



The owners of Sequoia Packing Inc. turn the first shovels of dirt at the Chamber of

Commerce official ground breaking ceremonies on Monday.

Sequoia Packing ground breaking ceremonies held

Sequoia Packing Company held its ground breaking ceremonies at the Coalinga Industrial Park site south of Jayne Avenue on Monday. Representing Sequoia Packing was Jon Vessey, Gary Caneza and Andrew Caneza owners of the company, David Grimes, general manager of the fresh market plant in Lemoore and Tony Villalobos, manager of the peeling operation in Coalinga.

Sequoia Packing Co. was formed in 1993 and is owned by Vessey and Co. Inc owned by Jon Vessey of El Centro; JenArd Fresh, Inc. AKA Spice World Inc. of Orlando Florida owned by the Caneza Family. Sequoia is recognized as the number 2 fresh market garlic packer in the United States.

The owners of Sequoia Packing Inc. each represent over 50 years of doing business before forming Sequoia Packing in 1993. Spice World is recognized as the largest user of garlic in the United States.

Sequoia Packing is packing fresh market garlic at a plant on 25th Avenue in Kings County, and a peeled garlic plant is in operation in Coalinga on Elm Street near the southern city limits.

According to Sequoia Packing they will combine the two plants at the new site in order to ship their commodity throughout the United States and Canada.

At present they pack about 32 million pounds of garlic per year. The peeling plant will pack about 5-6 million pounds in the first year.

Most of this garlic (85 percent) is grown locally - Coalinga, Huron and Five Points - another 10

percent is grown in the Shafter and Wasco area while the rest comes from Gilroy, Imperial County, Mexico and Argentina.

From July through October the fresh market plant is expected to employ 500 people in a two shift day. In the winter that plant will employ about 100 person for 60 days. There are 10 year-round employees that consist of managers, office and maintenance personnel. The company said that they hope to expand this permanent staff as the company grows.

Their payroll is projected to be about \$1.5 million per month during the peak months for both the harvesting and packing operations.

The peeling plant will operate year round.

The fresh market operation packs three pound bags and 5, 10 and 30 pound cartons for both retail and foodservice users. The peeling plant packs 1, 3, and five pound jars and 5,7, and 30 pound poly bags for both retail and foodservices markets.

At the busiest times of the year they expect to be packing 400,000 pounds of fresh market garlic and 25,000 pound of peeled garlic daily.

The company does not dehydrate garlic and they assured area residents at the public hearing before the council and again Monday that garlic odors are at a minimum.

The owners said that they plan on being good neighbors. They will be active in supporting the city and families in the area. They expect to be active in supporting little league,

youth football, soccer, as well as high school and junior high school activities. Churches, senior citizens, as well men and women's clubs may also expect to benefit.

City interviewing another interim finance director

• Hargrave leaves

Monday Interim City Manager Robert Wilburn was interviewing potential Interim finance directors to replace Robert Hargrave who announced last week that he was not coming back after the Thanksgiving holiday.

The announcement came with no apparent fanfare nor any reasons given. His contract calls for a full report of the affairs of the finance department's status.

It was not made known whether he intends to submit this full report.

Hargrave was hired by former city manager Forrest Henderson to investigate the finance department following the discovery of embezzlements believed to exceed \$15,000.

Finance Director Dottie Ingham was placed on administrative leave at that time although Henderson acknowledged that she was in no way involved in the embezzlement.