

Video sweeps debate continues in Grover

Council sets Feb. 6 public hearing to consider moratorium on business permits

(Ed. note - Because part of this story was omitted inadvertently in last week's Herald, it is reprinted this week in its entirety.)

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GROVER - The controversy over video sweepstakes gaming continued Monday night and as tempers flared at the town board meeting Mayor J.D. Ledford called a halt to the "city recognition portion" of the meeting but not before Don Johnson, who rents his build-

ings on Main Street to sweepstakes parlors and Dennis Moss, who operates Cyberline, had their say.

The discussion came minutes before the board unanimously set a public hearing for Feb. 6 to consider a moratorium on issuing conditional use permits for video sweepstakes. The change in the ordinance requires public notice and a public hearing.

"We just want to operate our businesses and not be harassed by police," said Johnson. Deputy Roy Dyer, a new councilman, took issue and denied the accusation.

"It's against the law to operate against the conditions of conditional use permits and police are doing their job and our two auxiliary policemen work for free," he added. "I personally don't want that kind of element in this town but the bottom line is that we don't want criminal activity in this town, we had rather have nothing."

The two uniformed auxiliary and part time officer stood at the back of the meeting room and the chief of police sat at the table with council members.

Chief Eric Buff said a police car

was parked for a day or two in the parking lot across from the sweepstakes parlors because of complaints by a citizen of traffic violations.

"We're legal," said Dennis Moss of Cyberline. "Do you want business in this town or a ghost town?" to which board member Brent White responded; "We want business that is legal."

Johnson said the group was stagnant before new businesses opened on Main Street several years ago. Several weeks ago he said tenants were notified they

were operating illegally - that the state had outlawed certain games and an investigation was underway.

"The chief was nice about it, two businesses ordered new software for the machines and reopened, others are still closed, but police cars pull up behind cars in the parking lot and we just want to operate our businesses," Moss said.

Johnson said the group has hired a lawyer and will fight the revocation by the county of his tenants' conditional use permits at the Jan. 19 meeting of the Grover board of adjustment.

WELCOME: mat rolled out for state's second largest solar farm in KM



photo by ELLIS NOELL

State Department of Commerce Secretary J. Keith Crisco cuts a ribbon welcoming Strata Solar to Kings Mountain Thursday. Strata Solar CEO Markus Wilhelm is to the left of Crisco.

FROM Page 1

Emily Felt, of Duke Energy - the top customer of the KM solar farm, thanked Strata Solar for the extra volts now surging into their grids, courtesy of the sun.

Wilhelm thanked the many partners, which helped them grow the "second largest solar farm in the state".

"We started this here because of the political support and the incredible support from everybody here in Cleveland County" and the

state, he said. "The support we've got here is the best we've ever got."

Crisco thanked the company for the jobs it created to build the farm.

"This is 70 jobs, that's a good thing," he said.

"It's been a very good day," Crisco added, considering the recent industry announcements of Baldor's expansion in Cleveland County and Freightliner's resurgence in Gaston County, which brought 1200 more jobs back to the area.

This solar farm, he said, "is part of an energy sector that is growing in North Carolina."

Wilhelm said that they have 10-15 solar projects planned across the state and added that he'd like to have another one in Kings Mountain.

"This was a tremendous experience for all of us. It was a privileged chance to work with such a great team," he said.

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners approved an incentive deal, granting back 25 percent of the county property tax to

the industry over 10 years, to entice Strata Solar. The "lack of red tape" in the county was another perk that paved the way for the industry's arrival, Wilhelm said.

County commission chairman Johnny Hutchins and Mayor Rick Murphrey welcomed Strata Solar to the neighborhood.

This multi-million dollar solar farm, sprouting from a partnership between Stratus Solar and Birdseye Renewable Energy, is set to produce around 5 megawatts of electricity a day for Duke Energy.

DREAM: of MLK lives on at city hall

FROM Page 1

City Hall depicts a varied theme of the artist's impression of his/her "Vision of the American Dream".

The six top winners in the contest and a unity award from Mayor Rick Murphrey will be presented at the Jan. 31 6 p.m. meeting of Kings Mountain City Council. A reception was held at City Hall Monday night when the cash awards were announced: \$150 to first place winners in both youth and adult categories; \$100 to second place winners and \$50 to third place winners.

Ellis Noell, city events director, coordinated the celebration of talent. Co-sponsors with the city in the photography contest were Mickey Corry, local attorney, Cleveland County NAACP, and the Kings Mountain Herald.

Mayor Rick Murphrey announced the award recipients and all adult winners in the contest were present along with relatives of the first place youth winner.

Larry and Janie McVay said their 19-year-old son, Brian Johnson, a student at St. Augustine College in Raleigh, will be excited at the news that his collage of family pictures was top place winner in the youth division. The photograph shows his grandparents, Willie and Viola McVay holding the first born of their 11 children, Janie Ruth McVay; a little girl in the cotton fields (Brian's great-great grandmother Janie House) a picture of Dr. King and a picture of President Barack Obama when he campaigned in Charlotte in 2008. It was entitled, "GrandMom's Real-

ties."

"Dreams in Black and White" won for B. Starr Dove the top award in the adult category of the contest. In her photograph, she pictured two little girls happily playing together, taking her vision from a speech by Dr. King who said he dreamed of "little black girls and little white girls playing together."

Other top winners in the adult division of the contest were the second place award for "Big Dreams Start Small" by La-Sundra Williams who depicted entrepreneurship. Her photograph was of young people involved in lawn work. Third place winner Erica Williams' depiction of "Sea of Possibilities" showed a man standing on a shore.

Second place in the youth division went to Douglas Parker for his photograph, "Free Now" a picture of a young man ready to salute the American flag; and third place went to Aaron Watson for "Freedom to Serve and Play" showing a young serviceman and musician with his guitar. The mayor's award to Gen Hart's "Ever Burning Hope - the American Dream" depicted a flame blowing in the wind - Dr. King's light that will continue to burn for generations to come.

Rev. John Houze, pastor of People's Baptist Church, delivered the message at the early morning church service at Bynum's Chapel which attracted a full house.

"Even though we face the difficulties of today, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



photos by EMILY WEAVER

Janie McVay, left, Larry McVay and Vickey Knox look at photographs on the theme "What is Your Vision of the American Dream" submitted by residents at the city's celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day Monday. The McVay's son, Brian Johnson, won first place for his family collage, "Grand Mom's Realities."



Johnny Hutchins, chairman of the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners, admires the prize-winning photograph of KM student Brian Johnson at the city-sponsored Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebration Monday.

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238 CHEROKEE STREET

www.cherokeestreetavern.com

238 Cherokee St., Kings Mountain • 704.739.1292

Kings Mountain Herald

Published every Wednesday

Periodicals postage at Kings Mountain, NC 28086

USPS 931-040 by Gemini Newspapers, Inc.

Postmaster, send address changes to: P. O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, NC 28086

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Mail Subscription Rates Payable in Advance.
All Prices include 6.75% NC State Sales Tax.

	1 Year	6 Months
Gaston & Cleveland County	\$30.00	\$19.50
Other NC Counties	\$35.00	\$22.50
Outside NC	\$50.00	\$39.00

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