

Growth in the works for LaRoche Tree Trimming Service

The Times Leader article by Robert DeFrank



BELLAIRE — C.J. LaRoche, owner of LaRoche Tree Trimming Service, is planning a major expansion of his business in Pultney Township just outside his Bellaire location.

On Wednesday, Belmont County commissioners approved an Ohio Enterprise Zone agreement with benefits from Bellaire and Pultney Township, specifying a 60 percent, 10-year tax abatement on the expansion.

He said the business has outgrown its 2.5-acre location at Commerce Parkway in Bellaire. The new site will be on a 26-acre property on Winding Hill Road just south of Bellaire. By spring 2021, LaRoche expects to start construction of an office building; he hopes to have an operations building and a maintenance building in place by 2023.

This represents an investment of \$8 to \$10 million.

Belmont County Port Authority Director Larry Merry called the tree-trimming service a homegrown business and an investment in the area.

“They’re a company that’s rapidly growing. They do a very needed thing,” Merry said, adding the company performs considerable clearing work for American Electric Power and rural cooperatives to meet the growing demand.

Merry said the business has become a recognized name in Belmont County and beyond the state’s borders and currently employs more than 100 people. In the next three years, LaRoche expects to employ

more than 230 by the end of the expansion, with a majority of those being Belmont County residents.

“I appreciate your commitment to Belmont County,” Commissioner Jerry Echemann said.

Pultney Township Trustee Frank Shaffer said LaRoche’s business has been a valuable addition to the area.

“He has a great company here,” Shaffer said. *“He’s helped out the township on numerous occasions. ... The township itself is more than happy to see this expansion.”*

“I think your company is probably the fastest-growing company in Belmont County,” Commissioner J.P. Dutton said.

“It’s a good name in Bellaire. It’s an exciting thing to see these things happening within our county,” Commissioner Josh Meyer added.

LaRoche also thanked the village of Bellaire.

“They’ve been great for us. They’ve worked with us,” he said. *“The village has been great. The county has been great. ... It’s helped facilitate that growth, and it makes sense we want to stay here.”*

LaRoche started his business at age 15 while in high school. He has since been busy with both residential and commercial work such as right-of-way clearing. More recently, he invested in a helicopter to cut upper tree branches in conjunction with ground crews.

He said the pandemic has not impacted his work.

“It’s really not slowing us down,” he said of COVID-19.