

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

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Martinsville, Virginia

250 jobs coming to city

Call center will open at Clock Tower

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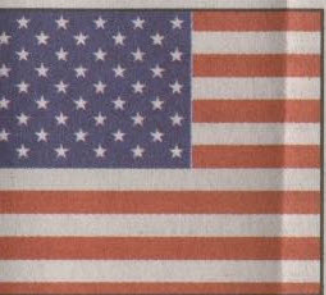
Faneuil Inc. will hire at least 250 employees during the next three years for a call center it will open in August at The Clock Tower at Commonwealth Centre in Martinsville, state and local officials announced Wednesday.

The call center will serve customers of Dominion Virginia Power, a company that supplies electricity to other parts of the state, Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling said during an announcement at the Martinsville Municipal Building.

A recruitment center will open soon at Commonwealth Centre, said

See JOBS, Page 2-A

Anna Van Buren (center), president and CEO of Faneuil Inc., speaks Wednesday during a news conference announcing that the company will open a call center in Martinsville and create 250 jobs. Standing at right is Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling, while Mayor Kathy Lawson stands at left. (Bulletin photo)



THE FORECAST

Sunny and mild

HIGH, 72
LOW, 48

Page 2-A



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Rogers to be PAA director

Jobs

(Continued from Page 1-A)

Faneuil President and Chief Executive Officer Anna Van Buren. Hiring is expected to begin in June, she said.

Employees of the call center will earn an average wage of \$10.78 per hour, according to Leigh Cockram, vice president of the Martinsville-Henry County Economic Development Corp. (EDC).

Faneuil will invest at least \$2.4 million in its Martinsville facility, Bolling said.

The firm received \$590,000 in Tobacco Region Opportunity Funds from the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission. It also is eligible for state enterprise zone benefits and tax credits, said Bolling.

Martinsville Mayor Kathy Lawson called Faneuil's recruitment "one step forward" to a better economy for the Martinsville area, which has the state's highest unemployment rate — 22 percent in March — due to numerous job losses in recent years.

"Job well done," Lawson told officials with the EDC, which helped to recruit Faneuil in cooperation with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.

"Things like this don't happen without a lot of hard

work by a lot of people," added state Sen. Roscoe Reynolds, D-Ridgeway.

"Our No. 1 priority is to get the economy moving again and create jobs," Bolling said of state officials.

He said he thinks Southside has major potential for economic growth.

"You've done everything you can do" to attract businesses and industries, Bolling told local officials. "Just keep your nose to the grindstone."

At a special meeting on Wednesday before the recruitment announcement, the Martinsville City Council unanimously approved a performance agreement between Faneuil, the city and the tobacco commission.

The agreement shows that if it does not meet hiring and investment quotas in 36 months, Faneuil will repay to the city pro-rated shares of the tobacco commission grant. The city is responsible for repaying the commission.

Faneuil must spend at least \$1 million toward its required investment before it receives any grant money, the agreement says.

Van Buren said Faneuil will hire at least 250 people and aims to eventually employ at least 350 at its local call center. She said the firm plans to be "a long-term corporate cit-



Faneuil Inc. announced Wednesday that it will open a call center in August at The Clock Tower at Commonwealth Centre in Martinsville, which is shown Wednesday. (Bulletin photo)

izen" in the Martinsville area.

Dominion Virginia is a subsidiary of Richmond-based Dominion Resources, an electricity and natural gas provider with operations in various states.

Hampton-based Faneuil operates other call centers in Virginia. Noting that Dominion Virginia is a new client, Van Buren said, "we have not lost a client yet."

The Martinsville call center initially will take calls from customers of Dominion Virginia for connections and disconnections of electrical service, officials said.

Eventually, the center may take calls from customers about other matters, such as billing, said Dominion Virginia Chief Executive Officer Paul Koonce.

The center is expected to eventually handle between 800,000 and 1 million calls per year, said Del. Danny Marshall, R-Danville, who serves on the tobacco commission.

Dominion Virginia was involved with Faneuil in choosing the Martinsville site. Koonce said the company wanted the call center to be in a place with lots of skilled yet trainable workers, as well as

in a place away from the coast so the center is not subject to phone service outages due to coastal storms.

Martinsville-Henry County "stood out for its business-friendly climate," he said.

"We have literally fallen in love with the city of Martinsville," Van Buren said of Faneuil.

"We've opened a lot of call centers, but we've never felt more welcome" anywhere else, she said. "The hospitality here is unbelievable."

As an example, she mentioned that when she told an employee at a local hotel that

she was considering opening a business locally, the employee became excited and gave her a discount on the price of her room.

Bolling presented Van Buren a state flag, and Lawson gave her a flag with Martinsville's city emblem, to fly outside the call center. Lawson also gave Van Buren a wooden bowl made by a local artisan.

Commonwealth Centre is the former Tultex Corp. factory off Franklin Street and Commonwealth Boulevard, which now is owned by The Lester Group and has been renovated for commercial and office space.

YoungWilliams Child Support Services already operates a call center there that takes calls for the state Division of Child Support Enforcement.

At first, Faneuil plans to occupy about 12,000 square feet in the building, Van Buren said. The four-story building covers about 175,000 square feet.

George W. Lester II, chief executive officer of The Lester Group, said he hopes Faneuil eventually will "take the whole top floor."

Lester, Van Buren and Koonce all said they could not immediately recall how much Faneuil will pay to lease its space in Commonwealth Centre.