

UPDATED: Local leaders react to Boston Financial's expansion to Rockland

By Stephen Betts

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ROCKLAND — Local and state officials were reacting with excitement and pride Tuesday with the formal announcement that Boston Financial Data Services Inc. will expand to the 12 Water St. complex owned by Rockland Harbor Park LLC.

The company, based in Quincy, Mass., will hire 100 employees this year, 250 people within two years and possibly more in the future.

"This is great news, not just for Rockland but for the region and the state," said Rockland City Manager Tom Hall.

Alan Hinsey of the Knox/Waldo Regional Economic Development Council, noted there was intense competition from throughout New England for these jobs. He said he believes Boston Financial choose Rockland because of the "affordable Class A facility," an affordable and available workforce, and the attitude and responsiveness of local and state officials.



Boston Financial will lease this complex from Rockland Harbor Park LLC.

The economic organization was able to identify trained workers, who previously worked for MBNA and Bank of America, who are underemployed in the region.

"The rapid responsiveness of Tom Hall and the Rockland City Council was very important," Hinsey said.

Hall said it was remarkable to find a tenant to take over 90 percent of the large waterfront complex.

"I'm not an economist but I'm a big believer in consumer confidence," Hall said, adding that this should be a boost to the local region's confidence.

The employees who come to Rockland will shop in the stores, eat in the restaurants and spend in the community, he noted.

Matt Jacobson, president of Maine & Company from Portland, said that a team effort led to the success.

Jacobson said he expects Boston Financial to hold a job fair this summer at which time, hirings will begin. The company also has an extensive job training program that will be provided to those who are hired.

The effort to land Boston Financial's jobs started about six months ago, Hall said, at about the time that Athena Health announced it was locating in Belfast. That company had looked at Rockland and a real estate broker involved in that was in contact with a counterpart working with Boston Financial.

Boston Financial was looking to expand within a 200-mile radius of Boston and Rockland was on that outer end, Hall said. Maine & Company, which recruits companies to come to Maine, had a relationship with a site locator working with Boston Financial.

After that, came the hard work to show that Rockland was the best site.

Hall agreed, saying it took a lot of hard work from many parties to bring this to fruition. He said considerable amounts of labor data had to be mined to show the available, trained workers were here. The Pine Tree Zone benefits also helped level the playing field with other states, he said.

The effort shows the business friendly attitude of Rockland, he said.

Boston Financial Data Services, Inc. is a leading provider of investor and intermediary services to the financial services industry.

In a news release issued Tuesday morning, the company announced it had formalized a lease agreement with Rockland Harbor Park LLC.

Boston Financial, with headquarters in Quincy, Mass, currently employs 3,000 people in Quincy, Kansas City, Mo. and Lawrence, Kan.

Jacobson said the nonprofit corporation, Maine & Company, leveraged local and state incentives and provided site location services and workforce analysis data to Boston Financial.

"Rockland became a 'short-list' contender when Boston Financial began looking for an additional location for expansion," said Jacobson. "We worked closely with state economic leaders and regional economic groups to provide an incentive package to locate Boston Financial in the Midcoast region."

In a prepared statement, Terry Metzger, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Boston Financial said "Our new site aligns with our long-term growth strategy while maintaining our commitment to the Boston, Kansas City, and Lawrence areas," said "We're excited about our new site in Maine, and the opportunity to build upon our position as an industry leader."

State leaders also offered their comments on the announcement.

"This is a great success story for the state; Pine Tree Zone incentives provided an attractive location package to Boston Financial," said Gov. John Baldacci. "The Pine Tree Zone economic program is, once again, creating more jobs in the state of Maine. This decision by Boston Financial also speaks to the quality of the state's workforce and our aggressive pursuit of jobs."

"Maine continues to attract industry leaders with our ability to provide key incentives for growing businesses and our available workforce," said John Richardson, commissioner of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development. "We are proud Boston Financial selected Rockland as a home for its new facility and we welcome the company to the state."

Boston Financial services 116 clients representing in excess of 25 million accounts and 6,800 funds. According to the 2008 Mutual Fund Service Guide, Boston Financial has the largest shareholder account base of any third party service provider in the industry.

Boston Financial Data Services has provided investor and intermediary services to the financial marketplace. Boston Financial was founded in 1973 as a unique partnership between two of the leading forces in the mutual fund business - DST Systems, Inc. of Kansas City, Mo., and State Street Corporation of Boston, Mass.

In addition to Boston Financial, Rockland Harbor Park will be occupied by Amalfi's restaurant, a 37-slip marina and the restaurant that will be located in the former boathouse at the end of the 360-foot pier. Amalfi's will have seating for 200 in the former cafeteria of the complex, while the boathouse restaurant will have 150 seats, according to the plans.

The Harbor Park LLC property has been placed in the state's Pine Tree Zone. That designation provides businesses that pay above average wage and benefits, a complete credit on state corporate income taxes for five years and a 50 percent credit in the next five years. Eligible businesses also can get an exemption on the sales tax for equipment and discounts on electricity.

The two-story complex, with a total space of 77,000 square feet, was last full of workers in April 2005,

when MBNA announced it was closing its Rockland and Northport facilities. There were slightly more than 300 workers at the call center in Rockland at the time of the announcement by MBNA.

The complex was built in 2001 by MBNA.

The property was later purchased by Bank of America, when it acquired MBNA, and the Rockland waterfront properties were sold in March 2007 to a group of investors who formed Rockland Harbor Park LLC. The owners of Harbor Park are Matthew and Ellen Simmons, Stuart and Marianne Smith of Camden, Tom and Linda Meyer, and Jay Kislak. Matthew Simmons is owner of Simmons & Co. International and a seasonal resident of Rockport. He acquired the Strand Theatre and renovated it to its original state. The Smiths have been involved in numerous successful business ventures, including Maine Sport Outfitters in Rockport, Lord Camden Inn in Camden and are partners in the Breakwater Marketplace in Rockland. The Meyers are seasonal residents of Lincolnville. Kislak is a seasonal resident of Rockport and a real estate developer from Florida.

The planning board voted in April to allow the complex to create an additional 115 parking spaces to bring its total parking spaces to 483.

And two weeks ago, the Rockland Board of Assessment Review voted 3-1 to grant an abatement to Rockland Harbor Park LLC for the property, lowering the assessment for tax purposes from \$8,250,000 to the \$5,450,000 that the group paid Bank of America.

The abatement lowers the tax bill by \$50,000 annually. The taxes on the property will be about \$95,000 annually.

Maine U.S. Sen. Olympia Snowe also issued a statement on the news.

"Rockland — and the entire State of Maine — has many virtues that attract world class business operations like Boston Financial. From the renowned Maine work ethic and available skilled labor force to local, state, and federal business incentives, Maine is clearly an attractive place to locate an operation. Our workers are among the best in the world and they will go above and beyond to provide Boston Financial and its customers with a level of service that is unequalled anywhere," Snowe stated.