

Show us the money!

County tries to regain \$200,000 grant intended for Banks Bros.

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Shenandoah County Economic Development director Rick Moorefield wants to know what happened to the incentive grant promised to Banks Brothers Manufacturing.

When the manufacturing company announced its pending arrival in December 1996, former Gov. George Allen was on hand to promise a \$200,000 incentive grant from the Virginia Department of Economic Development.

But the grant did not come with the keys to the plant.

When Banks Brothers purchased the 300,000-square foot textile plant in Woodstock, they were promised the funds - if they upheld their end of the bargain.

That included Banks' promise of employment for 100 people prior to receiving the first \$100,000 with the additional \$100,000 awarded when 100 more employees were secured.

Since their arrival in Woodstock in 1996, Banks Brothers has hired eight to 10 employees and presently does not indicate additional employment efforts, said Moorefield.

He recently visited the Woodstock site

where rubber is covered with plastic in the development of garden and knee cushions. He said only one portion of the building is being utilized.

He feels the business is content in its home in Woodstock but does not look to see it employ an additional 90 people.

So, where's the money?

Moorefield said usually the grants are held under a 12-month time frame by state economic development offices. Banks Brothers has obviously failed to meet that stipulation.

"Banks Brothers was never awarded any of that money," said Moorefield.

He wants to know where the money is now and if the county can be reassigned the grant as an incentive toward another industrial development site.

AmeriCold Logistics, the company which has shown definite - though unwritten - interest in the North Shenandoah Industrial Park, has been promised one \$200,000 grant, awarded when they meet the same contingencies of employment.

Moorefield said he was curious to see if they could be awarded another grant - possibly the former Banks Brothers grant - in addition to the already stated grant.

If not, Moorefield said the grant could be

promised to another company. Presently, he does not know where the \$200,000 grant is being held - whether it is in the state's general fund or if it has been reabsorbed and reallocated to another industry.

Moorefield said even though its only \$200,000, the grant is an encouragement to business, allowing them to see a financial return earlier in their development. It encourages further employment and development.

The county does not benefit - except in employment and community returns - as it is simply a conduit for the state funds, he said.