

Wood pellet company hopes to locate in Moreau

By JIM KINNEY, The Saratogian

MOREAU — A German company wants to build a \$20-million factory in the Moreau Industrial Park to turn waste wood from the area's lumber mills into wood pellets that could fuel homes and businesses.

"It's a good thing for us," said Moreau Supervisor Preston Jenkins.

The Woodstone Pellets facility would likely cover 40 acres of the Park and employ about 30 people, said Lawrence Benton, CEO of the Saratoga County Industrial Development Agency.

"It doesn't require the highest quality wood," Benton said. "It really uses a lower grade."

Jenkins said the plant would also provide a market for area woodcutters.

"That industry is all around us, so there would be a spinoff effect for the community," he said.

Woodstone is seeking a property-tax abatement through the IDA, but Benton didn't have numbers available Monday. He expects to have details when Woodstone comes before the IDA Board at 8 a.m. Thursday at the Saratoga County Planning Department offices in Ballston Spa.

Jenkins acknowledges, though, that truck transportation to the site located about two

miles east of the Northway will be an issue. The company, Woodstone Pellets, estimates about 24 truck trips — 12 in and 12 out — a day. The company will likely have to upgrade the intersection of Bluebird and Fort Edward roads that the trucks will use to avoid going past Moreau Elementary School.

Trucks bound for the Industrial Park's sole current occupant — Hexion Chemical Specialties, formerly Borden Chemical — already take that route.

"There is a tight fit," Jenkins said.

Jenkins said he's meet with Woodstone officials over the past few weeks and they are on an aggressive timetable.

"I think they talked about getting on the property by the end of the year," he said.

"They are very organized and they want to make sure everything is in place before they come to the Planning Board."

Jenkins expects the Planning Board to take up the issue later this month.

Woodstone officials at their U.S. headquarters in Massachusetts couldn't be reached Monday. But according to the firm's Web site, the company already has a factory in Holland Michigan and is looking to build three plants in the Midwest and New England in the next three years.

According to Woodstone's Web site, a ton of pellets is the equivalent of 220 gallons of heating fuel.

Wood pellets are ground wood, dehydrated and pressed into pellets. In this country, most pellets are used in home heating, burned in stoves. But Jenkins said the company told him most pellets in Europe are used in industrial furnaces.

"That's the way they see things going in this country," Jenkins said.

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