

## **Martin Baker planning expansion**

### **Defense contractor cites steady growth**

Randy Griffith [rgriffith@tribdem.com](mailto:rgriffith@tribdem.com)

— Another national defense contractor is making plans to expand its Johnstown operation.

Owners of the Martin Baker America plant along Walters Avenue have received approval to expand the facility to make way for increased production.

The expansion could more than double the size of the current building, said James Vasilko, a partner with Lou Mihalko in East Hills Commons LLC developers.

“There definitely is going to be an addition,” Vasilko said. “They are still deciding how big it will be.”

Steady growth has driven the plans for expansion, General Manager Mike Santoro said from the Stonycreek Township plant. Sales have shot up from \$8 million to \$36 million over the past few years.

“I have parts at this facility coming out my ears,” Santoro said. “We have outgrown what we started with.”

Rep. Mark Critz will tour the plant today to be updated on the plans.

Martin Baker makes helicopter seats and ejection seats for military aircraft.

The Johnstown facility is located in the former Skateland building near the township’s border with Geistown Borough.

Vasilko and Mihalko are wrapping up paperwork to buy about 20 acres behind the plant and have received the township planning commission’s approval for a plant expansion.

“We just finalized on Friday,” Mihalko said.

The planning commission approved the subdivision plans last month, Chairman Joseph Brett said. Engineers with L. Robert Kimball had complete storm water management studies and other paperwork completed to address all the township’s concerns, Brett said.

Martin Baker has about 110 employees. Continued strong performance could add up to 40 jobs over the next five years, Santoro said.

In recent weeks, two other contractors brought positive employment news.

Concurrent Technology Corp. announced advances in a robotic paint stripping system for

aircraft. The work could expand operations through a five-year Air Force Research Laboratory contract worth up to \$49 million.

Electromet Corp. is moving forward with construction of a 15,700-square-foot manufacturing plant at the Johnstown Business Park in Richland Township.

The \$1.4 million project expands capacity from the 11,000-square-foot machine shop Electromet opened in 2007 at 124 Donald Lane in Richland.

The company makes metal panels and cabinets for electronic components used on military equipment.