

Jones lands defense firm

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TRENTON — Arguably the biggest economic announcement in Jones County history was made Thursday when Manassas, Va.-based Defense Holdings Inc. revealed its plans to build a 23,000-square foot facility in Trenton.

The announcement was unveiled at the Jones County Civic Center, where more than 100 people gathered to hear the news.

Defense Holdings, which has offices and facilities in seven states, will soon hire 25 people with total salaries over the \$1 million mark in Trenton. A ceremonial groundbreaking took place at the Jones County Industrial Park, where DHI will become the park's largest tenant.

"I think this is the biggest economic boost we've had in Jones County in my 31 years of working here," Jones County Manager Larry Meadows said. "This is the type of company we need here."

DHI is a military research and development services firm specializing in systems engineering, information science and technical program management services for the federal government.

The new facility in Trenton will be home to a number of business activities including: managing work for military customers throughout Eastern North Carolina; conducting research and development in the use of high-performance photo luminescent materials (materials that can be seen when there is little or no light) for military and commercial applications; converting bulk photo luminescent materials into finished products; and assembling metal fiber brush kits used in electric motors for the U.S. Navy submarine fleet.

The new facility will be named the Operations and Technical Development Center.

DHI President Richard J. Martin was initially going to build the OTDC in southern Virginia. Martin changed his mind when Jones County Economic Development Chief Roy Fogle and a North Carolina contingent traveled to Manassas to encourage him to build in Trenton.

The delegation — which included Fogle, Meadows and N.C. Rep. William Wainwright — flew on N.C. Governor Mike Easley's private jet to meet with Martin.

Martin said the fact that Easley sent the delegation to Manassas was one of the main reasons DHI decided to come to Trenton.

"They presented a very favorable economic package to help defray and offset the costs to build a facility like this," Martin said. "The enthusiasm and dedication demonstrated by the team was something we could not ignore."

DHI Integration Engineer Joe Jones, who runs one of the company's offices in Morehead City, said that the community support of his organization was one of the deciding factors.

"The thing that really enticed us here was the support of the folks in Jones County," Jones said. "We looked at several counties in North Carolina and Virginia and Jones County was the most aggressive to pursue the opportunities that Defense Holdings provided."

This is only the beginning for DHI, though. Martin anticipates growing the 25 initial employees into a force that may number close to 100 in the future.



Janet Sutton / The Free Press

Richard Martin, president of Defense Holding Inc., center, and Joe Jones, integration Engineer, left, receive the North Carolina flag from N.C. Rep. William Wainwright on Thursday at the Jones County Civic Center. The Virginia-based company is bringing its defense engineering industry to Jones County.

“Our goal is to actually create a major operation here in North Carolina,” Martin said. “It wouldn’t hurt my feelings if this became our largest facility.”

And it’s not the last major announcement for Jones County, either. Fogle has some other companies — including some in the defense-related field — clamoring for a chance to locate in the county.

“Before this year’s out, if everything works out, there could possibly be a couple more announcements,” Meadows said.

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