

LOCAL

State of City addressed at recent Customer Appreciation Breakfast

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Mayor Rick Murphrey gave a State of the City address at last week's Customer Appreciation breakfast at the Patrick Senior Center, which included several updates and current activities in city departments.

"The city continues to move progressively forward," he said.

Starting with the \$35 million 2008-09 budget, he said, that the city's long-term debt rests at a little over \$6 million. The short-term debt is at \$1.3 million and \$858,000 is included in the budget this year for the city's capital outlay projects.

"We've had a perfect audit, we're very proud of, for eight years in a row," he said. "You can see our debt service in a \$35 million business, we feel, is very reasonable and very low."

"Kings Mountain is one of eight cities (in the state) that sells all four utilities: water, sewer, electric and gas. As the economic times become a little tougher and more difficult, we've implemented a few plans to try to save money," the mayor said.

One of the plans is the city's performance contract with Siemens, a company which develops new technology to promote efficiency and to cut costs for their clients. Murphrey said, that through Siemens, the city will save over \$3 million in a 12-year period.

Another penny-saver is found in the city's two peak-shaving plants. The plants enable the city to save money by producing their own electricity, through turbine engines, during the city's highest peaks of energy usage. "We have signed a new 10-year contract with Duke Energy," Murphrey said, which will take affect January 1, 2009.

For many years, the city has purchased wholesale electricity from Duke Energy, who supplies it to the KM substations, which then distribute it to the citizens. Through the new contract, he said, Duke will allow the city to continue its peak shaving operations.

"That is saving the city roughly \$1 million dollars," he added.

Another cost-cutter in the age of expensive oil, is the city's no-idle policy. Murphrey said that they are encouraging city employees to use one car instead of two when only one would do. They are also asked to turn their engines off when they are stopped to avoid wasting fuel

by letting the engine idle.

"We have an energy depot that's on our website (www.cityofkm.com) and has just a tremendous amount of energy tips to help us all save money," the mayor said.

Economic development

Even in a receding economy, Murphrey said that the city has welcomed several new businesses and industrial expansions over the past year.

To name a few, he spoke of the recent grand opening of the 85,000 sq. ft. Ingles on Shelby Road, the opening of Roses department store, Buckeye's 35,000 sq. ft. addition to its complex and Ultra Machine's expansion into two KM locations and one Shelby location.

"Southern Industrial Contractors has merged with Gibson International and they are hiring at this time. It looks like to me it's some 40 or 50 or it could be as much as over 100 jobs (to fill there) as we go into the next year," Murphrey said.

He thanked Parker Hannifin for moving its hydraulic pump division and headquarters to the company's Kings Mountain plant. "It means a lot to me and it means a lot to our city when big corporations like this think enough of us and our staff and the workforce to bring their entire headquarters here," he said.

Several other new businesses were mentioned, in addition to the new Kings Mountain Professional building, which houses Prescriptions Plus and Baker Dental Care on E. King Street. The mayor said that in the past four or five years, the city has probably received over \$100 million worth of industrial investment and over 1,000 jobs, which stemmed from "a lot of team work."

Residential development

Murphrey said that although the city has not been immune to the nationwide housing slump, the residential market continues to develop in Kings Mountain.

"We have subdivisions still being built," he said.

Those listed as "active developments" at the meeting were: Country Grove on Patterson Rd.; The Farm on Oak Grove Rd. (about 28 houses); Coleman Estates (about

30 houses); Eagle Run; Tommy Hall's condos; Fairview Subdivision; Hall Crossing; Shepherd's Place; Phifer Acres and Crocker Ridge.

The land that is currently being cleared near Mountain Rest Cemetery on Gold Street will house King Falls apartments, with 36 units for seniors and 48 regular apartments, Murphrey said. Twelve more apartments will be established on Cherokee Street for the handicapped.

Water and Sewer

The city Water and Sewer Department serves 4,639 water customers and 4,063 sewer customers, according to the mayor.

He mentioned the new technology Director Dennis Wells has been using, the cure-in-pipe inner liner. "They don't have to dig up the street (to repair a water line)," he said.

With cure-in-pipe repairs, workers are able to detect the problem areas of a line with a small camera and, once spotted, can usually repair the cracks with a foam injected into a liner in the pipe.

"We're going to complete the sewer extension to our Westover friends, that should be completed by the end of October. We've got a grant to do that, some \$440,000," he said, adding that they have also received a \$700,000 grant to provide service to Galilee Church Road.

He said that they continue to dredge Moss Lake, which holds 50 billion gallons of valuable water. He thanked former mayor John Henry Moss for his vision to establish the lake years ago. He added that the city is about three or four years into an eight-nine year process of creating another lake, about a third of the size of Moss, next to the current impoundment.

He said that they continue to work on the new pipeline coming into town and there are some spillway repairs, which need to be completed.

Electric Department

The Electric Department, directed by Nick Hendricks, serves 4,226 customers. "Nick and his staff continue to do new lighting on the main corridors as you come into town," Murphrey said. "These lights will be changing from mercury to sodium lights. They look a lit-



EMILY WEAVER/HERALD Mayor Rick Murphrey addresses crowd at annual city breakfast.

tle dull, but it's less energy and it's brighter. We've tested them."

He said that they have added new street lights to Patriot's Park

and are installing underground wiring downtown for electricity, which should hopefully be in place in time for Christmas. New lights

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