

The Berkshire Eagle

State economic development chief Jay Ash visits Boyd Technologies



Massachusetts Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Jay Ash (center) chats with Bronly Boyd, left, and Stephen Boyd during a visit to Boyd Technologies to celebrate the company's growth and innovation. Boyd Technologies is a high-tech company that manufactures advanced flexible materials.
BEN GARVER - THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

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Dick Lindsay rlindsay@berkshireeagle.com

LEE — Boyd Technologies epitomizes what the Baker administration wants from 21st century manufacturing — innovation.

That was the message from state Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Jay Ash on Thursday during a visit to the family-run, high-tech company.

"If you don't innovate, you'll perish," he said.

Ash took part in a two-hour open house and tour Thursday afternoon of the nearly 40-year old business that has become an international supplier of advanced flexible materials, which range from disposable medical products used in hospitals to functional components for car batteries.

Founded by Bronly Boyd in 1979, the company is now run by three sons, led by President Stephen Boyd.

Ash said he had heard plenty about the firm, but the tour convinced the high-ranking state official that the Route 102 facility just off the Massachusetts Turnpike was better than advertised.

"I was so astonished, I went outside and checked my GPS to make sure I wasn't in Cambridge," he quipped. "That's the highest compliment I can give."

Boyd officials scheduled the open house to showcase the latest upgrade of a multimillion dollar investment that began five years ago.

The first phase completed in 2013 was the creation of a clean room that company Stephen Boyd highlighted during the tour, which included state Rep. William "Smitty" Pignatelli and college presidents Ellen Kennedy from Berkshire Community College and James Birge at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams.

"It's cleaner than an operating room," he said.

Clean rooms are controlled environments frequently used in manufacturing or scientific research that contain low levels of pollutants such as dust, airborne microbes, aerosol particles and chemical vapors.

More recently, Boyd Technologies replaced two aging machines with a single, modern one to increase productivity, efficiency without sacrificing personnel.

"We made sure nobody lost jobs," Boyd said. "We're more competitive and more versatile now."

The current payroll is between 55 and 60 employees, Boyd said, bumped up a bit in recent years by hiring more technical and engineering staff. The five-year investment also included increasing the skill-set of many other workers, leading to better pay.

The latest improvements just completed before the open house features a more welcoming lobby to guests and clients, along with a collaborative work space that is employer friendly. Next on the upgrade-list is the creation of a development laboratory expected to be operational by early 2018, Boyd said.

"Today is by no means a victory lap. We're still preparing for tomorrow for an unrelenting marketplace," he said at the conclusion of the open house, which was attended by more than 100 people.

Speaking on behalf of the company's board of directors, Scott Hand called Boyd technologies a "rare

species" in manufacturing willing to adapt and sell in a global marketplace.

"We need more of this in the Berkshires," he said. "It's the kind of company moving with the times."

Ash told *The Eagle* seeing Boyd in person reinforces his and the state's commitment to the proposed Berkshire Innovation Center (BIC) at the William Stanley Business Park of the Berkshires in Pittsfield.

Construction on the \$9.7 million project was originally scheduled to begin in late 2015, but has been delayed by a \$3 million funding gap between the promised state funding and the actual costs to build the project to its original specifications.

Ash's department oversees the state entities that would provide the additional funding. The 20,000-square-foot technology and job training center is considered crucial to the development of the 52-acre business park, which is mostly vacant.

Ash stated in January a decision on additional funding was near, but six months later, any financial solution remains in limbo. He noted the state's budget woes aren't a factor in whether the state spends more money on the project.

"We're still working on the best options for the BIC and the city of Pittsfield," he said.

Reach staff writer Dick Lindsay at 413-496-6233.