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## **More information about proposed facility to come before county board**

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**By Laurel Beager, Senior Writer, [laurel1@dailyjournal-ifalls.com](mailto:laurel1@dailyjournal-ifalls.com)**

Koochiching County commissioners Tuesday are expected to consider moving forward with a proposal that would study the feasibility of a plasma gasification facility that would be fueled with garbage.

The county board is scheduled to hear more about the project, and possibility act on a letter of intent, at 11 a.m. Tuesday in the courthouse boardroom.

The county board meeting is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m.

The board has heard preliminary information about the proposed project, but Tuesday's meeting is expected to provide more information about the plan to construct the gasification facility in the county.

Called International Falls Renewable Energy Clean Air Project, or RECAP, the facility would bring together a partnership to develop solution to disposing of municipal solid waste while at the same time providing heat and power. The plant would also use biomass from local wood waste streams and other locally grown and harvested biomass. It would not include standing timber.

The technology involves a heat and power plant powered by plasma gasification. The system could provide electricity, heat, steam and hot water to create other value-added products, such as insulation and tiles.

The project would produce raw materials locally, convert them to manufactured products and keep the money generated from sales within the local area and economy. It would be located in International Falls on Koochiching County land.

Koochiching County Board Chairman Mike Hanson said the proposal merits further consideration.

"Right now, it's the right thing to do," Hanson said this morning. "This has the potential to be a big help to Koochiching County and the environment."

Environmentally, burying garbage in a landfill is not a good way of handling the

communities waste, said Hanson.

Now, Koochiching County pays \$1 million to dispose of its solid waste. The garbage generated here is trucked to a landfill in Kittson County.

"We can't keep putting garbage in the ground," he said. "We've been searching for a long time to find a better way that's good for the environment, while at the same time reducing the economic drain."

Tuesday's meeting will bring together state, federal and private representatives to discuss the viability of the project with commissioners.

"This is a process that is proven to be very environmentally friendly," Hanson said. "It appears it has the potential, and I want to stress the word potential, to solve a lot of problems and enhance our area."

A question that needs to be answered yet is whether the area can provide enough fuel for the proposed facility. He said a number of people have been involved in preliminary discussions on the proposal including representatives from Minnesota Power, Boise Paper Solutions, the city of Fort Frances, private developers and financial consultants.

"I don't want to lead anybody on, but this appears to have wonderful potential and there is no opportunity like now," he said.

The project would involve participation from the county, Laurentian Resource Conservation and Development Council, Distributed Generation Solutions, Korridor Capital Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Cloquet; Rainy River Community College, International Falls; University of Minnesota Extension Service; University of Minnesota-Duluth; Minnesota Department of Natural Resources- Forestry Division; Natural Resources Conservation Service; USDA Forest Service; Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; Minnesota Power; St. Louis County Solid Waste Department; US Environmental Protection Agency; the National Renewable Energy Laboratory; US Department of Energy; Minnesota Agroforestry Cooperative; and Onanegozie and WESMIN RC&D Councils.

In other business Tuesday, the board is scheduled to:

- \* Approve taxing district levies for 2006 for Fire Districts 1, 2, 4, 5 and subordinate districts of the Littlefork Ambulance, Rainy River First Responders and Northome First Responders.

- \* Handle several issues at 9:55 involving the Jackfish Bay sewer extension project. Among the issues on the agenda are to schedule a hearing and prepare notice for assessment roll modifications; Authorize condemnation of four properties for the sewer project; Hear about a survey of property owners in the project site for low income

abatement assistance interest.

- \* Handle Community Service business at 10:35 a.m.
- \* Hear public comment at 11:45 a.m.
- \* Meet in closed session to discuss a lawsuit by Florence Hervey, county jail administrator, against the county, sheriff and undersheriff.

## **About the project**

### **Information about RECAP --**

Renewable Energy Clean Air Project:

\* **WHY INTERNATIONAL FALLS?** This project is designed to fit small and rural towns in the United States. It will provide jobs, economic development, education and some level of energy security. This project is scalable and fits the available feed stock supplies in most communities.

With small town USA losing most of its young folks to the larger metropolitan areas, rural America needs revitalization.

\* **WHAT IS PLASMA?** Plasma is the fourth state of matter. The states are solid, liquid, gas, and finally plasma. State transitions occur from solid to plasma, by adding more energy in the form of heat. An analogy is ice to water to steam to plasma as more heat is added.

\* **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INCINERATION AND GASIFICATION?** Incineration is a process where a fuel is heated to the flash point in the presence of oxygen. This process is commonly known as burning or incineration. Gasification is a very high temperature process (18,032° F or 10,000° C) which occurs in an oxygen deprived environment.

\* **WHO WILL OWN THIS FACILITY?** After the initial commissioning of the facility it will be turned over to Koochiching County for operation.

\* **WHERE DID THIS PROJECT ORIGINATE?** The concept for this project was developed by the Laurentian Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) along with numerous partners in 2001.

\* **WHAT VALUE ADDED PRODUCTS ARE PRODUCED BY THIS PROJECT?** The plasma gasification process can produce several useful byproducts such as hydrogen, ethanol,

biodiesel, vitrified glass, rock wool, and more.

\* **WHAT POLLUTANTS ARE RELEASED INTO THE AIR?** Very few emissions are released as the gasification process turns all the organic feedstock into hydrogen and carbon monoxide.

The inorganic material that is produced is contained within the slag which is the second output. The output streams of the plasma gasification process meet all present day United States Environmental Protection Standards standards.

\* **WHO IS GOING TO PAY FOR THIS PROJECT AND WHERE IS THE MONEY COMING FROM?** Funding for the Koochiching County project will come from several sources. The program has been designed to use funding resources from federal, state and private investor contributions.

\* **WHAT KINDS OF FEEDSTOCK WILL BE UTILIZED?** The gasification process can use any organic feedstock: municipal solid waste, forestry residues, agricultural residues, paper mill residues, residential demolition, yard waste, and similar items.

\* **HOW MANY JOBS WILL BE CREATED?** The facility will employ an estimated 15 people. These positions will be well paid and require a level of education and certification to operate the systems.

\* **WHERE WILL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES COME FROM?** One of the project components is to create an educational system that is integrated into the K-12 curriculum teaching renewable energy systems and conservation, moving on to a two year certificate obtainable from Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College in Cloquet, and Rainy River Community College in International Falls. Additionally, four year and graduate level degrees will be available from the University of Minnesota Duluth.

\* **HOW WILL THIS PROJECT HELP WITH HOMELAND SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES?** Communities where these projects will be located will be producing their own electricity, fuel for cars and trucks as well as selling products outside the community. Harvesting the feedstock (municipal solid waste) locally will allow communities to move towards independence from foreign oil and vulnerable power transmission grids.