Ray Hagerman (Executive Director Muhlenberg Alliance for Progress)

Thank you for joining us in this indoor venue. This is Paradise Park, but we weren't thinking this Paradise Park, but no, this is a wonderful day. We're all glad that we're here.

There are many years of team effort that got us where we are today, but here we are. So we want to celebrate today a couple of things. First of which we want to welcome BE&E and its CEO, Dane Floyd, to their new home that will be coming here in about 10 or 11 months.

We're looking forward to that. We're looking forward to having a bright future together with BE&E. Also, we want to note that this is the very first project that we have at Paradise Park.

We are formally open for business with this project, and as many of you know, Paradise Park is a five-county partnership between Muhlenberg County, Davis, Ohio, Hopkins and McLean Counties. And toward that end, I kind of want to recognize several elected officials that are with us today. I know Rebecca Raymer, our state representative, is with us today.

I want to also recognize all of our magistrates for Muhlenberg County, Andrew Bullock, Malcolm West, Jeff Vincent, Darren Benton, and Keith Phillips. Also the judges that are here in attendance with us from Davis County. We have with us Charlie Caslin, and we also have Jack Whitfield Jr. from Hopkins County.

We really appreciate the input from McLean County's Judge Curtis Dame and then also Judge Johnson from Ohio County, but they're not with us here today. If I do miss somebody who is an elected official, I apologize. I know that Mayor Eddie DeArmond from Greenville is here with us, Tony Armour from Central City is also on our board, but I want to recognize the fact that we have so many of our board of directors for Muhlenberg County Economic Growth Alliance with Todd Cartwright, our board chair, who's with us.

Todd's been instrumental in getting so much work done on this project and others and been such a great personal help to me. And also the Paradise Park, chaired by Tommy Caskey. Many of you board members are here today as well, and we appreciate you guys being a part of this with us.

Again, thank you to my board at Muhlenberg Economic Growth Alliance, or MEGA as we call it, and we are doing a MEGA site. So, see what I did there. We certainly want to welcome the team from BE&E.

Everybody who's part of the BE&E team, you're the reason that we're here.

So, I'd like for you guys to stand if you possibly could. Everybody who's with BE&E, please stand up. And then our contractor, Force Construction, I know has a team of three or four people here.

But none of this would have been possible as far as the heavy lifting on this project if it hadn't been for this next gentleman. He was with me every step of the way and helped solve problems, as he does every single day of his life, and really was there step by step with us on this project. I want to welcome to the podium Judge Mac McGee.

Mack McGehee (Muhlenberg County Judge Executive)

Welcome everybody here today. I welcome the ones that's not from Muhlenberg County here, and I welcome our constituents here in Muhlenberg County coming out today and celebrating with us.

This has been a long-awaited great day for all those that have been involved in the development of Paradise Regional Industrial Park. The five counties that's involved and plus us here locally always looking for something to happen. The manufacturing plant is the first, hopefully, of many industrial projects coming to the park.

B&E is a great company who's providing new manufacturing jobs that will impact our region, its economy, for many years to come. I want to thank both our state and federal legislators for being here today, representatives of, and their support for Paradise Regional Industrial Park over the years. I personally want to thank Governor Beshear and his team for being here today to celebrate with us, and the Kentucky Economic Development Cabinet for their support in bringing this to Muhlenberg County.

I also want to commend MEGA, the MEGA board, and its director, Ray Hagelman. To admit to Ray, he's so good at working with and the things that we've gotten to work together on. I just commend him and his staff for a job well done.

Now I'd like to introduce someone who's a friend of local government. Someone who you can call to help in time of natural disaster, and he'll show up. A great advocate of economic development who does what it takes to get the job done.

I'd like to introduce the governor of this great Commonwealth of Kentucky, our friend Governor Andy Beshear.

Andy Beshear (Governor, Commonwealth of Kentucky)

Thank you. Well good afternoon, everyone and what a great day for Muhlenberg County.

What a great day for Western Kentucky. What a great day for Paradise Regional Industrial Park that now has its first tenant. We're going to build quickly to make sure they're not lonely for long.

I want to thank the judge for his leadership. I want to thank Ray for doing such a great job. It seems like we come back over and repeatedly for great announcements in Muhlenberg County and in Western Kentucky.

I want to take a minute just to thank the judges from the other counties that are here. We are seeing more cooperation. We are seeing more working together between our counties and local governments than I've ever seen in my lifetime.

And companies are noticing. It's giving us an advantage. By showing everybody that we are all in this together, they see an expanded region for their workforce.

They see a better likelihood of getting their needs met. You are all helping to drive the economy in Kentucky and I'm really proud of how you do it together. Today, we're celebrating Biomass Engineering and Equipment, or BE&E, and how it is adding to our red-hot manufacturing economy in Kentucky.

