

Great Plains working with several firms

By Colleen Williamson cwilliamson@parsonssun.com

May 26, 2020

Within the footprint of the Great Plains Industrial Park, Matrix Design Group, Progress Rail Services, Red Bull Distribution Co., Taylor Crane & Rigging and TP&L Management Solutions currently operate near Day & Zimmermann, and more growth is forthcoming.

Last week, park director Brad Reams spoke to the board about several potential projects he and his team are working on bringing to Great Plains, moving ever closer to the park serving as an economic development hub for Labette County and Southeast Kansas.

Each of the projects utilizes assets Great Plains has to offer, while others allow for interaction and cooperation between businesses of similar interests, such as renewable energy.

“You have to cast a big net. That is the only way you’re going to get any business improvement done. You’ve got to look at every option and look at your assets, and what could be, and try every option. Our staff’s been busy. It’s been a good time,” Reams said. “Several months back I gave a presentation to the board and I told them we were pretty much going to use the M2R3 strategy, where we’ll look at munitions and manufacturing as well as renewables, using rail and our existing resources. Those are the ones that we’re looking at.”

Project Fuel

“One of our projects we are working on is called Project Fuel, to bring a fuel service here, because we believe that would be a great service on site for really the contractors that are here and the trucking firms going in and out,” Reams told the board. “Talking to one of the trucking brokers, they say one of the difficulties they have is going in and filling up in the Parsons area with their trailers extended and connected, and so we would be able to provide that opportunity. That would be a captive local market.”

Reams said in speaking to a provider they have gone back and forth with terms of a lease and Great Plains is waiting to hear back from them of when they would like to enact that service.

“Our feelings are the sooner the better because of the three different projects that will be serviced out of here. Really starting the next week or week and a half, we will have three projects being served. That could be a possibility of up to 46 trucks a day going out of this facility, so that is a lot of fuel being moved,” Reams said.

Project Waste

There are a couple of different aspects to Project Waste.

Reams said he has been in touch with Bioenergy DevCo, which operates in the biogas field.

“They are looking to put a project in the four-states area, between Kansas City, Springfield and our area, kind of a triangle. They are looking for a site ... really looking for an anchor waste producer quite honestly,” he said. “We have partnered with Watco (a Pittsburg transportation and supply-chain logistics company) to identify waste streams with their customers and possibly have Watco be the mover of waste to our facility. They would put anaerobic digesters on site, probably a 7-acre plot is what they would start with.

“We see this as an integral part with several other projects we’re working on.”

Great Plains offers access to Kansas Gas Service and is in close proximity to the Southern Star Pipeline, a 16-inch pipeline running from the southeast point of the park’s footprint, less than a quarter of a mile away.

“So without the activity that used to go on that line to the gas peaker plant, there isn’t any access beyond that line, so to get an industrial user on that line would be pretty idea,” Reams said.

Project Camel

Reams said Great Plains is working with a vendor on the storage of munitions at the plant, and in the midst of discussions there came a change.

“He is now an independent contractor. He is still wanting to come to our site. That makes it pretty attractive for us because we would be the only site he would be operating, so his concentration would be on our site alone,” Reams said.

The owner of the business is looking into insurance options.

“I think we will see a contract or lease here in short order, once those details are ironed out. With all his contracts he has with different munitions groups that were looking at Great Plains when he worked with his former employer, they are still interested. In fact some others are interested,” Reams said. “One of the things I will see as a benefit of this, is because he is a veteran of the munitions industry and attends SHOT (Shooting, Hunting, Outdoor Trade) Show, it would be a possibility of a shared booth space this next year. Because of his connections that will draw people to our booth and he will be able to grab people in the industry and talk about Great Plains. I think it is going to be a great partnership once we get this thing off the ground.”

Reams said this is a project they know is going to happen, but the timeline is dependent of the vendor’s clients’ storage needs.

“He might have somebody right now who wants to store something. It didn’t make any sense to come lease two or three igloos (storage units). It makes sense to do eight or so all at once. I think that is what he is coordinating,” Reams said. “Getting to be able to use the igloos for their original intention is great and I think that also that partnership will help when Jim goes to SHOT Shows in the future, they will have someone on site who can highlight their usage of our facility.”

Project Recycle

Project Recycle is moving along a little better than Reams had at first anticipated and could address a growing concern regarding waste in the wind industry.

“It’s really a growing need I think, when you are looking at re-powers of wind projects. There’s some studies that came out recently that talked about the inefficiencies of wind projects that are older than 10 years in the United States and globally. So you may see some manufacturers looking to re-power some older projects. With that there will be a need to get rid of wind blades and do something with them,” Reams said. “There are a few places around the United States that are taking them in landfills, but there is a lot of public outcry against that. So, we worked with TP&L to come up with some ideas. We had a conference call with Takkion Holdings, which is the parent company of TP&L, and also GSS, which is another large logistics company. We also had a

call with a group called Core Infrastructure ... and they are going to, within a couple of months here, be sending some samples to Core so they can run it through their process. Hopefully we want to be a home for recycling those wind blades here at Great Plains.”

Solar Project

“It’s no secret that Evergy has people on its board that want to see it diversify into multiple renewable energies. They obviously have wind as a big part of their portfolio, but there are other considerations. We work with their renewables department and they are making other decisions about other renewable energies,” Reams said. “The companies that we are working with are always looking to that — what will their ability be to sell the electricity to the local utility, and that’s anywhere in the United States. And so, that study has to be done and looking at all those options before finalizing an agreement with us because if they are going to lease land, that is going to influence their ability to pay us.

“Those are the studies being done right now. They really started looking at those possibilities ever since we put out the RFQ (request for quotation). In recent months, Evergy has become more open to decarbonization at a quicker pace than the original 2050, which I think was their original deadline. That has changed things and made opportunities there greater.”

Networks and Partnerships

Besides working with businesses to locate at Great Plains, Reams has been working hard to develop strong networks and partnerships to help grow Great Plains. One such example is a visit last week from representatives of EnTech Solutions LLC of Wisconsin, with whom Great Plains is working on a distributed energy partnership.

Faith Technologies, the parent company of EnTech Solutions, provides renewable energy solutions, and its manufacturing partner is Excellerate Manufacturing, which has a location in Olathe.

Faith has been providing renewable energy solutions to its customers for over a decade, including energy-efficient lighting, generators, combined heat and power, solar, wind power, microgrid controls, uninterruptible power supply, electrolyzer, fuel cell, battery storage and more.

EnTech Solutions allows for diversification, addressing distributed energy, sustainable fuels and asset management.

“We had a debrief session today,” Reams said Friday. “They will continue to work on the MOU (memorandum of understanding) with their legal department and execute it and we’ll bring it before our board to ratify to establish.

“Now they will not initially have a physical presence or be leasing anything, but they are an effective development partner for us, to where they can work on a lot of different projects in the energy sector that we are hoping to land here and Great Plains can utilize their services. . . . It does seem to be a very good fit of professional services and again it’s not a setup where it’s a consulting fee we’re paying them. It’s a true partnership on any projects that come to the park.”