

December 7, 2005 – Roanoke Rapids Daily Herald

Companies Welcomed to Halifax County

By Amy Lotven/Herald Staff Writer

HALIFAX – Three trucking and one plastic company will take advantage of county incentives and have committed to relocate their business to Halifax County's Industrial Park, located off N.C. Highway 903.

Tuesday morning, the Halifax County Economic Development Commission announced that Pelican Packaging Company, Driver Trucking, C & C Trucking and Super Service all hope to relocate by the end of next summer. It is estimated that about 220 jobs could be created over the next five years due to the new businesses.

Halifax County Manager Matthew Delk joined a number of county and state dignitaries in making the announcement and introducing the companies during a press conference at the Halifax County Agriculture Center.

Pete Roy, president of Pelican Packaging, said the company started out in 1996 brokering and selling plastics and raw materials to clients. The Rocky Mount based company, which started out with a 5,000 square foot building but now occupies a 35,000 square-foot space that is still too small, soon began growing as well as changing its focus. Recently, Roy said, the business has gotten into plastic processing and recycling.

They decided to get more into production, and he began looking for a site that could provide the space and resources he desired. Roy searched the area and was discouraged until one day, while driving through Roanoke Rapids; he saw a sign for the Industrial Park. He called the number on the sign and was soon connected to Ron Baker executive director of the commission. After a brief discussion, Roy said, his whole outlook changed.

He now plans to build a 100,000-square-foot building in the Industrial Park, at a cost of between \$2.3 and \$2.4 million. Over the next five years, he plans to put an additional \$1.8 million in equipment and improvements at the site. He said the plant currently employs 13 people, but after the new additions are made, that number of employees should increase to between 25 and 30.

Linda Driver; president of Driver Trucking, a small company currently located in Northampton county, said she had actually been thinking of moving to Halifax for years, but when County Manager Matthew Delk called to tell her Pelican was coming, she said she'd move, too. Currently, Driver has 11 trucks, but hopes to get that up to 20. They plan to be in Halifax by the end of the summer. C & C Trucking president Greg Grubbs said his Duncan, S.C.-based company saw the potential in the Roanoke Rapids-area's business-friendly environment, and the pool of quality employees.

Terry Durell, the company's director of safety and risk management, told the Daily Herald that the company is a drive-in truckload carrier. "What we do is pick up full loads of commodities from point A (and take it to) point B," he said. For example, he noted, trucks may pick up a load of paper from a mill and take it to a printing center.

C & C currently has 40 employees in Halifax, and hope to increase that number to 50 soon after the first of the year. Durell noted that a key factor in the trucking industry is being able to hire enough qualified drivers. "We knew there was a pool in Eastern North Carolina," he said, adding that these drivers will now be able to receive C & C's good pay and benefits package.

C & C will start off by constructing an approximately 5,000 square-foot building in phase one. Durell confirmed that "technically," Halifax County will be transferring the land parcel to the company as an incentive for the move. In exchange, the company has agreed to hire a certain amount of employees and to stay in the area for a period of time. "We're real excited about being in Eastern North Carolina," Durell said. "And we plan to be here long-term."

Super Services Plant Manager Bruce Ellington, who is currently based in Atlanta, confirmed that his company had purchased the old Youngblood Trucking facility in the Industrial Park for \$300,000.

He said he plans to bring about 100 trucks to the facility at first and will be looking for experienced drivers in the area. However, he said there is no limit to the number of trucks that can eventually be brought in. Ellington, like Durell, noted that one of the biggest challenges in the trucking industry is finding and hiring qualified drivers. He said Super Service will also be hiring mechanics, fuelers and maintenance workers.

Delk explained that Pelican Manufacturing will be located on a swatch of land just below Quankey Creek and abutting a current lot in the park, avoiding the wetland area.

A new road will be build off Highway 903 leading to the facility. C & C and Driver Trucking will be located on two lots on either side.

With the new businesses, there are now just a handful of lots left in the Industrial Park, and soon there will be a "no vacancy" sign, Delk said. He also said that businesses will receive minimal tax breaks for their move, but the greatest incentive for relocation was the land transfer. He praised the vision of previous county commissions who had invested in the Industrial Park in the early 1990s. They were called "crazy," Delk said, adding that nobody seems to be saying that now. Four years ago, unemployment in the county was at 13 percent, Delk said. Now it rides between 7 and 8 percent. "There's still a ways to go," he said.