

INDUSTRY
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"Significant businesses are looking at being located in Cleveland County," said Rep. Tim Moore (R-Cleveland), who was a primary sponsor of House Bill 1958 before it was taken over by the Senate with SB 1171. "Should they choose to locate in Cleveland County we'd be the envy of the state."

Commissioner Johnny Hutchins agreed that, should their prospects pan out, the announcement would be golden.

The county has coined its mission to attract this new industry "Project Blue Ridge". An incentives deal that offers help with grants, extra water, speedy permits, a waive of fees, a tremendous break in property taxes and that covers utility connection fees, all over a 10-year span, is the county's first public attempt to attract the industry.

The deal with Project Blue Ridge is based on the promise of 31 new, permanent full-time jobs, buildings and installation of machinery and equipment that would lead to a total investment of approximately \$600 million to the county over the next 10 years.

The City of Kings Mountain will provide water, sewer and electricity to the site.

In the approved incentive agreement, the county will "aggressively pursue grant funding for high speed fiber optic network transmission services" for the company, and provide "at no cost to the company" a secondary water source. The county also "agrees to work with the City

of Kings Mountain to expedite the processing of all applications for permits required by the city or the county" and to work with the city to "waive all fees for permitting, inspection, development, or other fees normally charged by the city or the county". The county "agrees to work with the city to waive or otherwise pay for all connection fees to local utilities", according to the incentives deal, and the county agrees to refund 70 percent of the total ad valorem (property value) taxes on real property and 85 percent of the total ad valorem taxes on personal property paid each year by the company.

Rep. Moore said that he and Sen. Debbie Clary have been working closely with the state department of commerce and the local Economic Development Commission to bring the data centers to Cleveland County.

"I hope there will be an announcement soon," Moore said.

Hutchins said that he believes an announcement will be made within 30 days.

But more than one data center or data farm could be on the hook. With the approval of the incentives deal, Hutchins said that this is "only a hub"; "there will be more to come".

County Manager David Dear has said that more than one business has been looking at potential data center sites in Cleveland County.

Spoiler alert

According to the Charlotte Business Journal, Wipro Technologies and Juniper Networks could bring a total of 750,000 square feet

of server-farm (data farm) space to counties west of Charlotte. "Microsoft, which is also considering sites in Virginia, plans a 500,000-square-foot data center."

Even if all three located here, the number of jobs created would be small, but benefits to the tax base could be large.

Earlier this year, T5 Partners of Atlanta, who specializes in recruiting data farm companies, purchased the Chris*Craft building at 140 Riverside Court, Kings Mountain.

With adjacent properties, T5 has controlling interest in about 260 acres surrounding the former Chris*Craft plant, ripe for growth.

"Wipro, based in Bangalore, India, is eyeing a 215,000-square-foot building in Kings Mountain," according to the Charlotte Business Journal. "Juniper Networks has looked at an 141,000-square-foot former Carolina Mills building in Maiden for a data center" and Microsoft is hoping for a 500,000-square-foot data center.

According to the county's incentive agreement, the company is considering the "construction and equipping of an approximately 400,000-square-foot building located at 140 Riverside Court," a plan that may expand the former 250,000-square-foot Chris*Craft building.

Rep. Moore said that these types of industries may be attracted to the state and, especially Kings Mountain, because of the relatively low-cost of electricity, proximity to Charlotte and an international airport, and the

abundant source of water available here.

On the "farm"

A site in Mebane has been on the radar for computer companies, according to The Alamance News. A special meeting was called for Alamance County commissioners to discuss incentives for the unnamed company (that sources identified as Microsoft). It was called off at the last minute.

Nearly a week later, Cleveland County commissioners called a special meeting to order at 9 a.m. on Wednesday for a public hearing to discuss an incentives deal of their own - for a company known only as "Project Blue Ridge".

The project entails a plant, where instead of pistons and conveyor belts, a building is filled with thousands of high-tech computers. It's often called a "server farm" or "data farm", Rep. Moore said.

Google set up its own data center near Lenoir in Caldwell County in 2008. In neighboring Catawba County, Apple Inc. announced last year that they planned to build a \$1 billion facility. More companies and more server farms may be on the way.

FILM FEST
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FBI operation attempts to bust an Asian human trafficking ring, but in a botched raid only one girl survives. This is the story of an FBI agent who tries to make a difference and ultimately must stop one of his own men from siding with the bad guys."

"My Breasts Could Kill Me," a documentary by Lee Phillips of the United Kingdom takes a look at breast cancer, a disease that claims the lives of over 12,000 people a year.

"Contact", a documentary by Bentley Dean and Martin Butler of Australia, gives voice to an aboriginal girl whose clan was the "last aboriginal mob still living traditionally, without any contact or knowledge of modern Australia" - until rocket testing brought the outside world to their land.

"Yuwali gives a riveting account as she and her group are chased hundreds of kilometers around the desert trying to escape the 'devil men' in the 'rocks that move' (four wheel drives)," according to the film's description.

