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FILE

Green company interested in locating on former mill site

BERLIN — The owners of the Laidlaw project have reached a preliminary agreement to allow a green technology company to co-locate a production facility on the site, creating 65 new jobs.

Laidlaw Berlin BioPower Vice President Lou Bravakis said the company, whose name is not being released yet, would integrate a biomaterials production facility with the biomass facility his company hopes to operate on the site.

Bravakis said the company uses components of the low-grade wood that Laidlaw will burn in the boiler to produce electricity. He said the process involved does not degrade the BTU capacity of the wood. Produced is an ingredient used by the company to develop and market biodegradable

products designed to replace petroleum-based goods.

Bravakis said Laidlaw and the unnamed company have been discussing the agreement for three to four months. The company involved is based in New Hampshire and Bravakis stressed the technology involved is proven and is already in use by the company.

When fully integrated, the green company will employ approximately 65 people in what Bravakis described as good-paying jobs. He said construction of the initial phase of the company would begin this year and it would begin operations before the Laidlaw facility is completed.

"I think it's perfect for both parties," Bravakis said.

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He said Laidlaw has from the beginning envisioned using its 60-acre site to co-locate other compatible companies and take advantage of synergies offered by the biomass plant. In addition to the preliminary agreement outlined yesterday, Laidlaw has a memorandum of understanding to provide hot water to the paper mill in Cascade.

Laidlaw has approval to construct and operate the 70-megawatt biomass plant and is awaiting a decision by the N.H. Public Utilities Commission on the power agreement it has reached with Public Service of N.H.

Berlin Mayor Paul Grenier said he was excited about the new development and said it is just the type of business the city wants to attract.

"It's a match made in heaven for Berlin," he said.

He praised Laidlaw for seeking out businesses that would be a match for the property. With the possibility of 65 new jobs and the 40 projected by Laidlaw, Grenier noted the site could create over 100 new jobs plus hundreds of indirect ones. On top of that the federal prison is expected to start hiring this spring.

"We're going to have employment opportunities the city hasn't seen in a generation," said Grenier.

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