

WEDC hammering out final details on MolsonCoors incentive package

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WEDC is hammering out the final details of a new incentive package that MolsonCoors says will bring “hundreds” of jobs to Milwaukee as part of the company’s national reorganization.

Still, neither WEDC CEO Missy Hughes nor MolsonCoors CEO Gavin Hattersley provided many details of the package or the number of jobs that will move to Milwaukee as they heralded the company’s decision to move positions to the state’s largest city.

Hughes, who was announced as WEDC CEO Sept. 5, said she’d been on the job about 72 hours when MolsonCoors first contacted the agency about working on an incentive package. It came together quickly as the company announced plans Oct. 30 for a national reorganization.

Hughes said negotiations were ongoing as the company’s plans solidified, and the incentives will require the creation of a new enterprise zone that would have to be approved by the Legislature’s Joint Finance Committee.

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Meanwhile, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said he’s proposing a city package worth up to \$2 million in incentives contingent upon adding workers at the brewery and keeping current jobs.

The mayor said the deal, which would have to be approved by the Common Council, also includes requirements for MolsonCoors as it hires employees to work on the project, including renovations to existing facilities to house new employees.

“We want to ensure that the people who live in this community and sometimes

literally in this neighborhood are helping to build the future of this city,” Barrett said.

Gov. Tony Evers joined Barrett, Hattersley and Hughes for Monday’s news conference in Milwaukee to discuss the company’s move to add jobs at its city facilities.

In October, the company announced a “revitalization plan” that included closing its Denver office and moving its North American headquarters to Chicago. The plan included cutting 500 jobs overall in the U.S. and Canada while moving positions in finance, legal, IT and human resources to Milwaukee.

MillerCoors currently employs close to 1,300 workers in Milwaukee — about 600 office jobs and 700 brewery jobs. Two years ago, the company invested \$50 million to increase capacity at its 10th Street Brewery.

Hattersley said one reason the company chose Milwaukee for the “hundreds” of jobs is it has two underutilized buildings already that can be renovated to house them rather than building a new facility. He also said the new positions will be a mix of people relocating from the Denver area as well as new positions.

He also credited WEDC and the city for moving quickly to negotiate a package as the company weighed its options.

“There is a meaningful number of folk that we’re going to be recruiting for in the city of Milwaukee and the state of Wisconsin,” he said, adding he expects the new positions to come online in 2020.

When the company announced the move, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, credited a 2017 tax package approved under then-Gov. Scott Walker that included \$1.95 million in business tax credits if the company created 150 positions and another \$750,000 in credits for workforce training.

A WEDC spokesman said the new incentive package isn’t related to the 2017 credits. While the company provided required reporting to the agency on those incentives, it didn’t qualify for the credits outlined in the contract.