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Manufacturer ready to expand business

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Gazette Photo/Elizabeth Coyle

Mission Critical Solutions' facility in Pleasantville will undergo a \$1 million-plus renovation and expansion that will include the company purchasing new equipment and adding 16 jobs over the next three years.

A Pleasantville manufacturer will invest more than \$825,000 to renovate and expand its operations that provide metal fabricated and machined parts for rail, utilities and defense industries.

Mission Critical Solutions, founded in 2008, has committed to adding 16 full-time jobs over the next three years along with retaining 36 jobs, according to a press release from Gov. Tom Wolf's Action Team. Mission Critical will renovate space at its current facility at 271 Industrial Lane and purchase new equipment to modernize and strengthen the company's manufacturing and machining capabilities.

CEO Bob McGowan said the company has been building toward the expansion by paying attention to quality and by achieving certifications such as the International Organization for Standardization as well as the Association of American Railroads Quality Assurance Program. All the company's welders are certified by the American Welding Society.

"Not a lot of people have those designations and by having those designations, we open the door for more opportunities for us," McGowan said in a phone interview Wednesday.

"This evolution has always been driven by a desire to deliver quality products and professional engineering services, using the skills and dedication of local talent," McGowan said in a news release. "Our team is invested in growing MCS into an innovative, national resource for fabricated and machined products."

McGowan, who was a pharmaceutical sales manager with a background in defense contract work, took his entrepreneurial spirit and, about nine years ago, purchased the closed Starrett Exact Level plant in Pleasantville, a 50,000 square-foot building. The plant was left vacant after Starrett Exact moved its productions overseas in 2004.

At its launch, MCS served as a telecommunications assembly and product development house, according to the company.

In 2011, when McGowan looked to expand the company's capabilities to full metal fabrication, machining and engineering services, he joined forces with engineer George Bohrer, an Ashville, Cambria County, man who spent 30 years managing defense manufacturing facilities, according to MCS.

The partnership has allowed the company steady growth, said Bette Slayton, president of Bedford County Economic Development.

"(Bob's) a very creative, very innovative businessman. He's the type of person who, whatever he gets involved in, will inevitably be successful. And Bob knows to surround himself with good people," she said referring of Bohrer.

Bohrer said MCS, in addition to its quality assurance program, is unique in that it pairs an on-site team of mechanical, electrical and quality engineers with certified welders and experienced machinists. "This partnership between science and craftsmanship results in engineer processes that deliver high-quality components and finished goods, time and again."

Slayton said her agency had worked with McGowan and Bohrer previous to the current expansion and found they had laid a solid foundation for the company's progress.

She said the company's \$825,000 commitment on the expansion "is very impressive," Slayton said.

"Since Bob came to Bedford County in 2008, we've seen the stable, steady growth," Slayton said. Since the company expanded its machining, fabrication and engineering services, the company has seen its sales double year over year from 2012 on, McGowan said.

A large part of the company's success McGowan attributes to employees. As the company has grown, it's welcomed skilled welders and other laborers from companies that, like Starrett Exact, shuttered their doors through the early 2000s.

"All but one of our employees was previously laid off or dislocated permanently," he said. "Primarily it was Cannondale, it was Hedstrom, or JLG or ESCO in Windber. They're skilled workers and it's been a winning formula for us," McGowan said.

Wolf said the MCS expansion will improve the company and the community as it creates more employment. "Not only does this project create new jobs in Bedford County, but it provides for the continued opportunity for this steel manufacturer to serve as a supplier for the U.S military which has ripple effects beyond Pennsylvania," Wolf said.

MCS received a funding proposal from the state Department of Community and Economic Development that includes a \$16,000 Pennsylvania First grant, a \$16,000 tax credit for each job created and \$7,600 in WEDnetPA funding from a grant for employee training. The governor's

office said the company also “has been encouraged to apply” for a low-interest loan of \$371,015 from the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority.

McGowan said MCS is “grateful” to Wolf for recognizing the commitment to “growing our local manufacturing sector and supporting those efforts with a financial assistance package.”

Slayton also lauded the governor for his investment in Bedford County. “It demonstrates he’s committed to helping create jobs in rural areas.”

The CEO said he plans for more expansion. “We’re going to continue to grow,” he said. The company said it has purchase orders “in queue” for 2017.