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New jobs could be hard to find in wake of layoffs

CANYON COUNTY — Now what? That's the question local officials faced the day after Micron Technology announced an additional 2,000 layoffs by the end of August. The lost jobs will certainly affect people in Canyon County. And it will require a variety of efforts by local leaders to absorb the unemployment created by the job cuts. But Nampa Mayor Tom Dale said that even in a bad economy, there are opportunities for job expansion. "What we need to do is try and stay on the front lines looking for those (business) areas looking to expand," Dale said.

Northwest Nazarene University economics professor Peter Crabb painted a bleaker picture. "There's a tremendous amount of uncertainty both locally and nationally, which is negating any new investment, any expansion plans or any new hiring," Crabb said. "At least in the short term I don't see any chance for new job creation."

Dale said it's important to help established businesses in the area, such as Amalgamated Sugar and Sorrento Lactalis, thrive and grow. The mayor supports Sorrento Lactalis's plan to build a new whey tower, which he said would add 50 good jobs. He also said the company has plans for future expansion that would add 200 jobs. Companies like Amalgamated and Sorrento have a positive ripple effect on other areas of the economy, he said. Dale wants to see if Nampa can capitalize on the Obama administration's call for alternative energy sources. That could lead to more commerce in such businesses as solar panel manufacturing. "We are at the forefront of looking to attract those kinds of industries," Dale said.

Nampa Chamber of Commerce President Georgia Bowman-Gunstream said the city faces a challenge attracting businesses. "To be honest with you, I'm thinking a big old prayer is going to help," Bowman-Gunstream said about the Micron layoffs.

Economic viewpoints

Here's what folks had to say about the Micron layoffs and creating new jobs in the Treasure Valley:

"We're still waiting to get an accurate read on what this means (to the state budget). I think (the state) anticipated that we were going to shed some high tech jobs. Right now our focus is on helping the people (without jobs). We'll have time to worry about what this is going to do to the (state) budget soon enough."

— *Jon Hanian, Gov. Otter spokesman*

"The easy answer would be we're going to recruit some new businesses in here, but we have to be realistic ... How do you find something that even comes close to what (Micron employees have) been making?"

— *Georgia Bowman-Gunstream, Nampa Chamber of Commerce President*

"We've got some of the best electronics manufacturing expertise anywhere in the world. There's high tech manufacturing going on in a lot of areas that are still growing. One possibility is fabrication for alternative energy generation. I don't know how much of (the stimulus package) is going to be higher-end jobs as opposed to short-term kind of construction projects. We still don't know what if any job creation it's going to produce."

— *Sen. Curt McKenzie, R-Nampa*

"What we can do is shore up those (existing) industries and try to support them any way we can."

— *Tom Dale, Nampa Mayor*

Large Treasure Valley employers

Hospitals

- St. Luke's Regional Medical Center — 5,617 employees in the valley (full-time and part-time)
- Mercy Medical Center — 647 (full-time and part-time)
- Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center — 3,300 (full-time and part-time)
- West Valley Medical Center — 500 (full-time and part-time)

Canyon County

- Nampa School District — 1,500 full-time, 66 part-time
- Vallivue School District — 928 employees (full-time and part-time)
- Caldwell School District — 800 (full-time and part-time)
- Canyon County — 750 (full-time and part-time)
- City of Nampa — 558 full-time; 200 part-time
- Plexus Corporation — 475
- Amalgamated Sugar Co. LLC, Nampa — 450 (Nampa); 1,400 statewide

Largest employers statewide

- St. Luke's — 7,677 (full-time and part-time)
- Wal-Mart — 6,969 in all of Idaho (full-time and part-time)
- Micron — approx. 5,000 after recent layoffs factored in

*Figures not immediately available for J.R. Simplot Co.

Largest government employers

- Boise State University — 2,218 full-time (including 367 part-time)
- Department of Correction — 1,625 full-time (including 30 part-time)
- Department of Health and Welfare — 3,332 full-time (including 385 part-time)
- Idaho State University — 1,857 (including 396 part-time)
- Idaho Transportation Department — 1,953 (including 177 part-time)
- University of Idaho — 3,240 (including 946 part-time)

* Overall, the state of Idaho employs 25,724 as of last month, according to the Idaho Controller's Office.