

Burn, baby, burn? - Douglas Budget: News

Collin McRann | Posted: Wednesday, January 11, 2012 8:21 am

With time running out for the City of Douglas' landfill, officials might have found an alternative to take care of waste without shipping everything to Casper.

Guernsey-based American Renewable Energy Associates came before the city council Jan. 9 with a plan to incinerate, or gasify, municipal solid waste to generate electricity. Company officials would like to see the city commit to providing solid waste for a future plant which would be built in or around the town of Guernsey.

"We consider ourselves a leader in municipal solid waste energy development," Vice President of Business Development Dave Herder told the city council. "We are focusing on a target market of about 150 tons to 250 tons per day of repositing municipal solid waste."

The city of Douglas generates around 25 tons of solid waste per day, according to a 2010 city study developed to try to find solutions for the landfill.

Though Herder said the new technology has not been proven, it is based off of long existing technologies and could potentially increase efficiency up to 95 percent from the 78 percent obtained in other operations.

In all, the organization estimates that around 9 megawatts of baseline power could be generated at the planned facility with 150 tons of waste being burned per day.

"It's not that the technology is anything new, its been around since the 1900s," Herder said." The basic principle of it, what makes this unique, is a batch technology, which increases the efficiency it can achieve, by about 20 percent."

According to Herder, the system is modular and could handle different amounts of waste as needed. However, before any waste can be accepted, the company will have to raise about \$30 million to build the first plant. The organization would like to see plants built near both Guernsey and Cheyenne.

Additionally, after the money has been raised, Herder said it will take between 10-18 months to go through the permitting process and build the facilities. Nevertheless, the organization wants to see things to move as quickly as possible.

"We're up against a time line because there are some economic benefits to getting these plants operational and receiving green energy tax credits and those types of things," Herder told the council. "But, we know that there is an issue with landfills and ground water (in Wyoming) and have a lot of (state) legislature support, including (support from) Gov. (Matt) Mead."

Council members Leroy Kingery and Tony Reynolds voiced some concern about a deal with the city and the organization concerning a transfer station which would need to be built.

Herder said the city would have full ownership of such a facility after an initial \$50,000 buy-in. The city would also pay around a \$32 tipping fee per truck to transport waste to Guernsey.

The city caught a break late last year when the state allowed the landfill to stay open through 2016, but until now, the city's cheapest solution has been to build a transfer station and ship waste to Casper.

City Administrator Steve Henning said waste could still be shipped to Casper, but that will be up to the council.

Claudia Teeters, projects administrator for the Guernsey company, said it has been in contact with around 32 entities around southeastern Wyoming concerning waste commitments. Herder said the eventual goal is to gain the business of larger communities.

“We also felt that if we could prove this technology in a rural environment, we could take it to the cities, eventually,” Herder said. “In talking with companies like Waste Management, they were not interested. If the technology wasn’t proven for cities of three million, they just were not interested in talking to us, and that’s okay.

“We want to prove it with smaller rural communities.”