

Mac's Market headed for Port Henry

Store to open at former Tops site

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PORT HENRY — Residents of southern Essex County got an early Christmas present Friday when local officials confirmed a full-service grocery store will soon open in Port Henry.

The local Tops Friendly Market closed in March, putting two dozen people out of work and leaving residents with no local grocery store.

But a Mac's Market will open in the same building in March 2007, Sherman V. Allen Inc. President Daniel Dukeshire said Friday.

OPEN BY MARCH

Sherman V. Allen Inc. operates Mac's Markets in Vermont, New Hampshire and New York, with headquarters in Rutland, Vt.

Dukeshire said the company will close on the purchase of the former Tops building in January and hopes to have its store open by mid March.

"We'll open as soon as we can. The building needs some work done inside and a new heating system. It's easier to do it before we're open."

Mac's doesn't plan to utilize any of the other locations Tops closed earlier this year, such as the stores in Keeseville and Lake Placid.

TAX PILOT

The firm has applied for a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) program through the Essex County Industrial Development Agency. A public hearing on the request is at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 3, in the Port Henry Knights of Columbus Hall.

The 10-year PILOT program would give Mac's a 50-percent tax reduction the first year, decreasing by one percentage each year, until the store is back to full taxation.

Essex County, the Village of Port Henry, Town of Moriah and the Moriah Central School District must all agree to the PILOT.

JOBS

IDA Co-Director Jody Olcott has been working on the project, which should provide 10 to 15 full-time jobs and another 10 to 15 part-time jobs at the new store.

Dukeshire said they won't know the exact number until the store has been open awhile.

"We hope some of the folks who worked there before will come back. We hope to hire everybody locally, including the manager. We'll see a lot of the same faces."

FULL SERVICE

The store will feature a deli and fresh-baked goods, he said.

"The stores are full-service grocery stores. We'll have a deli, produce; we'll have a meat cutter.

"We try to buy as much locally as we can. We're an independent. We can buy from whomever we want."

On the other hand, they also have the purchasing power of a chain, he said, and will carry about 35,000 items.

"We'll have a pretty complete inventory of products. You won't see 18 kinds of peanut butter; you'll see three. We'll focus on fresh meat, not pre-packaged meat. We'll have fresh produce, maybe local corn in the summer."

The store won't try to compete with the Wal-Mart SuperCenter's grocery department in Ticonderoga, he said.

"It will be a community-based store. We want to help the community. A grocery store is the foundation to most communities."

WELCOME

Moriah is a community that will welcome them with open arms, Town Supervisor Thomas Scozzafava said.

"This (work to get a store) has been daily for the last five months. A lot of people were involved. I was confident all along we'd have a store.

"I can't think of a better supermarket for the area than Mac's.

"It's been a huge detriment to this community not to have a grocery store. The inconvenience it's placed on all our residents, especially senior citizens, has been a real concern."

Scozzafava said he and his wife recently visited the Woodstock, Vt., Mac's Market.

"I was very impressed. They pay a decent wage. I don't think we could have found a better fit for the community. They do business in small, rural areas. I'm very pleased we're going to have a store."

The Mac's Markets staff is also pleased, Dukeshire said.

"It should be a nice store. We're very excited about coming to Port Henry."

Mac's arrival will enhance the quality of life in southern Essex County, Scozzafava said.

"It's great news for the community. Merry Christmas for the Town of Moriah."