

SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

The Propex building on Shiloh Road is the new home for COE Optics, LLC.

'Big win' for Seneca

BY MONICA KREBER
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — COE Optics, LLC, a leading provider of optical research and development solutions, announced Wednesday its plan to establish a new research manufacturing operation in Oconee County.

The business will move into the Propex building on Shiloh Road in Seneca, next to the Seneca Rail Site.

Richard Blackwell, executive director for the Oconee County Economic Development Commission, called the announcement a "big win" for the city.



Blackwell

"The good news was we were able to win one for Seneca," he said. "It's a testament that demonstrates teamwork. We're working together to create jobs in the county and in the city."

Seneca Facilities Corporation officials met Wednesday for their annual board meeting to discuss the lease for COE – COE Optics officials already signed a lease.

Blackwell said the decision represents a $1 million investment and is expected to generate five highly skilled, research-intensive jobs.

The location of the Propex building was a big sell for the company because of its proximity to Clemson University, where COE Optics owner Eric Johnson is employed as a professor of electrical and computer engineering. He also serves as the endowed chair in optoelectronics for PalmettoNet, a digital fiber optic network provider for the Carolinas.



Johnson

COE Optics, which works with laser technology, develops and conducts research on ways to integrate new materials into optoelectronic devices and systems. This includes the design and manufacturing of techniques for photonic devices used in sensing, imaging and communications. The growth for their core business and research-related opportunities has been tied to the defense industry.

"Propex is a safe facility that COE Optics can do their research in," Blackwell said.

Seneca City Administrator Greg Dietterick said COE Optics will take up 16,000 square feet inside Propex. The company will be one of three tenants occupying the building, along with Johnson Controls and Altera Polymers. There are still "hundreds of thousands" of square feet left for future tenants, Dietterick said.



Dietterick

"There's a lot of interest in that building," Dietterick said. "There's been a lot of activity with Propex with very little advertising."

Dietterick said COE Optics is gearing toward moving into the facility Aug. 1. Propex is also a potential future garage space for the city's newest electric buses, which should be ready by the end of the year.

"I think there's a niche for small, industrial businesses," Dietterick said. "(Seneca is) a reasonable option to look at."

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mkreber@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6685
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