

Fuel-cell company eyes production space in Charlotte region as it takes new tech to market

An Atlanta-area company is searching Rowan County for a building to temporarily house a fuel-cell manufacturing center as it takes the new technology to market.

FCET Inc.'s production site could grow to employ 200 within two years if all goes as planned, says Landis resident Paul Fisher, vice president of manufacturing and market and chairman of the FCET board of directors.

The new type of fuel cell produces electricity from hydrogen without carbon emissions, Fisher says. The FCET fuel cell also operates at much lower temperatures than current designs, he adds.

"They can really be used in any way you want to produce electricity," Fisher says. For example, a FCET fuel cell could be used to power a cell tower without being hooked up to the electric grid.

David Doctor, CEO of E4 Carolinas, likes what he sees in FCET's technology.

"It definitely is marketable," Doctor says. FCET is a member of E4 Carolinas.

Robert Van Geons, executive director of Salisbury-Rowan County Economic Development Commission, says he's helping FCET find a building in Rowan County.

"It's all early stage discussion, but we've been working with them," Van Geons says.

FCET, short for Fuel Cell Enabling Technologies, has already cast a wide net for manufacturing sites around the Carolinas. Executives have considered buildings in Charlotte, Mooresville, Concord, along with Greenville and Columbia, S.C.

Fisher is looking for an existing building of about 15,000 to 20,000 square feet for the manufacturing



Mikhail Pozvonkov, FCET executive vice president and chief scientist, is shown here with his namesake PozCell fuel cell.

center. He says FCET needs a production site for making a larger number of the fuel cells than can be completed in the laboratory at the Atlanta-area headquarters.

"It take a lot of time to do the manufacturing by hand" in the Atlanta area, he says. "We need to make enough of those to put multiple cells together."

Fisher expects FCET to pick a Rowan County building by the end of the year.

Fisher and FCET executives are conducting demonstration of the fuel cells in hopes of raising \$5 million to take the cells into production. Fisher thinks \$1.5 million to \$2 million in capital will push the company into moving production to Rowan County.

"First we have to get the money,"

Fisher says. So far, the executives and their families and friends have financed FCET, he says.

The next demonstration is scheduled for Thursday at Rowan Cabarrus Community College in Salisbury. Fisher expects a technician will show how the fuel cell will produce electricity from hydrogen at the demonstration.

The fuel cell is called the PozCell, named for Russian native Mikhail Pozvonkov, who is FCET executive vice president and chief scientist. It's Pozvonkov's invention and improvements to the fuel cell that are propelling the company, Fisher says.

Pozvonkov, a former Siemens employee in Atlanta, is a naturalized U.S. citizen.

FCET is based in Alpharetta, Ga., outside of Atlanta, where Pozvonkov and CEO Mark Deininger work. The company has about 15,000 square feet of flex space in an office park.

Fisher served as vice president of German robotics company Hedrich in Huntersville before departing to work for another robotics company in Ohio.

He eventually moved back to Landis and into the home that his father built on family land in Rowan County.

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