

'New and fresh': Publix opens in Seneca

BY NORM CANNADA
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SENECA — An event that was years in the making brought Seneca city officials and locals together early Wednesday morning to welcome the new Publix Super Market to the area.

The grocery chain, which spent \$100,000 in May 2018 to purchase the lease, permits, licenses and fixtures for the former Bi-Lo building on Rochester Highway, opened its doors for

the first time at 7 a.m. Wednesday.

"Welcome Publix. We appreciate y'all," Seneca Mayor Dan Alexander said before the ribbon cutting. "We're glad to have you here. Most of all, we thank every customer that's here to help support this business. It's a great day in Seneca."

Alexander said Seneca store manager Ray Peters of Walhalla came to the area in 2003 and has spent 31 years with the company.

"I'm a hometown per-

son, looking forward to getting the Seneca Publix opened up and getting everybody exposed to what Publix is all about in our hometown," Peters said.

Publix media manager Jared Glover said the company is "more than just a grocery store."

"Publix believes in being a part of the community, investing in the community and the people that are a part of the Seneca community," he said. "We're excited to be here, excited to be good citizens of Seneca."

Glover added a feature of the new store is a second-floor dining area above the store.

The work to get to Wednesday's opening took a few years and included tearing down the former Bi-Lo building and building a new 48,000-square-foot store, all while keeping the storefronts on either side intact. Building permits filed with the city of Seneca estimated the project cost at about \$7 million. Publix signed a 20-year

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Seneca Publix manager Ray Peters cuts a ribbon to officially open the new Publix Super Market on Rochester Highway in Seneca with help from Seneca City Councilman Dana Moore, left, Mayor Dan Alexander and Councilman Stuart Pohl, right.

contract with Nalley Properties in the fall of 2019.

City administrator Scott Moulder said he was glad to see another business open in town.

"We're just extremely proud and excited to have Publix part of the Seneca family now," he said. "They've been looking at this market for quite some time and they've been working on this property for a few years. We just appreciate their diligence and persistence in opening this store."

The work includes a new look for the parking lot.

"They've done a beautiful job," Moulder said. "It just looks new and fresh."

Alexander said the store has hired 136 employees.

"It's a beautiful store. I love the big aisles," he said.

Seneca events coordinator Riley Johnson said the store has generated a lot of community interest.

"There's so many who have been riding by here," he said. "I love Publix, and it's going to save me a trip across the river (to Clemson). It's right here in our backdoor."

Seneca City Councilwoman Denise Rozman agreed.

"There are certain things that only Publix has, so I will make a special trip to Clemson to get them, so I'm real excited not to have to do that," she said. "As I was walking through the doors a while ago, there was this lady telling me, 'I'm so excited. I don't have to drive to Clemson anymore.' I think there's a lot of people who are excited Publix is finally opening its doors."

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