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N.Y. BUSINESS COULD MOVE TO CITY AND CREATE MORE THAN 100 JOBS

Colorful and worth the time

Art project has street value



By Meghan Foley
North Adams Reporter

NORTH ADAMS — A Hoosick Falls, N.Y. company that manufactures mattresses and cushions for the medical, hospitality and consumer markets is considering the relocation of its entire manufacturing and administrative operations to the city.

Mayor Richard J. Alconright announced on Wednesday night that WCW Inc. has sent a letter of intent to the city outlining the potential purchase of the former Sprague building in the Industrial Park on Route 8.

"The move would involve moving approximately 100 jobs with an estimated annual payroll of over \$4 million," he said.

However, this isn't yet a done deal, as the company is also looking at relocating to Manchester, Vt., he said.

WCW, which has been in operation since 1993, currently has its manufacturing operations in three separate buildings in Hoosick Falls, and it also has a consumer call center in Bennington, Vt.

In its letter of intent, company president Jeff Wilkinson said WCW desires to bring all its operations "under one roof for efficiency purposes as well as obtaining a facility that provides a suitable corporate image."

Alconright said opportunities for immediate local job creation would come from current WCW employees who may want to relocate or travel to North Adams.

As for future employment, WCW — which holds 16 patents — is projecting considerable growth over the next five years, which would create more local jobs, he said.

"The prospect of manufacturing jobs coming back to this community is a real source of pride to the city," he said.

Alconright said WCW's plans to purchase the building and invest hundreds of thousands of dollars into it, if it moves to North Adams.

This move would allow WCW to put their entire operation under one roof. It would consist of production, management, R&D (research and development) and call center operations," he said.

Company officials saw the building as a perfect fit for WCW operation, and there is room to expand along the western end of the parcel, Alconright said.

The next steps are for the City Council to designate the Sprague building property as an Economic Opportunity Area and approve a Special Tax Assessment, Alconright said.

The assessment would give WCW an estimated total of \$178,954 in tax breaks over five years. The company would pay no taxes the first year it was in North Adams, 25 percent the second year it was in the city, 50 percent the third year, 75 percent the fourth year, and 100 percent the fifth year.

Alconright plans to bring the economic opportunity area and special tax assessment orders to the City Council for approval on Aug. 23.

Upon approval of the order, the Massachusetts Office of Business Development will then discuss what can be offered on the state level, Alconright said.

"This is an opportunity that the city of North Adams has not seen for many years," he said.

Mayor announces negotiations with Hoosick Falls plant

By Jennifer Robertson
North Adams Reporter

NORTH ADAMS — Here's a new splash of color in the crosswalks in the area of Mohawk Forest Boulevard.

Volunteers from Art About Town have teamed up with teenagers from the Mohawk Forest apartment complex to paint three crosswalks with vivid colors and patterns that were designed and selected by the teens.

"We're glad to bring this project up here," said property manager Barbara Brule-Belle on Tuesday as she watched the group of artists and teens paint bright yellow, blue, red and white squares inside a crosswalk. "We saw all the excitement going on in the downtown and thought it would be a great thing to offer our residents."

She said Kathy Kesser, who oversees its maintenance through MassHousing's Evergreening Youth Employment program, was instrumental in connecting the initiative with the art group.

"She's like a pro-painter with the kids," Brule-Belle said. "She brings so much to the table."

Kesser said the project isn't as simple as just slapping a coat of paint on the road. The team met with artist Gail Sellers who talked about the need to balance colors, and use repeating patterns. She helped them start their designs.

"We had three teens who did designs with squares, which we pulled together into a single design," Kesser said. "We started today with the easiest design. We'll also have a crosswalk with butterflies and another with a leaf pattern."

In addition to planning the crosswalks, she said the six teens also assist with maintenance work around the complex and plan service projects, like activities for Rensselaer Night Out.

"It's been a lot of fun," Giovanni Santilli, 13, said.

ART, continued on A5

Art About Town teams with teens to produce crosswalk splendor



Susan B. Anthony birthplace

Museum seeking direction

By Ruth Hattler
North Adams Reporter

ADAMS — Representatives from the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace and Museum are asking the town to follow through on a promise to help promote the childhood home of Adams' favorite daughter.

At Wednesday night's Selectmen's meeting, Jim Longman who is on the museum's board of directors, asked the Selectmen what had happened to a handful of signs that the town had bought with grant money to help attract visitors to the birthplace — which he admitted is slightly off the beaten path on Blue Road.

"This is the second year we've been open and we have definitely seen an uptick in visitors," he said.

"The only thing is we're a little hard to find. We've been working with the Community Development office to get some signs put up pointing people our way and we understand the town found some state money to get them in April."

Town Administrator Jonathan Butler explained that the town has indeed received the signs and added the reason they have not gone up is because they are incredibly large and cannot be posted on normal street sign posts.

"We're trying to figure out where they're going to go," he said.

"There's some engineering that has to go into the signs. You actually

MUSEUM, continued on A5