Plastics company bringing 25 new jobs to Oconee

BY STEVEN BRADLEY
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WESTMINSTER — A plastics company is expanding its operations into Oconee County and bringing with it a $4.1 million capital investment and 25 new jobs.

Michigan-based thermoplastics processor and recycler ACI Plastics, Inc., announced Monday it has purchased a former textile warehouse on U.S. Highway 123 and will remodel the 88,000-square-foot facility for its operations.

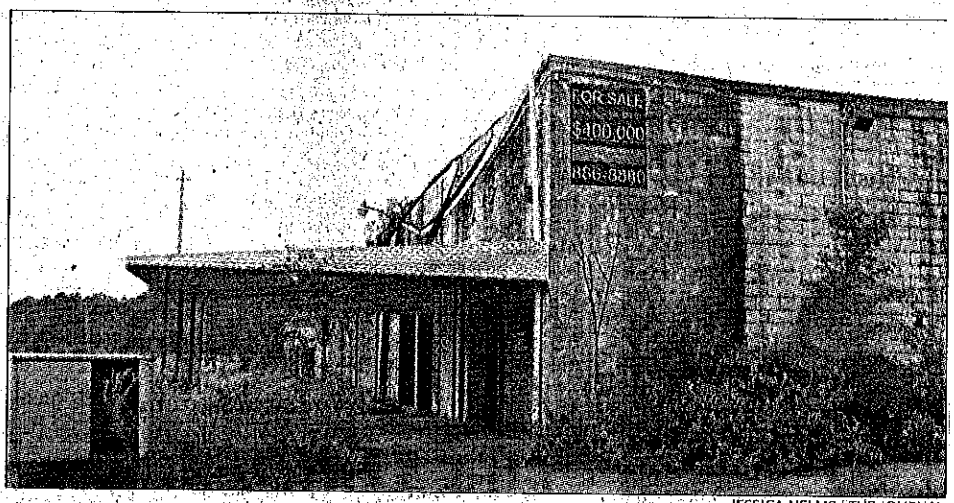
Referred to as "Project Plume," the economic development project was approved for a fee-in-lieu-of-tax agreement by Oconee County Council at its Sept. 2 meeting.

Oconee Economic Alliance director Richard Blackwell confirmed ACI Plastics was the company approved for that tax agreement and said the deal to bring the company to Oconee "was very much in favor of the county."

The county had been working on the deal since March 2013, according to Blackwell, and it gave the company a fee-in-lieu-of agreement for 20 years that will lock its millage and reduce its property assessment to 6 percent instead of the standard 10.5 percent assessment of fair market value on manufacturing properties.

The state also gave ACI a one-time state investment tax credit, as well as job tax credits, and provided help with a workforce training grant. The state

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Michigan-based ACI Plastics, Inc., purchased this former Beacon Manufacturing warehouse on U.S. Highway 123 last month.

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job tax credits amount to roughly $296,000, according to Blackwell, and the grants equal approximately $2,000 per employee.

"That's the reason we were excited to land this project — because it does provide a lot of benefits, not only new tax benefits, but also new jobs, and it also helps some of our utility providers," Blackwell said. "So, when you add it all together, this was a good deal."

ACI Plastics has been in business for 28 years, with operations in Michigan, Arizona and Nebraska, as well as South Carolina.

The company already has a location in Anderson, and according to Gov. Nikki Haley, its expansion sends "a message to other companies' that South Carolina is a place where industry can thrive.

"We celebrate ACI Plastics' decision to invest $4.1 million and create 25 new jobs — something that will have a very positive impact in Westminster and beyond," Haley said in a news release.

The building is a former Beacon Manufacturing warehouse outside the city limits of Westminster — adjacent to Westminster Center on Sandifer Boulevard — but is served by Blue Ridge Electric Co-operative and Westminster Water, according to Blackwell.

"So our friends in the utility business will also reap the benefits of this new company coming into town," he said.

The 25 jobs the company has agreed to create within the next five years will pay on average $17.42 per hour, which is the county per-capita average.

"There will be jobs of various scales — from maybe $11 to $12 an hour to maybe the manager job that makes $28 an hour — but when you do the math it equates to $17.42 on average," Blackwell said.

The expansion of ACI Plastics also means the remodeling of a "lackluster" building, which Blackwell said was also a benefit for the county.

"It's taking an old building and making more tax revenue for the future," he said.

ACI Plastics closed on the building last month and has already begun preparations for the renovation.

The Flint, Mich.-based company is known for its separation technologies for paint removal, instrument panels, electrostatic and optical separation.

ACI Plastics president Scott Melton called the move into Oconee "key to our strategic growth in the South."

"Within the next 10 years, we see our operation in South Carolina being as large as our operation in Michigan, where we operate in 225,000 square feet with 85 employees," he said. "The new South Carolina plant in Oconee County will add capacity to our paint removal and instrument panel recycling."

The company plans to begin hiring for the new positions in mid-January. Those interested may apply after Jan. 15 by sending resumes to the ACI Plastics office manager (valerieg@aciplastics.com) or in person at 435 East Shockley Ferry Road in Anderson.

"On behalf of Oconee County, we are grateful to ACI Plastics for committing to locate their operations here and invest in our community," Oconee County Council chairman Joel Thrift said. "It will be exciting to watch this company grow here and create new opportunities for our citizenry."

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