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Printed on page C4

Lakeland's Quantum Benefits from New Incentive

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LAKELAND | Polk County has landed its first business expansion that will use a new incentive designed to cut down on permitting time.

Lakeland-based Quantum Marketing Inc. (QMI), an automotive additives manufacturer, plans to add roughly 30 jobs and expand its facilities this year as it combines operations with a sister firm from California.

The projected job growth makes QMI eligible for a number of state and local incentives, one of which is entirely new: the Expedited Review and Permit Process.

Approved by Polk government in late 2009, the program allows qualifying companies to obtain land and building permits in as little as 15 days. That compares with a traditional permitting process that can sometimes stretch on for three to four months.

"I have two businesses that still have to keep running and supplying goods while we're doing this relocation, so time is everything," said Dan Shupsky, director of operations for QMI. "If (the new permitting process) works, what a great thing Polk County has for businesses who want to expand here."

QMI's sister firm in California is losing its lease at the end of the year, and parent company Illinois Tool Works needs to move operations quickly to Lakeland, Shupsky said.

As part of the expansion, QMI will add a minimum 27 jobs to its Lakeland headquarters on Craftsman Park Drive (it employs 47 there currently), as well as expanding its facilities by 1,400 square feet and adding a 2,500-square-foot tank farm. The expedited permitting

means QMI shouldn't have to worry about getting its local headquarters ready in time for the move, Shupsky said.

QMI's expansion plans were submitted to the county Jan. 22, and five days later an initial review was held with Polk planning officials, as well as the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Final approval for the permitting should come within 30 days of the initial submission, according to Lakeland-based JSK Consulting, which handled permitting for QMI.

Officials say the expedited permitting doesn't cut corners, and works quickly because documents can be filed online and submitted to designated staff.

The new jobs at QMI will have an average salary of $39,000, according to the Central Florida Development Council. The company will also receive a total $120,000 in tax breaks for meeting local and state benchmarks for job growth and salary levels.

Amy Palmer, senior business development manager for the CFDC, said QMI is currently the only firm scheduled to take part in the expedited permitting program. She says she hopes more will follow.

"It makes it more attractive if there is a tight deadline for a project and companies know this process is available in Polk County, and might not be available elsewhere," Palmer said

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