Nick Hendricks with the City Electric Department said that the winds caused outages all over the city, uprooting trees, severing tree tops and limbs. Power started going off line around 8 am. "At the height of our See Wind, 11A



JOSEPH BRYMER / HERALD

Kings Mountain Police Officer Scott Hood directs traffic at the intersection of Cansler and King streets after strong winds blew through the area Monday, causing power outages and fallen trees.

## Hearing on four-year City Council terms is tonight at City Hall

ELIZABETH STEWART

Herald Correspondent

City Council will hold a public hearing Thursday, April 19 at 7 p.m. on lengthening their terms from two to four year staggered terms, reversing what voters decided in 1995.

The hearing, which invites input from the public, is required before Council takes a vote on amending the charter April 24 at the regular meeting at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

By a 6-1 vote April 4 Council adopted a resolution of intent to amend the city charter and by a 7-0 vote called for the special public hearing.

Ward 3 Council member Jerry Mullinax is apparently the lone councilman opposed to a four year term which Council, by law, can approve with a majority vote. Mullinax says since the people voted out the four year term 12 years ago that the voters should make the decision whether or not to change it back to two years.

Apparently there is no outward opposition to the charter change unless it surfaces at the public hearing. Six of seven council members and Mayor Rick Murphrey told The Herald recently they favor staggered terms to create more stability in government and a politically experienced board which would help in economic recruitment and business development. Currently, all seats of council and the mayor are up for grabs every two years.

The U.S. Justice Department must sign off on a change before filing for city offices opens July 6 for the November election. City Attorney Mickey Corry says Justice Department approval could take 60-120 days.

At tonight's public hearing City Council members are expected to outline how terms of city council would be staggered because at the upcoming election some members would have to run for two years and some for four years. One method is to draw straws.

## Firehouse Cook-off Friday, Saturday at Walking Track

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What is the best thing the Kings Mountain firemen do all year (besides save your life)? They bring the mouth-watering aroma and delicious taste of award-winning barbeque from across the country straight to your backyard.

The 11th Annual Firehouse BBQ Cook-Off begins this Friday at noon at the Walking Track beside the YMCA and with at least 53 contestants it is slated to be the biggest one yet.

There are also new additions to this year's Cook-Off which will run until about 3 pm on Saturday. KMFD and Murphy's Scooter Shed is presenting the First Annual Firehouse BBQ Bike Show and Poker Run. The show will begin at 9 am Saturday with the bike run starting about 11 am. All of the money raised during the Poker Run will be donated

to Relay for Life of Kings Mountain. The bikes will return at 3:30 pm for the awards ceremony.

Packed with competing BBQ teams, the walking track will also have Fun Time Inflatables kid slides, live entertainment and about a dozen food vendors.

This year's Cook-Off, sponsored by the Kansas City Barbeque Society, has been proclaimed by Gov. Mike Easley to be the North Carolina Firehouse Barbeque State Championship. The winner of the state championship will receive \$4,000, "The Magic Big Green Egg" (valued at \$1,000), an invitation to the American Royal Barbecue Contest and will be eligible for the Jack Daniels Invitational Contest.

Last year's grand champion, BS Pitmeisters will be returning to defend their title. The competition will be fierce. But two

See Cook-off, 5A