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# LOCAL NEWS

# County discusses RECAP project

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

The Koochiching County Board Tuesday discussed citizen backlash to the potential location of a waste-to-energy conversion project.

The Renewable Energy Clean Air Project would take solid waste and covert it via plasma gasification to a usable form of energy like electricity or biofuel. The site being opposed is on County Highway 155 south of Second Creek.

The county board accepted a petition from Ranier residents David Stavseth and Jeff Oveson containing the signatures of Ranier residents for consideration in determining a site for the project. They canvassed Ranier proper, the French Addition section, and parts of Alberta Park, Oveson said, and they were met with overwhelming support.

"One hundred percent of the homes that we canvassed were not only willing to sign, most of them were waiting for us and wanting us to get there so they could sign the petition," Oveson said. "No one turned us away."

The petitioners are not opposed to the project itself, Stavseth said, they just don't want the facility located near Second Creek and the homes in that area.

"We're just against the location, having a garbage waste facility that close to the residential area," he said. "We're not opposed to it, just relocate it."

Commissioner Rob Ecklund is the project leader, and he addressed some of the concerns weighed by Oveson and Stavseth. The waste would be contained within the facility, he said, so all the odor would be contained within the building. The site in question is also zoned for industrial use, he said, so there will probably be some type of industrial facility located there.

"It's got the advantages of having rail, truck transportation, and all the utilities are virtually to the site right now; the gas line runs by it, water and sewer are there," he said.

If the project were harmful to the environment, Ecklund said he wouldn't support it.

"I would not support something that I feel would be a detriment to our environment," he said. "All the vendors that are working on this project are top-of-the-line waste energy vendors, they know how to work these projects."

The technology used by the facility would also meet Class 1 air emissions standards required by national parks, Ecklund said, so the facility wouldn't be an issue for Voyaguers National Park.

With the effects of Boise Inc. laying off 265 employees at the International Falls mill still being felt by the community, Ecklund said this project would provide some relief.

"This is a potential for 20-plus good-paying jobs, not counting the transportation jobs that would be associated with it" he said.

One of the potential project sites is by the county's transfer site on Highway 11-71, and Commissioner Wade Pavleck said he remembered the issues the county went through when they were siting that project. In the end, he said, they located that project in an acceptable location for everyone.

One option the county has overlooked before now, Pavleck said, is sitting down with the city of Ranier and discussing the project location.

"Cities do have, from my recollection, some legal authority to have input on any type of facility that's going in close to their borders, even if it's in another municipality," he said. "They need to brought into this project."

An issue with wetlands has downgraded the transfer site as a potential location for the RECAP project, Commissioner Brian McBride said. Locating the project within Boise Inc.'s facility was also turned down as an option, Pavleck said. Because of this, the Second Creek location is the most desirable potential location for this project, Ecklund said.

"This is the No. 1 potential location, and it's potential because of logistics, that's why it's looked at," he said. "It's on the truck route, it's on a truck corridor."

Pavleck visited and toured another plasma gasification waste-to-energy site in Japan, and he said there weren't any odor issues there. It was located downtown in a small community, he said, and no one seemed to have an issue with it. The Japanese facility was built in 2000, he said, so the facility here would have even newer technology behind it.

Koochiching Economic Development Authority Director Paul Nevanen attended the meeting, and said there's a more local example of a waste facility being located in a highly populated area. The Hennepin Energy Recovery Center, in downtown Minneapolis next to Target Field, incinerates 1,200 tons of waste per day, Nevanen said. While the county doesn't want a facility like that here, he said it shows how the impact of a facility like RECAP can be minimized.

Meanwhile, Ecklund encouraged area residents to attend a meeting at 5:30 p.m. Dec. 12 at the AmericInn where developers associated with the project will be available to answer questions and dispel rumors, Ecklund said.

With a project like this, it's important to attend the meetings and get the facts straight, Nevanen said.

"Let's get the facts, please," he said. "Let's not be intellectually lazy and just throw things out there because that feeds into this. Let's let the process work itself out. Ask the right questions, and get the right answers."

# Rick Nolan sponsors port bill

## Bill would allow public-private partnerships to construct land port of entries

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

8th District Congressman Rick Nolan has joined other border representatives to cosponsor a bill that would allow partnerships between the public and private sectors to construct new land port of entries.

The Cross-Border Trade Enhancement Act, H.R. 1108 would direct the General Services Administration to establish procedures for evaluating proposals submitted by people to enter into cost-sharing or reimbursement agreements with the GSA or the construction or maintenance of infrastructure at land border port of entries, and to provide GSA an unconditional gift of property for use in the construction or maintenance of such infrastructure.

Nolan said he added his name to the bill to allow border communities like International Falls to enter into public-private partnerships with the federal government to help spur economic activity. "Among other things, this bill would help International Falls build a new land port of entry to encourage commerce with Canada," he wrote in a newsletter.

The bill was introduced by U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Texas, in response to increasing fiscal constraints in Washington. The bill has been pushed by border trade communities, which have explored ideas for alternative funding for ports of entry improvements to keep bridges open and expand development to ensure safer and more efficient travel and commerce.

A plan to reconstruct the International Falls port-of-entry has been shelved because Congress has indicated it will not fund such projects this year.

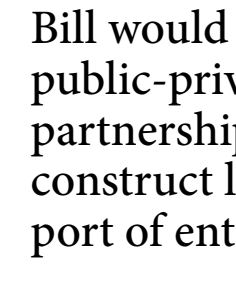
International Falls City Council and the Koochiching County Board have sent letters to federal lawmakers representing Borderland urging their support of the bill.

City officials have said while federal funding for construction of a new land port of entry in International Falls is not likely in the near future, a change in the law to allow for public-private partnerships would help construction of the proposed new facility move forward more quickly.

The existing port of entry facility was constructed in 1993. Since then, the former U.S. Customs Service and Immigration and Naturalization Service has been blended into the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The mission of managing the border has also changed.

GSA officials have said the existing facilities are undersized and obsolete, and consequently incapable of allowing the federal agencies assigned to it to fulfill their respective missions. GSA is an independent agency of the United States government, established in 1949 to help manage and support the basic functions of federal agencies. A GSA report also said the existing land port of entry suffers from a variety of basic deficiencies that inhibit the ability of the CBP and other agencies to provide safe and efficient processing of vehicle and pedestrian traffic, according to GSA documents.

In 2009, GSA issued a draft feasibility study examining the conditions of the existing port and the existing and future needs of the CBP and other inspection agencies. After consideration of comments received on a draft Environmental Impact Study, the GSA identified Alternative 10 as best to satisfy the proposed action's purpose and needs with the least impact on the human and natural environment.



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Randy Noojin – One-Man Show
November 21 ..... Top the Tater Dinner – 5:00 – 6:30 pm
Sponsor – Super One/The Hideaway
November 21 ..... Border Concert Association – 7:30 pm
"Vocaldente"
November 25 ..... Library Documentary Movie Night – 6:30 pm
"We Are Not Ghosts" (FREE)
November 28/29 ..... Backus Office and Backus Kids Club Closed
November 30 ..... Holiday Shopping and Craft Festival – 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Lunch Served – 11:00 am – 2:00 pm
December 6 ..... Logging Camp Christmas
Koochiching Aging Options Fundraiser
December 7 ..... Family Christmas Concert with Icebox 4
4:00 - 7:00 pm, Backus Auditorium

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