



Local owner plans to move HVAC company to St. Johns County

By Stuart Korfhage
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In a move that could bring a few dozen high-paying jobs to St. Johns County and a lot of satisfaction to one business owner, Clarke Story of MAS HVAC took a step toward relocating his company to the county on Tuesday.

MAS HVAC is a company that engineers and builds commercial air handlers for clients around the country. Currently located in Green Cove Springs, the operation is expected to build a new facility in St. Johns County next year.

The effort received a boost Tuesday when the County Commission voted 5-0 to give MAS HVAC up to \$160,000 in savings from taxes and fees in an Economic Development Grant. The project, with an estimated value of \$4.15 million when complete, is expected to generate almost \$350,000 in tax revenue over the next 20 years.

Story, who has operated the company for six years, said the proposed move is being done for practical and personal reasons.

“We’ve kind of outgrown where we are in Clay County,” Story said. “The location that we’re selecting is kind of ideal. I love living here. I’ve raised my children here.

“It’s the best place in my mind to attract the type of employees that we’re looking for.”

Right now, there are 17-18 full-time employees at MAS HVAC.

Story said the revenue is growing quickly — 75-80 percent higher than last year — so he expects the number of employees to double in the next two years.

The jobs that will be added won’t be minimum wage-level positions. The average wage for the jobs created will be \$61,000, according to the background information provided by the county.

“I think it’s a great project for the county,” said Melissa Glasgow, the county’s director of economic development. “(MAS HVAC has) all of the things that we’re trying to target within the county’s economic effort.”

The proposed new facility will be located at 4030 Deerpark Blvd., just west of Interstate 95. It will be a 32,400-square-foot office/industrial building.

Story said the deal is not quite finalized but expects everything will eventually move forward.

Making the move is something that's been in the works since the company signed a three-year lease that expires in August 2017. Story said he knew his company would need a custom-built facility for the expansion in business he predicted.

"To have our own stand-alone building in our own backyard in our own hometown, we've got a lot of folks real excited about that," he said. "It can't happen fast enough."

Currently, MAS HVAC is in the process of moving a company it purchased in California called IceStor. That acquisition will allow the company to produce the IceStor static ice tanks, which produce and store ice at night when energy costs are lowest and discharge cooling during the higher peak rate period. The company website says more than 50 schools in Florida currently use the product.

Also under MAS HVAC is Q-PAC, a brand of "EC motor fan arrays." These fan arrays are used in commercial and custom air handling units throughout North America.

Story said the combination of those products allow his company to offer some of the most energy-efficient HVAC systems on the market.

"If we stay on the forefront of making these systems more energy efficient, we're just going to continue to grow," Story said. "What's been a trend for our company is we've hired really young, really smart engineers. More than half of our company has engineering degrees. They're just smart young people with a lot of good ideas."