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American Greetings Corp. to keep its corporate headquarters in Ohio

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American Greetings Corp. has ended more than a year of speculation about whether it would move out of state, but it has yet to say where it will locate its corporate headquarters.

At an 11 a.m. news conference featuring American Greetings CEO Zev Weiss and Ohio Gov. John Kasich, the company indicated that it won't be heading to Illinois. That's thanks in part to the passage last week by the state Legislature of House Bill 58, which will provide the company with a tax break.

The measure allows a company that employs 1,000 or more in Ohio and makes a capital investment of at least \$25 million in a site during three consecutive calendar years to claim the credit based on the state income tax its employees pay. It also requires that the business receive a written offer in 2010 of financial incentives from another state that the Ohio director of development determines to be sufficient for the company to leave Ohio.

Two potential headquarters locations in the Chicago area now are out. Still unknown, though, is which of five local locations will win the prized headquarters. Besides the Cleveland suburb of Brooklyn, which has been its home for 50 years, American Greetings has been considering locations in Beachwood, Brecksville, Independence and Westlake.

Mr. Weiss said at today's news conference that local incentives will play a part in the company's decision on a Northeast Ohio site, as will what he called "cultural" factors, such as the location's ability to help American Greetings attract the artistic talent it needs.

Gov. Kasich hailed House Bill 58 as a key factor in keeping American Greetings in the state, noting that Ohio now is "on offense" in working to attract and retain companies.

It was January of last year when American Greetings first revealed that it had retained an outside real estate consultant to conduct a search of potential options to Brooklyn. A company spokesman said at the time that American Greetings had told the 2,000 employees at its headquarters it wanted to see "what was available" beyond Brooklyn, which had raised its city income tax to 2.5% from 2% the previous summer.

Two American Greetings executives heavily involved in the site search emphasized to *Crain's* last November the desire to establish a new headquarters that is amenable to creativity but is competitive on a cost basis. They revealed that an important part of the company's internal discussions revolved around creating a headquarters that could attract creative personnel, from artists and writers to technical types.

"We currently have one of the largest creative studios in the country here," Brian McGrath, American Greetings senior vice president of human resources, said at the time. "We need to have a facility that creates a creative environment for new and existing employees."

Also driving the company's search was an overabundance of space at its Brooklyn headquarters, which totals 1.2 million square feet.

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