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The Pierre Foods facility expansion in Claremont is nearly complete.

The 45,000-square-foot cold storage facility expansion is in operation and should be completed in the next few weeks, said construction project manager Andrew Vachon.

Work on the expansion started in April and came with the company's announcement that Pierre Foods will bring more than 500 jobs and \$16.8 million in investments to the area over a three-year period.

The facility was issued a temporary certificate of occupancy and is on schedule for completion.

"It's supposed to increase storage capacity (for sandwiches)," said Laurie LoCicero, Claremont city planner.

Vachon said some Pierre Foods employees will work inside the freezer facility, but most of the space will serve as storage.

The Claremont branch of Pierre Foods is located at 3437 E. Main St. across from Claremont Elementary School.

LoCicero doesn't know if the company started hiring workers to fulfill the 500 jobs promised to the area in March.

The construction went as expected and caused little disruptions to the city, LoCicero said.

"We did have a few citizens' complaints early on from traffic," she said.

The traffic was due to the shift change pattern from Pierre Foods workers and the changing flow of traffic from construction.

LoCicero presented an update on the facility expansion to Claremont City Council members at their Sept. 7 meeting.

Claremont Mayor David Morrow said he was excited about the facility expansion and the jobs Pierre Foods is expected to bring to the city and the surrounding area. LoCicero was scheduled to meet with Vachon on Wednesday afternoon for additional information about the facility's completion.

The expansion was made possible in part through a \$600,000 grant from the One North Carolina fund, which helps local governments attract businesses and industry to create jobs in North Carolina. Once completed, the facility will increase the size of the Claremont facility by about 40 percent, said Pierre Foods CEO Bill Toler in March when the expansion was announced.

Pierre Foods, which is based in Cincinnati, manufactures fully cooked frozen sandwiches and distributes them nationwide. The company announced in July that it will merge with Advance Food Company and Advance Brands LLC. The merged company is called Advance Pierre Foods and will offer a line of frozen sandwiches and fully cooked chicken and beef products.

"Pierre is extremely pleased to merge with these two outstanding companies we have known and admired over the years. The new and expanded product offerings and distribution network will give our combined customers tremendous variety, quality and value," Toler said in a press release. "Our businesses are wonderfully complementary, and we share common corporate philosophies around the importance of taking care of both customers and employees."

About 700 workers are currently employed at the facility in Claremont.

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The 45,000 square-foot Pierre Foods facility expansion in Claremont is nearly complete. Claremont, N.C.

Staff Writer

Observer News Enterprise

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