

LAIRD: Some 500 jobs are in the offing with expansion

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development organizations to create programs, internships, and apprenticeships that develop and train Sisters Country's emerging workforce. All of these challenges will be part of our ongoing visioning implementation process."

City Manager Cory Misley told *The Nugget*, "The planned growth of Laird Superfood is impressive on many fronts and a testament to the current vibrancy of Sisters and confidence in its future. With that level of growth, plus on-going efforts to further diversify the economy, the City must continue to have an eye towards the future for essential infrastructure and land use. Growth overall is not a surprise and, through the visioning process, many next-step action items are identified to prepare for that and add to the livability of Sisters Country."

From the Chamber of Commerce, Executive Director Judy Trego offered, "The potential addition of 500 jobs in Sisters is crucial to the health and vitality of the community. These new jobs help to diversify our economy and drive the local market by increasing sales for our (Chamber) members. This welcome addition will also help stabilize off-season revenue to cash-flow strapped businesses, currently reliant on the destination tourism sector. We are excited and wholly supportive of Laird Superfood's expansion, and our membership will benefit significantly from Laird's investment in the Sisters Country community, individually and as a whole."

When queried about where all the new people would live, Hodge referred to the new proposed development by Hayden Homes next to Sisters High School (*see story, page 7*). The employees with children who choose to live in Sisters are expected to help boost school enrollment.

If all of Laird's plans come to fruition, Sisters will no longer be considered just a tourist economy with its fluctuating business cycles. Laird would become the largest employer, passing up Black Butte Ranch and the school district, currently the two largest employers in Sisters Country. Manufacturing could become the single largest industry sector in town.

With the infusion of capital and growth of the company, acquisition of other natural food companies is a possibility. As of January 2019, expanded distribution through national chains will begin.

POST OFFICE: Season is overwhelming for small staff

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this time of year, that number more than doubles.

"We're doing anywhere from 1,000 up to 1,500 parcels a day," Schlichting told *The Nugget*.

The staffing, however, remains the same.

"I've got four clerks and I've got five HCR (hand-carry route) drivers," said the OIC. "Our office is considered small enough that we don't qualify for... extra assistance."

Each morning, pallets stacked above man height with Amazon boxes arrive and have to be sorted, along with heaping binfuls of other packages.

The upshot is that when tracking shows that your package has arrived at the post office, it might be buried under a mound of other packages. And your mail may not be in your post office box until the afternoon.

"We try to do our best to see that our customers get what they need and what they deserve," Schlichting said.

"It's just very difficult to keep up with the volume and demand.

"I've got clerks working 10-hour days," said the OIC.

The clerks are working six days a week; the carriers are working seven. The HCR drivers are often out on their routes until 8:30 or 9 p.m.

The Sisters Post Office also handles parcels for UPS and Fed Ex — but they don't know in advance, nor do drivers, which packages will be routed that way.

The OIC is asking for a little patience from the Sisters public, who are understandably eager to get their packages in hand. If a clerk can readily lay hands on a parcel, they're happy to retrieve it, but if it's not on the top of a pile, "it's just too much to try to dig through the containers until we get to it," Schlichting said.

Schlichting also noted that the Post Office is returning parcels every day because the shipper requires a street address, but the customer doesn't get street delivery. The OIC offers a work-around:

Use the post office's physical address of 694 N. Larch St. and include your P.O. Box number as a "unit code" with that address. Packages addressed that way will not be sent back, Schlichting said.

On behalf of his weary and stressed crew, Schlichting wants Sisters to know that they're doing their best.

"I just want the customers to know that we're doing every thing we can to get their packages done."



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

The Sisters Post Office is receiving mountains of packages daily. It takes time to sort through it all.

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