

Gov visits for ribbon cutting at

Horton Inc. facility employs 92 people and expected to grow

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
THE JOURNAL

WESTMINSTER — An economic project more than two years in the making was celebrated with Gov. Henry McMaster and others attending a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday afternoon inside a major Oconee County industrial park. Local officials gathered

outside Horton Inc.'s 112,000-square-foot facility, seated within Westminster's Oconee Industry and Technology Park (OITP) on S.C. Highway 11. The Minnesota-based manufacturing company produces fans and clutches for off-road diesel vehicles, such as large tractors and transfer trucks.

Horton began operations in November after

receiving its certificate of occupancy in May. The site currently employs 92 people. That number figures to grow over the years, as the company is still filling positions.

Horton CEO Cordell Dietz said county officials were critical in the company choosing the location, saying "(they) wanted us, and we could feel that right away."

"We're going to increase those demands for hiring — we need more. We're going to have a fantastic growth story here at Horton," he said.

Dietz told The Journal Horton is also considering future plans to add another 100,000 square feet to the site for expansion.

"Our other factory in the

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new manufacturer



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Gov. Henry McMaster speaks at the Horton Inc. ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday afternoon. The company, which opened its site in the Oconee Industry and Technology Park in November, currently employs 92 people.

MANUFACTURER: 'It's a great day for Oconee County, but also the Upstate'

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U.S. is pretty well landlocked, so any new products or any new business is going to come into Oconee County," he said. "We love it (here). It's exactly what we were hoping for."

McMaster spoke at the ceremony, reiterating his stance of keeping the state open — no matter what — throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to promote economic development.

"The reason businesses invest here is the people," McMaster said. "We didn't close down as they did in other states. I'm telling you we're not going to do that. Why? Because it's not necessary. When you have good people, you can do just about anything. ... This is a good company, and these are good people."

McMaster gave Horton officials an honorary plaque with the state seal and motto after his comments.

Horton representatives gave McMaster a University of Minnesota hockey jersey and hockey stick.

"I want to promise everybody here that this is the first time in my life I've ever held one of these before," McMaster quipped. "It's like a prehistoric golf club."

WHAT'S ON THE STOVE AT INDUSTRIAL PARK?

The Horton project included involvement from the past two former executive directors of the Oconee Economic Alliance (OEA) and the current president of the organization, Richard Blackwell and Janet Hartman each played roles in the initial conversations and sealing the deal with Horton. Current OEA president Annie Caggiano and her team walked the project through the finish line Thursday.

"It's a great day for Oconee County, but also

the Upstate," Caggiano told The Journal. "Having a commercial vehicle supplier open up during a pandemic, during a recession, is really a great sign for things to come and does bring attention to us for some of these other large industrial clients around the country who will maybe see us as a potential location to open up."

The 400-acre industrial park is already home to Baxter Enterprises and Hi-Tech Mold and Engineering, as well as the Hamilton Career and Technology Center and Tri-County Technical College's Oconee campus.

Still, the park has plenty of room to add more companies to the mix. Caggiano didn't divulge specifics on what could come next, other than the park having

ing "seen a tremendous amount of activity" in the past year.

"It's really popular with the state, but also site consultants, because the county has invested a lot of money into both the infrastructure and grading the property as well," she said.

"There's no one in particular that we're chasing right now, but it has seen a lot of activity."

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Henry McMaster
South Carolina governor