

Ethanol plant expansion, Pride Pak are Orleans EDA's focus

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SHELBY — The Orleans EDA will take steps Friday to encourage one major project to expand and is ready to act to attract another to the Maple Ridge corridor, CEO Jim Whipple said Wednesday.

No opposition was raised at a public hearing in Shelby Wednesday for a proposed sales tax abatement for Western New York Energy, which is building a 810,000-bushel corn storage bin at its Bates Road ethanol production facility.

Whipple said the incentive, which the EDA projects as providing a \$80,000 benefit compared to the company's \$2 million infrastructure investment, will be voted on by the agency's board Friday.

The EDA is not tying any job creation targets to the project, but takes the "permanent investment" by WNY Energy as more than a fair trade. The ethanol plant is in the final years of a property tax abatement schedule, but has reached full assessment for town, school and county taxes.

"We're encouraging them," Whipple said. "Who knows what they'll add in the future?"

Tim Winters, WNY Energy's controller, said the 142-foot high silo, located just south of two 500,000-bushel silos, will allow all three to be in use during active days.

"We have days with 200 trucks coming in, (with three silos) we can continue to load them in," Winters said.

The silo project has received the blessing of the county and town planning boards. Excavation has started at the site, with concrete forms being laid this week.

"The idea is to have it ready before the new crop of corn comes in," Winters said.

Incentives for another Maple Ridge corridor project will not be on the EDA's July agenda, but Whipple anticipates they will move fast if needed.

The EDA has already approved a PILOT deal for Pride Pak, a Mississauga, Ont.-based fresh fruit



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and vegetable processor, if the company locates a planned American facility at the former Worthington Cylinders Bernzomatic facility.

Negotiations between Worthington and Pride Pak have not progressed since the March PILOT approval, leading the company to scope out open land for a new build in the Medina Business Park.

“There is no commitment yet, but they are investigating a new building,” Whipple said.

The EDA would need to redraw its incentive package if the Bernzomatic site is abandoned for the project, as it was based largely on property valuation and abatement schedules specific to the renovation of the vacant facility.

According to the EDA Vice President Gabrielle Barone, a public hearing will be held on an Office of Community Renewal grant application for Pride Pak will move forward in August.

The EDA has previously aided Claims Recovery Financial Services in securing OCR funding during a process that stretched between a planned expansion in Medina before CRFS moved into the former Chase Bank back offices.

“We hope to be moving forward (even if) they changed the location,” Barone said.

Both sites are within the village of Medina. Mayor Andrew Meier believes the variety of existing sites and open land in the village will be enough to entice Pride Pak and similar projects.

“Certainly, we want to see new business development, and we’re hoping we can seal the deal (with Pride Pak),” Meier said. “Between Takeform, Associated Brands, Baxter Healthcare and Snappy, we’ve shown a capacity to meet and exceed the needs of employers. We’re open for business and welcoming new enterprise.”