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It's Official – New York Firm, Jobs Coming

HALIFAX – PCB Piezotronics, a New York-based high-tech sensor manufacturer, announced today it will invest more than \$5 million and bring 500 new jobs to the Roanoke Valley during the next 10 years.

Bolstered by a package of state and local economic incentives, the company will take over Halifax county's Shell Building and may be up and running by April of next year.

The final piece of the economic development puzzle fell into place this morning when the North Carolina Economic Investment Committee approved a \$1.6 million Job Development Investment Grant to help fund the initial phase of the PCB's opening in the Roanoke Valley.

The committee's approval cleared the way for Governor Mike Easley's expected formal announcement during a public gathering at Halifax Community College's The Center.

The decision culminates six months of hard work, careful planning and skillful adaptation by a host of private and government entities. The drive to bring PCB to the Valley began early this year with the Northeast Partnership's efforts to "sell" Northeastern North Carolina as the place to do business.

From the "first official" contact in early May to today's announcement, a myriad of local officials, educators, business people and citizens were involved in convincing PCB to expand its operation here.

PCB Group Co-president David Hore's voice was filled with enthusiasm and expectation as he discussed his company's decision to expand its operations in the Roanoke Valley. "We are glad.... It was a wonderfully pleasant process," he said describing the local effort to lure the PCB operation.

"We just ran out of room in our 100,000-square foot facility in Depew, N.Y.... The plant has been expanded four times since the 1980s and at this point it's landlocked.... We have been busting at the seams for about a year," he told the *Daily Herald*.

PCB is a high-tech electronics firm. "We make sensors that measure everything from vibration, to force, to pressure, to sound and more," Hore explained. The company's products can be found in nearly every industry from paper and pulp plants, to the automotive and aerospace and beyond. "We are very diversified. There is no single concentration. Our products even go on the space shuttle."

The company has not firmed up which of its product lines will be produced in the Valley. Hore said the move was just being finalized. "We wanted to wait until everything was finished."

The new jobs are expected to pay an average of \$26,000 a year and include a complete health insurance plan. One economic development estimate says PCB's total payroll expenditures over the first 10 years will be approximately \$71.5 million.

Since 1990, the company has enjoyed an annualized growth rate of about 15 percent. During the last two years, the growth rate exceeded 20 percent annually, Hore said. "We just ran out of space in New York."

Praising the Roanoke Valley community for its professionalism and friendliness, Hore said two things were fundamental in PCB's decision to come here.

"The first was the economic package that was provided. The Shell Building had been up for quite awhile and was very attractive to us," The Buffalo-area native said.

"The second item, which was equally important, was the manner in which the state, county and city recruited us ... Every deadline was met. North Carolina met every deadline. New York missed the deadline. The North Carolina effort was flawless," he said in a voice filled with admiration.

The decision wasn't easy. The company has deep roots in the Buffalo, N.Y. area, which Hore describes as a region that is "very friendly, a very special place." He had the same sense of community on his visits to the Roanoke Valley – the people were "friendly, fun and sincere."

A survey of PCB employees showed substantial interest in relocating to North Carolina if the plant was located here – Approximately 135 of the company's 500 workers said they would have a definite interest in moving south.

Hore admitted there was a level of disappointment that the expansion would not take place in New York. "Our people are extremely loyal to the community. Many would have preferred to see the jobs expanded here." But after five months of "countless meetings and conference calls", the decision was made to come to the Roanoke Valley. Hore believes that he and John Lally, one of the firm's major owners, spent between 500 to 1,000 hours on the project.

The company will bring 20 to 30 families to the Roanoke Valley to start the new plant leaving behind Buffalo's fabled winter snows. "We will miss the months of January and February with 60 inches of snow ... but we will remain loyal Buffalo Bills fans," he said with a laugh. "We are bringing our pennants and Bills' stickers."

PCB Piezotronics Plan

The arrival and development of PCB Piezotronics has been planned for two phases.

In Phase I, Halifax County will spend nearly \$1.5 million preparing the Shell Building to accommodate the sensor manufacturing operation and providing land for expansion.

PCB will be given a 10-year lease at a fee of \$1 per year.

In turn, the company will invest \$500,000 a year for the first five years and create an average of 50 jobs a year for the same period.

In Phase II, the county will build a 50,000-square-foot addition to accommodate PCB's growth. According to the outline of the plan, construction on the addition will not begin until PCB's payroll reaches 250 employees. PCB is expected to reach that mark after the first five years.

During the second phase, the company's investment in its Roanoke Valley operation will continue at the rate of \$500,000 annually and will create 50 new jobs annually.