

Gourmet Gift Baskets constructing new facility

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EXETER – Gourmet Gift Baskets on Tuesday unveiled the skeleton of the 106,000-square foot facility it has made its home in Exeter, and Gov. Maggie Hassan was on hand to wish owners Ryan and Jeff Abood well.

Hassan praised New Hampshire's high quality of life, high-quality workforce and legislative flexibility – elements that, she said, allow for business ventures such as the Aboods.'

"It's who we are in the Granite State – we're working together and getting the job done," she said.

Ryan Abood shared with attendees the story of the multi-million dollar e-commerce company, which grew from a 2,000-square-foot building to its sprawling new home on Continental Drive.

Becoming emotional, Abood said, "Today is about the amazing people who have worked so hard to get us to this place."

State Department of Resources and Economic Development Commissioner Jeff Rose told the Aboods "it takes courage, it takes special people," to take business risks like they have.

"You are really the backbone of New Hampshire's economy," he said. "We are small but we are agile and we are responsive."

Town Manager Russ Dean touted the project as an illustration of Exeter's more aggressive push toward expanding its tax base and being economically competitive.

"I couldn't be happier to say that (Economic Developer Darren Winham) is here, working hard and tirelessly to make sure that things are happening on Epping Road," he said. "This is a symbol of our governing body's dedication to expanding our commercial base."

Located within the Epping Road tax increment finance district on property owned by Tom Monahan, the site has a 99-space parking lot and a loading dock on the north side of the building, with connections to town water and sewer.

The Planning Board is squarely behind the project, which members have said they see as an ideal development for Epping Road.

According to its website, Ryan Abood founded the multi-million dollar online retailer after working at the family's New Hampshire flower shop. The company offers gift packages for all major holidays and occasions that can include everything from gourmet food and snacks to flowers and cigars.

Economic Development Director Darren Winham, who Dean recognized as being instrumental to the venture's success, said on Tuesday that the project has been a long time coming and will be good for Exeter.

"The Gourmet Gift Baskets project is an important first step in the redevelopment of Epping Road and a colossal victory for Exeter," Winham said. "From abolishing ghost roads to shrugging off the false shroud of being challenging to work with, Exeter is truly growing as an economic player on the Seacoast."