Soon, our incredible Kentucky workers are going to be making BE&E's bulk handling equipment for a variety of sectors including agriculture, forest products, wood pellets, lumber, recycling and more. We're here today to celebrate BE&E's groundbreaking on the company's new state-of-the-art manufacturing facility. The company is investing more than $20 million in the county and that deserves a round of applause.

But that's not the best part. The best part is they are creating 250 great Western Kentucky jobs. We know that Kentucky is known around the world for our horses, our bourbon, and our unmatched hospitality.

But right now, we're welcoming more and more people to our new Kentucky home where the pace of business is fast, but the pace of life is just right. And a big part of that is our growing reputation as a global shipping and logistics hub, our long-time auto manufacturing base, and especially our advanced manufacturing capabilities exemplified by a company like BE&E. Since 2021, we have now brought in over $27.5 billion of new investment in Kentucky manufacturing.

Those have created 35,000 new jobs for our people all over the Commonwealth. So, BE&E might be the first tenant in paradise, but you're in very good company here in the commonwealth. This new project represents a significant commitment by this company and their leadership, as well as a huge investment in the commonwealth and our Kentucky families.

But again, one of the most important things that's happening today is their establishing themselves as their first business on the 600-acre Paradise Industrial Park. I want to thank the Cabinet for Economic Development for an important program that has invested in that park and other places across the commonwealth to get them ready so that we can tell a business like this that we can get them up and going faster than any other state. And I want to thank Representative Raymer and the General Assembly for repeatedly funding that program to make sure that we have an advantage on any and every other state.

Thank you. I know the industrial park is a culmination of years of hard work by many leaders like Tommy Caskey and Peggy Williams, just to name a few. It's also in part because of that program I mentioned.

It's called the KPDI program. This isn't the only investment in this area from that program, and we've got to keep it going. When it comes to site development and speed to market, Kentucky is second to none.

It's why over and over and over we are winning, and we are climbing all of those rankings we've always wanted to be in for the past five years straight. Kentucky has been in the top five in the country in economic development. We've had two of our three best years for economic development in our history.

We've broken our record for private sector investment, now over $35 billion invested in us and our families. We've created a record 61,000 new jobs. We've broken our exports record twice each in the past years.

We got to announce this last week that we just broke our tourism record for the third straight year in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Let's thank everybody who works in tourism. And right now we're able to offer a workforce second to none.

Last month we were able to officially report that we have the most people ever working in Kentucky, the most jobs ever filled, and the largest workforce in our history. Things are looking up. They're looking up for Muhlenberg County in western Kentucky.

They're looking up for the entire Commonwealth of Kentucky. And I think they're looking up because of what I talked about earlier. We're working together.

We realize that a job isn't red or blue, a new bridge isn't Democrat or Republican, and that we govern best when we don't try to move to the right or the left. We just move forward for every single Kentucky family. That is the type of welcoming environment where a business knows that they can succeed and that they know that we can be pro-job because pro-job means more jobs.

It means better wages, having just had the best three-year average for wages in Kentucky's history. Our goal is to make sure that every single family thrives and that we push out any division in our state and we just work together for the betterment of everyone. Now, put simply, we're not looking at the same Kentucky anymore.

That's why we're talking about that new Kentucky home. And BE&E is making Muhlenberg County and Paradise Industrial Regional Park its new Kentucky home. I'm excited today for this opportunity and for the jobs.

I'm excited because Mark Pogue has called me once a week, every week, until we announce something in this park. Mark, thank you for all of you. So, more things are being made here.

We're seeing new industries and amazing job growth. We're attracting new talent, and I hope you feel it. It's coming to every region.

That’s our goal, working with incredible local leadership, magistrates, city councils, and others, because you know the amazing capabilities that you have. And our job in the state is just to do our part to help achieve that potential. With great team Kentucky partners like everyone here, and I do mean everyone, because economic development is a team sport.

It is from the folks that show the property to the construction crews that are going to come in and build it, and build it fast, right? To the people that smile at someone that they don't know are in their community. It is a community-wide win. It's a community-wide effort, and everybody in this room ought to feel proud of what's being announced here today.

It is a really good time to be a Kentuckian. First time in my life where I know that the rest of the country is looking up to us instead of looking down on us. It's great to be a leader, and to have a company like BE&E, Choose Us, Choose You, means that we are doing a lot of good things.

So remember, life's short, keep doing good things, and be kind to each other. And to Dane, when you invest $20 million, when you create 250 new jobs, we bring you a gift. We do that just so the company knows, if they expand, they get another gift too.

Dane Floyd (President Floyd Holding, BE&E, VibraPro, and Greenville Manufacturing.)

Thank you all very much. Thank you all. I'm really honored and humbled to think that I just got to step in at the right time.

After all the years of work, I heard someone say today that the park property was bought in 2002. That is quite a testimony to a community that wants to work tirelessly, and never lost confidence that one day, the right person, the right combination, the right skill sets would all come together, and I just got to be the lucky guy. I feel like I won the lottery.

