



# The Chanute Tribune

50¢  
10 pages  
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Established  
1892

## PC Boards to become Sierra Midwest, Inc.

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Chanute-based PC Boards will soon have a new name but will feature the same faces and new faces. The company was recently purchased by Sierra Proto Express, Sunnyvale, Calif.

PC Boards attracted the attention of Sierra Proto Express, a quick-turn printed circuit board producer, about four months ago. There will be few changes in existing personnel, according to Dennis Steinman, owner of PC Boards, but the addition of 90 new jobs will occur over the next year or so, and general manager Joe Baggett will be there to oversee the expansion.

"PC Boards has everything we need to actualize our future growth plans," said Ken Bahl, president of Sierra Proto Express, in a press release issued to media. "They represent a perfect complement to what we do in Sunnyvale. Where we handle the high-technology,

small-volume quick turn products, PC Boards does the mid-volume, mid-technology product. This combined with the PC Boards offshore alliances will allow us to provide our customers with a complete PCB solution."

Steinman launched PC Boards in 1980 at 210 W. Main Street, Chanute. In 1998, Steinman moved his company and its 30 employees to its current location on South Santa Fe. It has steadily grown to 60 employees and now builds circuit boards for everything from Cessna jets to complex medical equipment.

"I'd like to thank the community for a lot of years of success," Steinman said. "We've worked over the years with Chanute and the state on various funding efforts. I'd like to thank all the employees who have been involved over the years to make the business a success.

"I believe that this is a very good

opportunity for all the employees and the city for the potential employee increase, and also for Mr. Bahl and Sierra Proto Express and all his team."

Steinman said he began looking for another company to help him take PC Boards to the next level. Working through Paul Emello, a consultant hired by Sierra Proto Express to scout additions to the company, Steinman and Bahl made a connection and a deal was struck. The new company will be named Sierra Midwest, Inc., and will keep its current address.

Emello said he will now be busy trying to consolidate several Sierra Proto Express operations into the new Sierra Midwest facility. One operation is in the process of transferring its work from the east coast to Chanute; another similar deal is in the works.

Sierra Midwest will need more people to cover the increased workload,

people who will be pulled from the Chanute area.

The acquisition is good news in an industry that, according to Emello and Steinman, is shrinking. Production is based on area, Steinman said. As technology gets smaller, and the size of circuit boards is reduced, there is lower demand from companies such as PC Boards, but an increased demand for higher skilled laborers because of the complexity of the smaller boards.

Talks are in the works with Neosho County Community College to decide if the college offers the training that will be required for employees of Sierra Midwest. Officials at NCCC were unavailable for comment at press time.

At their next meeting, Chanute City Commissioners will have before them a request for a loan from the Industrial Fund to be made to complete the deal. Details are still being hammered out

and a final number is not available at this time, but it will be a straight, low-interest loan.

In addition, the city will help the company with recommendations to increase its energy efficiency.

"We're going to work with (Sierra Midwest) as we do all our existing businesses on future expansions," said Brad Eilts, assistant city manager. "The net benefit will be positive for the community with the number and quality of jobs."

"Chanute is a breath of fresh air," said Emello. "They've been wonderful to work with. It's one of the things that convinced us we wanted to work here."

Papers are set to be signed on April 18.

Sierra Proto Express is one of the industry's fastest growing PCB fabrication companies with sales expected to exceed \$40 million this year.