

Jim Clark hoping to retain franchise in arbitration

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Jim Clark Auto Center is going into arbitration to fight the termination of its Cadillac franchise.

At this point, Jim Clark Auto Center is still a licensed Cadillac dealer but it's scheduled to wind down Cadillac sales in October.

The way General Motors structured the closings, the affected dealers would remain Cadillac dealers as long as they had some of the vehicles in stock.

"It was kind of set up when you sold your last one, good bye," said Jim Clark, dealer principal of the auto center.

Currently Clark has 2010 Cadillacs in stock, so he remains a dealer. The purpose of the upcoming arbitration is to make sure it stays that way.

Clark said only two Cadillac dealers in Kansas were unaffected by General Motors closings.

General Motors kept one Cadillac franchise in Wichita and one in Manhattan.

Clark believes these franchises may have been chosen more for their location than for their numbers, but he said that is just his assumption.

He thinks someone at General Motors might have seen Manhattan as a better location because it is a college town with a high per capita income.

"And without looking at the job that the dealers were doing, they selected, I believe, just by a dart at a map," Clark said.

Clark believes there is a tremendous case for the continuation of his Cadillac franchise.

"I believe that we will be successful in our arbitration of this case, because the facts bear us out," he said.

A strong customer satisfaction index and a new facility directly off of I-70 are some of the reasons Clark believes his Cadillac franchise should continue.

According to Clark though, the main reason his Cadillac franchise should continue is they are the fourth-volume Cadillac dealer in Kansas.

"So when we get in front of an arbitration hearing judge I'm very comfortable in our chances," he said.

Clark expects a number of Cadillac dealers in Kansas will be reinstated following arbitration, including his own.

"I believe we'll be one of them simply because of the numbers we've posted in the past for Cadillac. The case cannot be made that we shouldn't have it," he said.

The arbitration cases will be going through the American Arbitration Association, a dispute resolution service. The association uses many retired judges as arbitrators.

One of the subjects Clark expects to address in the arbitration is the area's demographics.

He said General Motors has Junction City down as an area of declining population, whereas Clark said it is easily supported that the opposite is true.

Clark expects to ask the city and the Economic Development Commission to participate in the arbitration hearing to show the current demographic numbers.

He also wants to involve the community because losing the franchise will affect the city as well.

"If people go out of town to buy a car, those sales tax monies support someone else's hospital, someone else's school, someone else's county and someone else's city," Clark said. "For our community we need to retain this."

Regardless of the arbitrators' ruling, Jim Clark Auto Center will continue to be a Chevrolet dealer.