



ASPI constructing Moses Lake building

*By Matthew Weaver
Herald senior staff writer*

Commerce Park One to house Genie supplier

MOSES LAKE - Work began for a 50,000-square-foot building in Moses Lake this week.

The Aero-Space Port International, or ASPI, Group announced Monday its Commerce Park One building will be constructed of concrete-tilt with a 24-foot ceiling height, with a combination of grade and dock-high doors with office enclosures.

The building will accommodate one of Genie Industries' main suppliers, Parker Hannifin, a Fortune 200 company headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio. Parker Hannifin is a supplier of hydraulic equipment and hoses used in Genie's lifts.

"It's an asset to Genie," said project Superintendent Mike O'Halloran.

O'Halloran said the building received its grading permit June 23 and its building permit on Monday.



Matthew Weaver/Columbia Basin Herald Work on ASPI's Commercial Park One Building commenced Monday along Patton Boulevard.

"We're good to go for the whole project," he said.

The new building is located on Patton Boulevard behind the ASPI Group's other, existing building. O'Halloran said the new, 25,000-square-foot building is an addition to the existing building, also 25,000 square feet, which houses Coca-Cola and Key Trucking, another Genie supplier.

Coca-Cola and Key Trucking will remain. Parker Hannifin is most likely the only tenant in the new building, O'Halloran added.

The wall between the new building and existing building will be a common barrier fire wall.

Tualatin, Ore.- based Russell Construction is general contractor. Mike Brown is the project manager.

The new building is part of ASPI's ongoing efforts to further economic development and employment creation in Grant County.

"We made an initial investment in and around Grant International Airport in about 1990," said ASPI corporate counsel Kim Foster. "So ASPI has a written memorandum of understanding with the Port of Moses Lake for joint marketing efforts for airport-related industries and development."

As Genie has "ramped up" production, Foster said, the growth has been so dramatic they need their subcontractors who have been using surplus space in their building to relocate outside.

"It's very difficult with the Moses Lake paradigm for leasing for traditional finance projects to accommodate people like Genie's subcontractors, because they typically would prefer a shorter-term lease because they aren't contractually bound to Genie for a very long-term time," Foster explained. "ASPI is able to finance and construct a project that allows us to provide a price-competitive environment for Genie subcontractors without having to insist on very long-term leases."

Parker Hannifin is no longer in the Genie building, but has been using space in a building owned by one of ASPI's subsidiaries on a temporary basis.

ASPI's plans include a second building of approximately 100,000 square feet, to be constructed behind Commerce Park One along the rail siding.

"We're hoping to get into some other leasees and renters in the near future," O'Halloran added. "This is the other shoe that's dropping. We're hoping to get into some more successful leasing and building more in that area."

Construction of the Commerce Park One building is scheduled for completion in late September. The whole building will sport exterior finishes of desert and earth tones and be remodeled to look like one brand-new building, Foster said.

For further information, contact Foster at 425-264-1000.



Economist: Grant County 'strong, slowing' in May

*By Matthew Weaver
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GRANT COUNTY - A Wenatchee-based regional labor economist found Grant County's non-farm employment report showed a "strong but slowing" economy in May 2008.

Compared to May 2007, 790 new jobs were added as the year-over-year pace of growth outpaced the state's growth pace for the third consecutive year, regional labor economist Tihamiyou Baba-Moussa reported.

Between April 2008 and May 2008, the labor market posted its fourth consecutive month-over-month job gain. Baba-Moussa said 540 jobs were added in Grant County, a 2 percent increase.

With revised April figures, Grant County nonfarm employment expanded 0.5 percent, or 130 jobs, in February; 1.3 percent, or 340 jobs, in March and 2 percent, or 530 jobs, in April.

The state expanded at a slower pace, Baba-Moussa stated, with a growth rate of one-half percent in March, four-tenths of a percent in April and seven-tenths of a percent in May.

"Strong means what?" Baba-Moussa asked. "It means we are growing, which means we are adding jobs."

Whether slow growth is more beneficial than faster growth depends on the circumstances, he added, comparing an extremely fast rate of growth to a car overheating.

"We are actually doing much better than many regions, not only in the state, but also in the whole nation," Baba-Moussa said. "At least we are creating jobs."

Baba-Moussa also reported:

- Grant County's service-providing sector, which includes a number of such subsectors as information and financial activities, leisure and hospitality and government, in April 2008 to May 2008, posted a higher growth rate than the state for the third consecutive month and the year-ago total. Over the month, jobs expanded by 500, a 2.3 percent increase following an upturn of 410 jobs in April and 310 in March. Over the year, 430 jobs were added in Grant County, a 2-percent change and six-tenths of a percent higher than the state.

- With a 2 percent annual growth rate and 100 jobs added between April and May 2008, the growth rate in Grant County's information and financial activities industry declined over year-ago totals but outperformed the state for the third consecutive year. Grant County posted a growth rate of 8.9 percent in 2006, 4.1 percent in 2007 and 2 percent in 2008. Over the last month, job growth edged up two-tenths of a percent in the state, while it increased by 1.0 percent in Grant County.
- In May 2008, employers in Grant County's government sector added 150 jobs, up from a previous employment level of 7,610 in May 2007. The 150-job increase represents a growth rate of 2 percent, a better performance than the state's 1.1 percent gain, and follows a percentage change of 2.1 in May 2007 and 0.7 in May 2006. In the county, 50 jobs were added in March 2008, 20 in April 2008 and 140 in May 2008.
- Employment in Grant County's trade, transportation and utilities sector posted a 20-paycheck decline, a downturn of four-tenths of a percentage point between April 2006 and May 2008. In April, 40 jobs were lost. Compared to a year earlier, no change was posted and employment remained at 5,240 in May 2008.
- Grant County's goods producing industry gained 350 jobs during the last 12 months, a lower performance than a 620-job upturn in 2007. In the last three months, 50 jobs were added in May, 110 in April and 40 in March.
- The unemployment rate in Grant County increased to its second-lowest May rate since 1990. The unemployment rate rose to 6 percent, or 1 percentage point above the May 2007 rate. In the last month the unemployment rate edged up two-tenths of a percentage point from the revised April rate of 5.8. At the same time, the number of residents out of work and actively seeking employment grew from 1,950 in May 2007 to 2,390 in May 2008, up 440 out of a total labor force of 39,840. The state's jobless rate was up nine-tenths of 1 percent compared to a May 2007 rate of 4.2 percent and increased five-tenths of 1 percent from April 2008.

Baba-Moussa stated the unemployment rate can be affected by changes in the labor force participation rate, a ratio of the total labor force divided by the population aged 16 and older. The makeup of the labor force changes over time, he added, noting new graduates join the work force for the first time as others currently employed retire. At times, job seekers may be in or out of the labor force, depending upon the state of the economy and their hope of finding a job.

"All these facts suggest that the unemployment rate does not and should not be expected to respond one-for-one to changes in employment," Baba-Moussa stated. "When employment expands, not all the added jobs are filled by the previously unemployed. Some of the openings may be filled by residents who just joined the labor force, while others are taken by previously discouraged workers who previously were not counted as part of the labor force."

If new workers or parents of first-time employees ever want assistance, Baba-Moussa recommended they contact the Moses Lake office of WorkSource, located at 309 E. Fifth Ave., or by telephone at 509-766-4105.