

PCDA Officially Approves \$2 Million for Sensor Lab

Ponca City Development Authority Board of Trustees Thursday officially committed to an investment of \$2 million for the recently announced Oklahoma State University Sensor Testing Center.

The unanimous action by the trustees comes just three days after the official announcement of the center by OSU, and the announcement by ConocoPhillips that it would donate a 70,000-square-foot building in Ponca City and match what had been a pledge by PCDA of \$2 million to the project.

"This project is about more than the 80 direct jobs it will create," said PCDA Board Chair Darrell Stolhand. "This is an opportunity to build an economic sector around a growing, knowledge-based industry."

Stolhand also noted that in addition to the 80 direct jobs, the center is also projected to produce a significant number of additional jobs for visiting faculty, developers and others that will come to Ponca City to utilize the facility.

PCDA Vice Chair Lee Evans praised OSU President Dr. David Schmidly for his leadership in the project and for establishing a physical presence in Ponca City.

"Dr. Schmidly's courageous and far reaching vision of the land grant triangle and Oklahoma's place in the new economy really became a reality this week," Evans said. "We have been truly fortunate to have OSU next door in Stillwater and we're delighted to now have them as neighbors in Ponca City."

PCDA, OSU and the designated center operator, AMTI of Virginia Beach, Va., have been in discussions about the project for more than 18 months. PCDA trustees have been directing the talks throughout the process, according to

PCDA Executive Director David Myers.

"This has been a decision and a commitment that has taken a great deal of study, consideration and soul searching. We know it's a great deal of money but we have world class partners in ConocoPhillips and Oklahoma State University. We all have a lot invested in this and we all stand to benefit from the project's success," Myers said. "The trustees felt that a significant leadership pledge would make the difference and indeed, it has."

A recent economic analysis conducted by PCDA said that the project would have an economic benefit of \$120 million over the next 10 years. PCDA Trustee and Treasurer Chuck Van Cleave noted, however, that a potentially larger benefit could come from companies that will move to the area over time to work closely with the center.

Said Van Cleave, "The spin-off effects of a project such as this are often much greater than the impact of the direct jobs. This has the potential for significant additional jobs, investment and growth in Ponca City."

The PCDA Board resolution committing the money requires that the funds be used in Ponca City and that an agreement be developed to insure that the investment of public money results in the creation of the center and the promised jobs. PCDA funds come from a half-cent sales tax approved by Ponca City voters in the fall of 2003.

"Our obligation to our taxpayers is to deliver results and to be good stewards of their money," said PCDA's Myers. "This project and the resolution the Board passed today will do both."

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Stolhand also praised the work of Sen. David Myers, Rep. Jim Newport, Stillwater Sen. Mike Morgan and the Oklahoma Congressional delegation in Washington, D.C.

He said, "It's rare to find elected officials so willing to do the hard work and not seek any of the public recognition they so richly deserve. We are so fortunate in North Central Oklahoma to have such fine people in office at this critical time."

The sensor testing center, officially named the University Multispectral Lab, will provide a national facility for the testing of sensors and sensor technology. Most of the new staff for the center is expected to come from outside Ponca City.

According to Evans, "Sensor technology is not a new field but it sure is a growing one. There is a huge body of knowledge and we're going to tap into that. Why shouldn't the best minds in the field be in Ponca City? It's a great place to live."