

New division may help job outlook in Lanark

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LANARK — The economy has hit a Carroll County village hard. Medallion Cabinetry, a subsidiary of Oak Brook-based Elkay Companies, is slated to close its doors in January. That closure is expected to leave 130 people out of work, including Lanark Mayor Kevin Barnes. Barnes said he learned the harsh reality Monday, noting there was no warning.

"We were all shocked when they announced it," he said.

Employees were told the economic downturn and sliding sales were major factors, according to Barnes. While

the Lanark site will cease operation, other sites would be cutting back. Barnes reiterated that the turn of events will affect all workers.

"They pretty much told us

everybody was done," he said.

Possible New Jobs

However, a slim ray of hope remains. Barnes noted Elkay's faucet division will be coming to Lanark, bringing about 30 jobs. It seems the anticipated move could bring at least 40 jobs, according to Phyllis Roth. Roth serves as vice president of human resources for Elkay Companies' cabinet division.

"They will be starting the transition as soon as we have

completed the production of cabinets," she said.

Like his fellow displaced workers, Barnes — a CNC machine operator — is sending out resumes. This is just another transition Barnes has faced. He was once a former Econo Foods meat cutter.

"I don't know which direction I'll end up going," Barnes said.

Lanark Impact

The pending job loss will have a ripple effect. Barnes noted losing Medallion Cabinetry would not only leave displaced workers behind, but impact the entire community.

"It's kind of devastating to the town," he said.

But Barnes was not able to quantify the economic impact on Lanark.

"Everybody's going to lose out in some way," he said.

A WARNING

Passage of the Illinois Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) requires employers to notify employees and their unions, the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity Bureau of Workforce Development and the Illinois Department of Labor within 60 days of a

plant closing or mass layoff. Roth said her company issued a WARN notice in Illinois. Although Medallion Cabinetry is based in Waconia, Minn., the company was not required to

file a notice with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, said spokesperson Kirsten Morrell.

"Despite internal efforts to make adjustments, the prolonged downturn in our markets requires that we make difficult decisions," Roth said.

Declining consumer spending and credit availability has hurt the cabinetry business. Roth noted housing starts have decreased more than 30 percent since 2007. She confirmed the closure would leave 130 people jobless. All production in Lanark would be transferred to other Medallion sites.