

Kings Mountain Herald

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"It will be a plus for the community," said county commission chairman Ronald Hawkins at a formal announcement Friday, after the county board earlier turned over real estate and operations of Cleveland County Health Care System to Carolinas Health Care System.

The deal inked by the state's largest hospital system will pay the

county \$101 million, including a lump sum of \$23 million and a total of \$3 million in annual installments thereafter until the full amount is paid.

"Carolinas Health Care System has more than lived up to all of its commitments through the years," said Hawkins. "We enjoy a level of quality care that we can be proud of, and that also makes Cleveland County a great place to live and a desirable location for businesses

that are bringing needed new jobs. Hawkins added, "We look forward to Cleveland County Health Care System becoming an even more integral part of Carolinas Health Care System. This move is in the best interest of Cleveland County residents."

Carolinas Health Care System will acquire the real estate and operations of Cleveland County Health Care System. The deal

See KM HOSPITAL, 6A



Multiple fire departments, including Kings Mountain Fire Department, battled flames at a warehouse off Main Street at Oak Street in Grover Thursday, March 7.
 Photo by JAMIE BLACK

Fire ignites hay bales

Heater may be the cause of blaze

GROVER —The smell of drenched, charred hay remained this week where fire raged last Thursday at what is commonly known as the old Baxter Paper Corporation on Main Street where flames and thick, black heavy smoke could be seen for miles.

Residents of a house about 10 feet from the building were evacuated. Firemen saved the house. The two people working inside the hay storage facility were not injured.

"Those big round rolls of hay will burn forever, it could smolder for a week," said Kings Mountain Assistant Fire Chief Jamie Black.

Black and 15 firemen from the Kings Mountain Fire Department took a big ladder truck and were on the scene 15 minutes after the fire alarm sounded, hoisting firemen in the air to douse the bowed-type roof and pumping water at 600 gallons per minute. Local firemen returned to Kings Mountain at 1:30 a.m. Friday morning. Black said firefighters from eight departments responded. The town's 100,000-gallon water tank was drained to contain the blaze that burned for hours.

The fire started about 5 p.m. Thursday in a 100x200 foot building, now known locally as Cameron Minette, and owned by John Laverder.

Early investigations show a malfunctioning propane heater caused the blaze. The dust particles apparently caught fire inside the building

where two people had been working before the fire started. No injuries were reported.

Black said that firemen dragged the big bundles of hay out of the building and wet them down. Grover firemen continued on stand-by after the fire was extinguished.

"There's been no ruling on the cause of the fire but it appeared accidental and is still under investigation by the county Fire Marshal," said Black.

Volunteers with the Cleveland County Chapter of the American Red Cross fed exhausted firefighters hamburgers and provided bottles of water throughout Thursday night. Cleanup of burned hay has continued.

Multiple fire departments from Cleveland County and Upstate South Carolina assisted at the scene along with rescue squads, first responders and other agencies. They included Grover Volunteer Fire Department, No. 3 Rural Volunteer Fire Department, Grover Rescue, Bethlehem Volunteer Fire Department, Oak Grove Volunteer Fire Department, Kings Mountain Fire Department, Cleveland County Emergency Medical Services, Blacksburg, SC Volunteer Fire Department, Antioch Fire Department, and the Cleveland County Fire Marshal's Office.

Onlookers recalled that it was the second time that a big fire occurred in town in recent years, recalling a fire which razed the old Minette Mills 4-5 years ago. The billowing flames and smoke brought memories of that fire.

Town residents reported experiencing low water pressure late Thursday and maintenance men worked late into the night to restore normal operations early Friday.

Fiber Optics to go live May 1

Fiber Optics, a 288 fiber-count self-healing ring around the city essentially to connect city buildings for cost-savings and faster communication will go live May 1.

"It's big cost savings for the city," said Energy Services Director Nick Hendricks, updating city council at last week's workshop at the Public Works Department. He calls the project "lighting up Kings Mountain" and he's confident fiber optics will put the city on the map.

Workmen have been busy hanging fiber on poles, pulling wire across US 74 at the midnight hour, splicing and constructing a loop to serve city buildings and utilities. "We are a little behind but our target date for completion is in 60 days," Hendricks said. Mayor Rick Murphrey and city council members were excited to hear the update of the project and particularly the cost savings in telephone use.

Hendricks acknowledged that several industries are interested in acquiring dark fiber optics from the city in the future. Some 750 calls could come into the city on one line.

Hendricks also updated council on another project he called a safety tool for the city. Proposed is a mass notification system that would include weather alerts, Amber alerts, and a notification to residents of power outages.

Citizens would sign up on the city's website www.cityofkm.com for the alerts they want to receive



Crew members from Williams Electric Company installing fiber optics to city buildings update Mayor Rick Murphrey, third from left, and Energy Services Director Nick Kendricks on progress of the project.
 Photo by ELLIS NOELL

and provide the information on how they want to be contacted. The mass notification system, with Everbridge as the preferred vendor, would notify via home phones, cell phones, work phones, email and text messaging. Some examples of alerts would be severe weather, missing persons, energy curtailment, outages, blackouts, and

scheduled maintenance. City staff use would be for employee notifications.

"A first class state-of-the-art project" is how the mayor described fiber optics that he said is not only cost effective by connecting city buildings but also a valuable tool in recruiting new industry and business.

Curtain goes up Friday on Oklahoma!



Trey Ross, Tom Bennett as Slim, Greg Dixon as Cord Elam and Julie Marshall as Aunt Eller in a scene from "Oklahoma" which opens Friday night by the Kings Mountain Little Theatre at the Joy Performance Center.
 Photo by BRYAN HALLMAN

The curtain will go up Friday night at 7:30 p.m. by the Kings Mountain Little Theatre on the classic musical, "Oklahoma," the first collaboration of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II in 1943, the story of two cowboys who flirt with and fight for the women they love.

Performances will be held at Joy Performance Center, Railroad Ave., on Friday and Saturday, March 15 and 16 at 7:30 p.m., Sun-

day, March 17 at 3 p.m. and Friday and Saturday, March 22 and 23, at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets and reservations are available now and can be requested by phone at 704-730-9408. Tickets may also be purchased in person for \$10 at the Kings Mountain Little Theatre Box Office located at 202 Railroad Avenue from 7-9 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Some of the classic songs in the

musical include "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," and "The Surrey with the Fringe on Top" and "People Will Say we're In Love."

Jim Champion, veteran KMLT director, actor and officer, is directing the production that features a number of talented performers, including a number of new faces to KM Little Theatre. "They have all been working hard on this production and look forward to presenting

See OKLAHOMA, 6A



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