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Grant County officials react to parts plant news

By Lynne Lynch
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SEATTLE — The announcement of a new BMW parts plant being built in Moses Lake was met with enthusiastic reactions from local officials Tuesday.

New manufacturing jobs, construction work and a more diversified economy are among the benefits of the joint venture between the SGL Group and the BMW Group, officials said.

The project's groundbreaking is set for June, according to the company.

"I'm very pleased," said Terry Brewer, executive director of the Grant County Economic Development Council (EDC), which started working on the project in July.

The new business will provide long-term growth for the area, he explained.

"Additional diversification is a good thing," Brewer commented.

He wasn't sure about the number of construction jobs created, but "we just know it's good for an economy. We know it's real and we don't try to quantify it."

Grant County Commissioner Carolann Swartz said the county worked closely with the EDC and the Port of Moses Lake, writing several letters of support for the project.

Grant County allocated \$265,000 to be used to connect the company to sewer and water through the Port of Moses Lake, she said.

"We're excited," Swartz said. "I think this is going to be terrific. It only means good things for Moses Lake and Grant County."

Moses Lake Mayor Jon Lane was also pleased with the news.

"We're just ecstatic," Lane said.

Lane mentioned the possibility of resulting growth from the new business, which could attract new retailers to rural Grant County.

"It helps us diversify the economy," Lane said. "It's a great thing for Moses Lake. It's a great example of a lot of different government agencies working together."

To help fund a new substation for the project, the port applied for and received \$2 million from the state Community Economic Revitalization Board, said Port of Moses Lake Executive Manager Craig Baldwin.

What also brought the joint venture to Grant County was affordable hydropower and the port's foreign trade zone, Baldwin said.

Another benefit was the port's wastewater facility, he said.

Kim Foster, corporate counsel with the ASPI Group, said the company has an expected agreement to sell 60 acres of land to the company for the new facility.

The land is located north of the City of Moses Lake's firing range, between Grant County International Airport and Stratford Road.

"It's a very exciting project for the county, city and whole community," Foster said. "I think it will attract more automotive companies."

Grant County PUD General Manager Tim Culbertson said the company is expected to use about 17 megawatts of power during its initial phase, growing into the 25-megawatt range.

"In discussions we had with them, it's important they have a non-carbon-emitting resource," he said, meaning hydropower.

"I think this is exciting for Grant County," Culbertson said. "This is bringing quite a few jobs. It allows us to bring more of our project energy back to purchasers."



Lynne Lynch/Columbia Basin Herald
Andy Chen, of the ASPI Group, left, and Moses Lake Mayor Jon Lane, visit before a news conference announcing the building of a BMW parts plant in Moses Lake.

Although serving more load growth presents future challenges, the PUD has the capacity to serve the project's initial phase with the Randolph Substation.

A business inquiry, possibly resulting from news about the project, appears to be a prospective data center, dubbed "Project Roosevelt," Culbertson said.

Grant PUD Commission President Bob Bernd said he is "excited for Grant County. This will bring some good family-wage jobs to our area and help diversify the economy."

"We have a great resource in our hydropower and great benefits in our dams," Bernd said.

Port of Moses Lake Commission President Mike Conley said the port participated in early project negotiations.

He called port project consultant David Bailey a "conduit" in their efforts.

Conley mentioned the benefits of the port's foreign trade zone (FTZ), which eliminates duty tax on products coming in from other countries.

The port's foreign trade zone is the only active one in Eastern Washington, he said.

"I think it was a county-wide effort to put this together," Conley said.

Moses Lake Chamber of Commerce President Michelle Price said the chamber is "very excited" to have the company come to the community.

Debbie Doran-Martinez, the chamber's executive director, said she expects to have discussions with the company during the third quarter of this year regarding skill sets needed for new jobs.

She's spoken to the company, which was seeking resources to assist with hiring, she said.

"The vast majority of all the employees will be local," she said. "I just think it's a great sign for our community."

Sen. Janéa Holmquist, R-Moses Lake, said she was "ecstatic" about the news.

"I'm thankful we have good hydropower," she added. "My goal is to make sure future phases (of the project) happen in Grant County."

Rep. Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake, also shared enthusiasm for the new manufacturing facility.

"What's exciting for me is they chose to come here," Warnick said. "A lot was because of power and our labor force. This shows what happens when everyone steps up to the plate, government on down. Having the administration involved is key."

She spoke of the recent passage of House Bill 3014, which modified a sales and use tax deferral program, for investment projects in rural counties.

The bill was sponsored by Rep. Lynn Kessler, D-Hoquaim.

More photos [here](#) and [here](#). Video of the announcement in Seattle is [here](#).