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Norfolk-based ship agency T. Parker Host celebrates move into new offices

By Robert McCabe
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Courtesy of T. Parker Host

Among other amenities at the company's new Norfolk headquarters: imported teak, adorned with images from nautical maps, in the lobby.



Courtesy of T. Parker Host

The employee break room at T. Parker Host's new headquarters in downtown Norfolk features glass work by a local artist and a cut-granite countertop.



Courtesy of T. Parker Host

A cut-granite tabletop serves as the break room's centerpiece.



Courtesy of T. Parker Host

This chart room is among the meeting places at T. Parker Host's new headquarters, on the 16th floor of the SunTrust Building in downtown Norfolk.



Courtesy of T. Parker Host

The Norfolk-based ship agency's new headquarters includes this board room.



Courtesy of T. Parker Host

T. Parker Host celebrates the grand opening of its new headquarters in the SunTrust Building on June 23.

NORFOLK

T. Parker Host Inc., a ship agency that essentially serves as a kind of concierge for vessels of all kinds calling on ports along the East and Gulf coasts, has called Hampton Roads home since 1923, when it was founded.

While based in Newport News, it always maintained an office in Norfolk and moved its headquarters there in 1983.

It recently celebrated moving into a new home at 150 W. Main St., an address otherwise known as the SunTrust Building. It overlooks Nauticus and the battleship Wisconsin.

At its previous location on Plume Street in Norfolk, the company's operations were spread out on three floors, with storage on a fourth.

Its new home will let its more than 70 employees work on a single floor with about 21,000 square feet – roughly 5,000 more than it had before. The hope is that it will enable better and easier communication.

The space offers panoramic views of the port and downtown Norfolk, along with other amenities. The walls around the elevators are decorated with imported teak hardwood, inset with images from nautical charts. The employee break room is centered by a cut-granite slab counter and boasts decorative glasswork by a local artist.

Employees can relax in another room in what is essentially a massage chair.

How can a company that has a stake in the declining coal business afford such digs?

"It's all part of the rent," Host said. While he declined to say how much it all cost, Host said the expense is built into its 10-year lease.

Host said the company's recent growth has been driven largely by its operations along the Gulf of Mexico, in places such as Houston; New Orleans; Mobile, Ala.; and Beaumont and Corpus Christi, Texas.

Grain, bauxite, aluminum and wood pellets are the kinds of commodities the company is helping move.

The company's somewhat opulent office isn't what Host has been accustomed to in his 39-year career, he said.

But if you want to attract and retain a talented pool of workers in today's market, that's what it takes, he said.