

Gratiot County Herald-2<http://gcherald.com/news/local-support-grows-for-glerp.shtml>**Local support grows for GLERP***August 2, 2007*

M&M Energy, the company headed by President Mike Sawruk and Chairman Mike Muckleroy, has been garnering state and national attention with its plans to plan and construct the Great Lakes Energy Research Park (GLERP) in Alma using innovative technology.

By Erica Goff

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M&M Energy, the company headed by President Mike Sawruk and Chairman Mike Muckleroy, has been garnering state and national attention with its plans to plan and construct the Great Lakes Energy Research Park (GLERP) in Alma using innovative technology. The most recent step in the project's progression came last Tuesday when Gratiot County Commissioners and the City of Alma passed matching resolutions urging support for a tax credit program.

Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. President Don Schurr said the resolution addresses the national energy legislation developed in 2005 that authorizes the issue of tax credits to companies intending to develop clean coal technology. It also authorized the Secretary of Energy to develop a "competitive process for programming in the country" focusing on the technology. During the initial round of that "competition" last year, a number of projects across the country earned those tax credits, however, the GLERP project was not one of them.

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"We missed out last year," Sawruk said, explaining he believed it was "largely a timing issue" because the Integrated Gasification Combined Cycle or IGCC technology included in M&M Energy's plans was not yet on the national radar.

It is a "timely issue now," he said, and he expects IGCC technology and projects intending to use it, such as GLERP, to continue to gain steam.

"Today it seems to be very timely and we're excited about the progress," he said.

Schurr said not all of the tax credits available were authorized last year, and he hopes GLERP will be awarded some that remain. One reason he believes the project has "a pretty good shot" at the credits is the amendment to the legislation

that puts more pressure on utilizing the technology, not just having the capability to develop it.

“In the original round (of credit awarding) projects that received the credits had the ability to utilize carbon sequestration, but GLERP is the only one actually capturing the carbon emissions,” he said.

The technology utilized by GLERP – IGCC technology – would gasify coal instead of burning it, creating a hydrogen-based gas that would be piped into a plant and burned to produce electricity. Because the coal is processed and not burned, there is a substantial reduction in carbon dioxide, or CO₂, emissions, Sawruk explained.

Further benefits of the system exist, however. Emissions of the CO₂, also known as a greenhouse gas whose threat to the environment has seen countless headlines in recent years, are further reduced because instead of releasing the gas into the air as coal burning plants have done for decades, the gas is trapped or sequestered underground. This process thus leads to another phase of the technology, which is to harvest oil. By trapping the gas below the earth’s surface in oil fields, oil previously unreachable can be pushed out or recovered. Enhanced Oil Recovery is the perfect answer to yet another issue of fuel shortages.

Schurr said M&M Energy’s plan to utilize this technology makes it a perfect candidate for the national tax credit program.

“It goes beyond the capability to really doing it. It is a doable thing,” he said.

The resolution passed by the county and Alma “respectfully urges Senator Debbie Stabenow to take every possible step to insure that the GLERP project ... is supported in the United States Senate,” either by increasing the overall tax credits available or by dedicating an “adequate level of existing credits” to projects like GLERP. Schurr said offering the official support of local municipalities is an important step in the process, and he is glad those bodies took the steps to state their interest and support for the project.

The next step on that issue, he said, is for the Senate and the Senate Finance Committee to take up the legislation.

Sawruk said IGCC technology has been a topic of discussion for environmental groups as well, including the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. In what Schurr called a “very significant step,” MDEQ recently issued a statement regarding coal-fired power plants in Michigan, stating support for IGCC.

“The MDEQ is proposing to require the consideration of clean coal technologies (i.e. IGCC) as part of the air permitting process for electric generating units,” stated a fact sheet provided by MDEQ.

Under the federal Clean Air Act, amended in 1990, MDEQ is responsible for defining Best Available Control Technology, which is intended to add clean coal technology. MDEQ stated “the availability and reliability of IGCC facilities has been steadily increasing” and should be considered among BACT.

Sawruk said the opinion of MDEQ is crucial, and he and his partners are “very pleased” with the support.

“We are very pleased the environmental community has taken a strong position. We have felt all along the real value of GLERP is in the focusing on moving environmental issues to a new level,” he said.

Sawruk said the project, which has been in motion for nearly three years, has “had its ups and downs,” as all sizable projects would, and he understands there are many steps left to go. One such step involves the addition of IGCC technology to the Renewable Energy Portfolio at the State level, a consideration state legislators have already noted to be necessary.

“I will be working on a subcommittee addressing that proposed legislation in August,” said 93rd District Representative Paul Opsommer, a strong supporter of the GLERP project.

Schurr said the project is “an excellent, excellent” project that would be “a great thing for mid-Michigan.”

(An article discussing federal grant funding for the energy park project that appeared on the front page of last week’s Herald was missing some of the text. The article can be read in its entirety online at www.gcherald.com.)