



The Republican.

Tax breaks sought for businesses

The businesses said they would add to their work force in exchange for the tax relief.

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By **JIM KINNEY**
Business writer

SPRINGFIELD - Five Pioneer Valley companies hope to get approved for tax breaks in exchange for creating 31 full-time and 15 part-time jobs along with keeping 56 jobs here.

Growing local companies and working with small business is part of a new focus for the state Department of Business Development, said Gregory P. Bialecki, the state's undersecretary of business development.

Bialecki met yesterday with the editorial board of The Republican as part of a swing through the area that included stops in Northampton and Westfield where he discussed the machine-tool industry's need for skilled labor.

Michael L. Vedovelli, a regional director for Business Development based in Westfield, said he's taking applications from the five companies to the state Economic Assistance Coordinating Council June 25 where they could get final approval. They've all already gotten backing from their towns and cities.

They are:

Roots Gymnastics Center in Westfield, with three new full-time jobs and 16 part-time jobs.

Aero Fasteners Co., of Westfield, 21 employees now with the promise to add another five full-time employees.

West Side Finishing in Holyoke with 30 workers now and a promise to hire three to five more people.

F.W. Webb in Greenfield has five employees and promises to add another five full-time workers once expansion is complete.

New England Wood and Beam in Monson is moving from Connecticut and plans to have 15 full-time employees.

New England Wood and Beam will save paying \$49,000 in taxes over the seven years of its agreement to redevelop the former Zero East Corp. plant at 288 Main St., said Edward S. Harrison, chairman of the Monson Board of Selectmen.

Shawn C. Donohoe, New England Wood and Beam's general manager, said the tax forgiveness starts at 100 percent and decreases each year until hitting 10 percent in year seven.

"So instead of paying taxes, we'll be able to put that money into hiring 15 people," Donohoe said.

The company plans to recycle beams from historic structures into lumber for hardwood flooring, furniture and kitchen cabinets.

Jobs will pay \$12 to \$18 an hour, he said. Donohoe hopes to have the plant up and running by the end of summer.

At the round-table discussion at Westfield State College, precision manufacturers told Bialecki about the lack of younger trained machinists and the need for federal, state and local emphasis on creating a "pipeline" of encouraging and training youth to pursue such careers.

Willa Jordana, controller of Western Mass Machine, of Holyoke, said her company has scores of skilled machinists. "They all have gray hair. Where are the kids?" she said. She suggested that the state help local industry publicize the career possibilities in machine shops.

Mark Dilorenzo, president of Tell Tool, of Westfield, agreed. "The number one issue is filling the pipeline. We've got to get more visible," he said.

Along with encouraging youth to consider such careers, there is a need for more up-to-date technology in vocational schools, Dilorenzo said. Some companies are going back to apprenticeship programs to help train capable youth, he said.

Bialecki said the governor and lieutenant governor are in agreement with many of the points raised about growth of industry and job creation in the businesses already in the state. "We're very much in the same place, and it does require a collaborative effort," he said.

Republican reporter Angela Carbone contributed to this report.

Business writer Jim Kinney can be reached at jkinney@repub.com

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