

Plastics News

Vadxx Energy scraps plans for Cleveland recycling plant

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Vadxx Energy LLC, a Cleveland-based alternative recycler that turns polyolefin waste into fuel, is abandoning its plans for a much-debated Cleveland plant and instead setting its sights on Akron.

The city of Akron plans to enter into a development agreement with Vadxx, a move that Russell Cooper, vice president of business development, said shows its "enthusiastic support" for the company. In turn, he said Vadxx is giving its full attention to the new location and doing away with plans to put a site in Cleveland.

Akron's planning commission is scheduled to discuss the sale of 5.1 acres of city-owned land at 1200 E. Waterloo Road at its next regular meeting, at 9 a.m. this Friday, Aug. 16. Cooper said Vadxx already has been changing its permits and redoing the design for the new space.

Brad Beckert, development engineering manager for Akron, said the city is working on a development agreement with Vadxx. Terms of the agreement are not yet finalized, but they likely will address the use of the land in question and the number of jobs the company needs to create.

According to the planning commission agenda, the purchase price would be \$150,000, and the estimated construction costs for an 18,000-square-foot plant would be \$2 million. At least 15 jobs would be created or transferred to the site when it opens, with a goal of another five jobs being created within three years. The agenda also mentions that the company would make efforts to move the research and development center to the site in the next three years.

The agreement has to go before Akron City Council before it becomes final.

Beckert said the city is excited about the agreement and that it fought to keep Vadxx in Akron. The company started in the city's incubator, the Akron Global Business Accelerator, and will now move to production while still in the city, creating jobs for Akron.

No one from Cleveland's economic development department was available to comment last Friday, Aug. 9.

Vadxx also is working to get partners for other sites financially committed by the end of the year. These developers would build their own sites and use local waste streams, taking Vadxx's technology to create usable fuel. Cooper said Vadxx is talking to potential partners in Wisconsin, Tennessee, California and Toronto.

Potential developers from across the globe visited Vadxx's research and development center in Akron during the week of July 15 to learn more about the technology. Vadxx has been running a scaled-down version of its future commercial units at its Akron center for about three and a half years, Cooper said.

Cooper said that when the equipment is commercially scaled, it will be about 5,000 square feet, including a 50-foot extruder and a 60-foot rotary kiln. Each will need about 16 operators to run the machine 24 hours a day, and those jobs will likely come with salaries in the \$40,000 to \$50,000 range, he said.

Cooper said the company is working through the financial details, and the new plant should start to run trials in about a year. It would take another three to six months to get completely to scale. Once the plant is at full production, it can process about 20,000 tons of waste a year, producing about 80,000 barrels of fuel. The device heats waste polyolefin products — certain kinds of plastics — in a controlled way, without using catalysts.

"That is a big breakthrough," Cooper said.

The heat slowly melts the products and condenses them, turning them back into carbon and hydrogen products. The majority of the plastics waste — about 75 percent to 80 percent — gets turned into hydrocarbon liquid, which can be used to make products like diesel fuel, Cooper said.

Another 5 percent becomes a non-hazardous byproduct called char, and the rest becomes gas that is used to heat the equipment. Vadxx already has one buyer lined up in Houston for the liquid products.

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