

Medical supply company to expand Conover site

By [Dee Henry](#) | Hickory Daily Record

A medical supply company here is expanding its work force by 25 and its facility by 50,000 square feet.

The announcement that BSN Medical will add the new employees at its facility on Keisler Road, SE, came at the City Council meeting Monday, following a closed session to discuss the issue.

"The key importance to this announcement is further diversification," said Scott Millar, president of Catawba County Economic Development Corp. "Industrial diversification is what we're all about. The medical industry is much more recession-proof than others. It's just a great project."

It is a welcomed project in Catawba County, where unemployment is at all-time high.

Unemployment in the Greater Hickory Metro was 14.9 percent in April, down from 15.4 percent in March, but still the highest jobless rate among the state's 14 metropolitan statistical areas.

Catawba County's unemployment rate was 15 percent in April, down from 15.6 percent in March. The county's March rate was the highest it had been since February 1975.

Among the state's 14 metropolitan statistical areas, Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton ranked No. 1 in joblessness for the fourth consecutive month. According to the Employment Security Commission, 11,300 more people in the Greater Hickory Metro were unemployed in April 2009 than in April 2008.

In the closed session, the City Council, Millar and representatives from BSN discussed possible incentives for the company choosing its Conover facility for the expansion. A public hearing is planned for 5:30 p.m. Monday, June 29, at Conover City Hall in Council Chambers. No decision on the incentive package will be made until after the public hearing.

"We are very happy a company in Conover is able to expand and create some new jobs in the current economy," said Mayor Bruce Eckard. "BSN has been a good corporate citizen and with it being medical based, it helps with our industrial diversity."

The company is one branch of a global corporation, said Nathan Huret, a spokesman for the Catawba County Economic Development Commission.

BSN Medical employs 3,600 people worldwide and operates in more than 25 countries. It has production facilities in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Pakistan, South Africa and the United States.

The facility has been in Conover about seven years, said Mike Kerse, general manager of the company's Conover distribution center.

Kersey said the company recently bought Florida Orthopedics earlier this year, its first delving into that area of medical supplies. He said the company hopes to have the renovated facility operational by October. The expanded operations are hoped to be fully operational by spring 2010.

The company deals in wound care, fracture and phlebotomy supplies and special compression hosiery for heart patients.

Kersey said the company will use temp agencies to hire workers, who will be trained by the company. Twenty of those employees will be warehouse, five light manufacturing.

The expansion is the second for the company in the past year.

The expansion is expected to cost around \$2 million.