And I didn't buy a ticket for 20 years. It's incredible. Thank you all so much, because I do know exactly what the governor said.

This takes an incredible amount of people, and time, and dedication, and frustration, and a lot of missteps along the way. And when it finally comes together, I'm just very, very happy for this community and for the workers that are going to benefit from this. We have a bright future.

There is so much going on in our sectors that we're in, and we continue to diversify and grow and find other areas where we can participate. And this is going to be absolutely state-of-the-art. This is going to be something that the industries we serve are going to come and look at and really see that this takes us to a new level of capability for them.

It gives them a lot of confidence to invest in purchases from us, which means we continue to invest in our workers. It's also very interesting and exciting to hear about what's going on beside us in the sense of things like the training programs and the training center that's coming, and the activities of the local community college. And I got to tour the high school and see the capabilities there to train workers for the future.

This is critical for us as business leaders. This is what we're looking for. We're not immune to those same economic issues that affect every other company, but we're always – we have – in manufacturing, we always must take a bit longer view.

It takes a lot of years to train up some of the skill levels that we need to be successful, so we're always taking a longer view. And when we see those kind of training programs, those are critically important to us and help us make the right decision. Again, thank you, Governor.

I appreciate that you would take the time to support this community this way by visiting today. And I'm very thankful to all of you. So many people have come up to me and – congratulations and thank you, thank you, thank you.

Please, I just – I say again, I just got lucky. I came to a community that needed what we had to offer. And people like Ray and Matt, when I first came here, they reached out and they said, “What do you need? “And it was just refreshing to come to this place.

And I couldn't be happier for the workers and for this community. I hope that it continues to work together. I hope to bring more business.

And anytime you need – you need an extra voice, just come knock on my door. I'm going to be happy to tell them of the great experience I had, hoping that they can have the same kind of experience. And let's fill that park up. It's only 600, eh? Let's go do it.

Ray Hagerman (Executive Director Muhlenberg Alliance for Progress)

Thank you, Dane. And Dane hit on a couple of things, and so did Governor Beshear, that talked about what really enabled things to happen.

And one of the things that stuck in my mind about when Judge McGee and I first met Dane was he said, "You know what I like about this place is I've got people in other places that know how to put metal together, but here you guys know how to weld. So, we – he did visit all those different places and came away understanding that this was a community that has good, strong work ethic. It has good, strong skill sets.

And he got lucky enough and we got lucky enough to have a great partnership. And also, in addition to our great workforce, having the Kentucky Product Development Initiative to enable us to develop Paradise Park and to help incentivize the package that we were able to present to Dane enabled us to beat Mississippi and Arkansas in something other than basketball. So, as we close, I just want to thank several people.

Mark Pogue, whose guys put the tent up, you know, for no good reason obviously, but put the tent up for us, organized so many things, helped us get on the Governor's schedule. And Mark, we appreciate all that you do for the organization. I want to thank Michael and Casey Davis of Star 107.3, who really made everything happen with the audiovisual at the last minute when we had to change venues, and Joe Hudson here from the Merle Travis Center.

Again, the Governor talked about Peggy Williams and Tommy Caskey and the leadership that they provided for so many years, but there were a few other folks like Mike Mercer and Laney Gardner and Gary Carver and Len Cisney and Gary Jones that provided a lot of strong work for a lot of years waiting for a day like this to happen. And I would be remiss if I didn't talk a little about how incredibly fortunate that we are to have Alyssa Manning and the Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation in our community. And last, and certainly not least, Karen Sensen and Katherine Williamson, our staff members who always make everything happen, always do heavy lifting and the work, and make a lot of my harebrained ideas come to pass.

So, I really appreciate all of that. Please, everyone, get some refreshments as you leave, and let's enjoy. And for sure, get one of the souvenirs BE&E cookies.

You can eat it if you want or keep it. That's what I'm doing. But other than that, we're going to have a few pictures outside, since we will be out in some grass and it at least looks like we're outside doing groundbreaking.

But I'd like to, if the Governor still has time to do it, and Dane, obviously, Judge McGee, Judge Whitfield, Judge Caslin, Todd, and Tommy, and Representative Raymer, please. And

we'd also like to invite, maybe you guys choose, Mick, Karen, Alan, TJ, it doesn't matter, whoever you guys want, they are part of the first photo. And then we'll follow it up with our board at MEGA, then the Paradise Park board, the forest team, and then last, but certainly most importantly, the team from BE&E.

So, if we kind of go in that order, it'll enable the Governor to kind of move and shake and go do what he does best, which is be a friend to all of us in Kentucky, and we look forward to many more of these. We want you to get a permanent seat up there, Governor. All right.

Thank you very much, y'all, and let's celebrate a great day.