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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Bluefish Wireless to expand

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For the Lebanon Reporter

ZIONSVILLE — Finally, some positive economic news.

The best part? It is happening in Boone County.

Bluefish Wireless Management, located at 6100 W. 96th St., Zionsville, in the Northwest Technology Park, officially announced Thursday that it would expand its headquarters in Zionsville, bringing with it 150 new jobs by 2013. The expansion will likely not involve new construction; rather, it will expand further east into the Browning building.

Zionsville had been competing with Las Vegas for the expansion.

Bluefish's West Coast operation center is located in Las Vegas. At the announcement Thursday, Bluefish Director Joshua Garrett said the decision to expand in Boone County was easy.

"Although both were competitive, Indiana won out for a number of different reasons," Garrett said. "The employees we're able to attract here are really the reason we're continuing to be successful. And the support we received from the state level, as well as the county and the city.

"When we came to this conclusion, it was around the holiday time, and the speed at which we heard back from all levels of government was very impressive, and made our decision easy in the end."

Garrett lives in Zionsville with his wife and two children.

Bluefish, a telecommunications business that handles wireless network solutions for a number of Fortune 500 companies (including Intel, Oracle and Ford Motor Co.),



PHOTO BY NICK MCLAIN

Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman congratulates Bluefish Wireless Management on its expansion that will bring with it 150 new jobs by 2013. Zionsville Town Council President Matt Price, Boone County Redevelopment Commission Vice President Terry Young and Bluefish Wireless Director Joshua Garrett look on.

has been listed by Inc. Magazine as one of the 500 fastest-growing companies in the country.

It had \$12.6 million in revenue in 2008, according to the magazine's Web site, a growth of 727 percent from its 2005 revenue of \$1.5 million. It has 73 employees. It was founded in 2001 by Michael Browning II, the son of Michael Browning, the developer of Northwest Technology Center.

Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman was on hand to celebrate the announcement.

"This is such an exciting day for Zionsville," she said. "Nothing makes us happier than companies that start in Indiana, grow in Indiana and stay in Indiana."

Skillman added that Bluefish was named one of the "50 Companies to Watch" by the Indiana Economic

Development Corporation in 2009.

The IEDC was instrumental in keeping Bluefish in Indiana, offering the company \$875,000 in performance-based tax credits and \$50,000 in training grants. IEDC Vice President Chad Pittman, a Zionsville resident, was in the crowd to hear the announcement. He mentioned several reasons for the attractiveness of doing business in Zionsville.

The Boone RDC is considering the possibility of providing Bluefish with nearly \$240,000 in TIF funds to help with equipment purchases, in addition to the incentives the IEDC has already offered.

Boone County Economic Development Corporation Executive Director Dax Norton was ecstatic about the news.

"It's a good day," he said. "This is

the exact kind of project we're looking for right now. The thousand-job announcements from big companies are few and far between, and we'd love to continue to track those, but this is really what's going to make the Boone County economy grow.

"What we need to do here is attract youthful human capital. Part of what we do in economic development, we need to start tracking human capital when we attract jobs. You see the youthfulness of the workforce here. That's what we want for the county and surrounding areas."

Jeff Wolfe, one of the three Boone County commissioners who will have to sign off on the TIF fund usage, was also on hand. He said that commissioner approval looked "favorable at this time."

"It's just a wonderful thing, that we have good businesses here that are wanting to grow," Wolfe said. "When the county and RDC can participate in that and help make that happen, it's a shining light on all of us."

Garrett said the added jobs would be anything from IT engineers to customer service, with an average salary range of \$22 to \$25 per hour. He said Bluefish tries to foster a casual work environment, with a "work hard, play hard" philosophy.

"That why we have things like the putting green, the Ping-Pong table, the lodge with the fireplace," Garrett said. "We want people to be comfortable here, and it sounds cliché, but it's really a family. We have very low employee turnover, folks who come here tend to stay here."

Shari Gross, an employee hard at work in her cubicle during the announcement, agreed.

"It's great here - I love it," Gross said.