Alliance Pickens to have permanent home

BY GREG OLIVER
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LIBERTY — For the first time since its formation more than 15 years ago, Alliance Pickens will have a permanent home later this year.

Pickens County Administrator Chap Hurst said Monday that construction of the 6,000-square-foot building would begin within the next 30 days. The facility, estimated at $1 million for the building and computer equipment, Wi-Fi and television screens combined, will be constructed at the Pickens County Commerce Park on Cartee Road — just below the Reliable Automatic Sprinkler Company.

"We hope it can be completed by the first of August," Hurst said, adding that the site will be housed on 2.8 acres the county purchased that previously contained mobile homes.

Hurst said the facility will feature a 2,500-square-foot room that Alliance Pickens will use to meet with industry prospects, each of whom brings 15-20 representatives. Meanwhile, Tri-County Tech will use the room to conduct specialized training for local industries.

"We will have the largest wireless computer connections and the capacity to have up to 60 computers operating simultaneously," Hurst said.

Just as having top-notch facilities are important to coaches recruiting top high school prospects to their respective universities, they can also prove beneficial when attracting out-of-state business and industry. Due to the lack of space within its temporary locations, Alliance Pickens Executive Director Ray Farley said the economic development agency has long hosted prospects in locations including libraries, classrooms and bank boardrooms.

"Wherever we could find a quiet, private room, that's where we've hosted our prospects," he said, adding, "It's (permanent headquarters) been a long time in coming, that's for sure."

Whereas Alliance Pickens is located behind Peoples National Bank in Pickens, Farley is excited over the eventual move to the Commerce Park. In addition to Reliable, the 310-acre site also features St. Jude Medical, KeyMark, Inc., Tri-Tech USA, substations for Duke Power and Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative and AT&T digital fiber switch and employs nearly 1,200 workers combined.

Farley said work crews will be out this week staking and clearing the property. Pickens County will be responsible for grading the property and preparing it for construction.

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Grading is scheduled to begin shortly on the site, shown above, where a permanent facility housing Alliance Pickens will be built. The facility will sit below Reliable Sprinklers at the Pickens County Commerce Park.