And in "Sebastian's Voodoo", a four-minute animation by Joaquin Baldwin of California,

"a voodoo doll must find the courage to save his friends from being pinned to death".

Descriptions, trailers and previews of other films that will be shown at the festival can be found online at www.ccartscouncil.org/realtoreel/index.html

Parents are advised to preview the descriptions of the films that will be playing each day.

For a complete list of show times and previews visit the Cleveland County Arts Council online

HOW TO REACH US

Contact the Herald by coming by the office at 700 E. Gold St.; call 704-739-7496, fax 704-739-0611 or Email emily.kmherald@gmail.com

STATE PLAY
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In 1937, the state of North Carolina prohibited the use of slot machines.

The state specifically prohibited the use of video poker machines in 2000, and then again in 2006.

Over the years state legislators have also sought to limit or prevent the operation of "for-profit" Bingo parlors, prevent commercialized gambling,

"prevent the disguise of bingo and other game forms or promotional schemes", and "prevent participation by criminal and other undesirable elements".

In 2006, state legislators approved the North Carolina Education Lottery - operated and taxed by the state.

Any federally-recognized Indian tribe, such as the Cherokees who themselves make up a sovereign nation, are exempt from state laws regarding gambling.

SWEEPSTAKES
From Page 1

"It's like having \$50 to spend on rent or bills and one chooses instead to use the \$50 at a restaurant and another chooses to spend the \$50 on a sweepstakes (game)," he said.

The state doesn't say anything to the one who spent his money at a restaurant, but the one who blew \$50 playing sweepstakes is wrong, Johnson said.

But, as other operators have pointed out, morality can be a blurry vision. Legislators outlawed video poker in 2006, shortly after approving the state's own education lottery. Video sweepstakes started migrating in after the ban, with operators and industry professionals claiming the law didn't apply to them since the new machines did not require the insertion of money or coins to play.

Some were allowed to operate unscathed by law enforcement. Others were deemed dens of sin and gambling halls. They were promptly shut down.

Operators claimed the sweepstakes were no different from the games offered by fast food chains and soft drink companies to market products. But legislators saw a difference.

Rep. Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) voted in favor of the bill. "In 2006, video poker was banned, but this bill clears up any confusion concerning computer-based sweepstakes. The bill now awaits the Governor's signature."

It was presented to Gov. Beverly Perdue on Thursday, July 8th. As of Monday evening, she had yet to sign it.

Industry spokesmen urged the state to pass legislation that would regulate and tax video sweepstakes, saying that it would generate at least \$500 million in rev-

enue each year - a tempting argument as the state looks ahead to a \$3 billion shortfall next year.

The new law applies to offenses committed on or after December 1, 2010, requiring operators to pull the plugs in four and a half months. Johnson, who also offers video sweepstakes at his other KM businesses (Soap N Suds, 301 E. King St., and Rags to Riches, 712 York Rd.), is just one of several owners that carry the games in the city limits. The sign has come down at Bill Condrey's Kings Mountain Business Center, which offered the sweeps at 608 York Rd.

Polo's, an establishment at 300 N. Cansler St., which sold clothes and "lucky phone cards", had four terminals still open for play on Monday. Other gaming centers around town, including three owned by Mike Heath and two by Ted Ford, will also have to close come Dec. 1st.

"Here in the city we want to have a good quality of life," said Mayor Rick Murphrey. "Sweepstakes is not part of the quality of life that we want to promote."

Before the new legislation, city leaders have had to look at different ways to regulate the industry. Grover and Kings Mountain studied zoning ordinances and license fees. Grover raised its annual privilege license fees for the operation of Internet cafes and sweepstakes businesses to \$4,000 per establishment.

After a six-month moratorium preventing any new sweepstakes parlors from springing up in town, the City of Kings Mountain amended its zoning laws to severely restrict where the establishments can operate and set a \$2,500 annual fee on conditional use permits. State law will take over in December.

"We're going to adhere to the state's law and enforce

that and hopefully sweepstakes and gambling will leave our city," Murphrey said.

And Grover's Main Street shops will likely be mostly empty and quiet again. Six gaming facilities have been operating in that downtown.

Lib Stewart contributed to this report.

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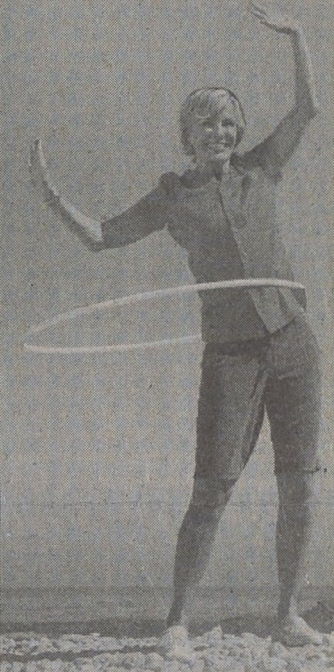
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