PC economic hot streak continues

Zero Connect announces launching of operations



BY GREG OLIVER
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PICKENS COUNTY — The economic development train is rolling right along in Pickens County these days, and Zero Connect is the latest passenger to board.

On Tuesday, company officials announced they are establishing operations in the county, coupled with a $1.3 million investment to create 72 new jobs. Zero Connect is a custom cable assembly manufacturer and supplier of off-the-shelf fiber and copper products for voice, data and video applications, and its new facility will be located on Kayaker Way in Easley.

Alliance Pickens executive director Ray Farley said he was pleased with the second economic development announcement in Pickens County in the past five days. Last Thursday, Farley and officials with Reliable Automatic Sprinkler Co. Inc., one of the world's three largest fire-suppression companies, announced the expansion of 150,000 square feet to the existing facility at the Pickens County Commerce Park. That project will bring a capital investment of $23.1 million and 100 new jobs to Pickens County and take an estimated 12-14 months to complete.

"Some projects take up to five years to come to fruition — (Zero Connect) came down the pike very fast and, from our initial discussions with them to the announcement, it was probably a four-month period," Farley said. "I think it's just indicative of the rapid growth this company is experiencing and the need to obtain this additional manufacturing capacity as quick as possible."

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Jennifer Willis
Oconee County Council chair

Based in southeast Iowa and led by president Larry Kendall, Farley said Zero Connect's supply base and growing marketplace, which is in the Southeastern portion of the U.S., are combinations that brought them to the Carolinas to search for a second manufacturing location and a site for their company's growth.

"Once they looked around the Upstate area, they focused solely on Pickens County and will locate in a building in Easley and, in that building, employ 72 people," Farley said. "What Zero Connect does is make to the specifications of their customer the exact length of fiber-optic and copper cabling with the appropriate connections on the end."

Farley said the Pickens County building that Zero Connect will soon occupy is an existing facility that was once used as a warehouse manufacturer for the former Precision Kayak. The 18,000-square-foot facility is expected to open sometime in July or August.

"They are going to have to do a substantial upfit for the space to make it fit according to their purpose," Farley said. "It's very conceivable the Easley operation will outgrow the Iowa operation."

Kendall said he is glad to locate his company in an area "with a dedicated and skilled workforce."

"We feel our new Easley facility will allow us to maintain our leadership in the copper and fiber optic cable assembly and data center businesses," Kendall said.

Pickens County Council chairman Jennifer Willis said Zero Connect has a great location, dedicated workforce and wonderful natural resources.

"We in Pickens County know what Zero Connect will learn — this is a great place to do business and live," Willis said. "We know that Zero Connect will thrive and we will be watching their continued growth and success for many years to come."

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