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08-2018-CV-02937

The Billings County Pilot

The official newspaper

*****5-DIGIT 58622
1067 02-07-18 8P 3S
LAURA GRZANIC
PO-BOX 161
BELFIELD ND 58622-0161
**B002

Change in refinery plans

By Richard Volesky

Editor/Reporter

MEDORA - With an armload of photocopies and printed documents, Laura Grzanic on Sept. 7 approached the Billings County Commission regarding her concerns about a change that developers of a proposed refinery made.

The Davis Refinery, which would be located between Fryburg and Belfield, is planned by Meridian Energy Group of Irvine, Calif. The company submitted a refinery-related application to the county in March 2016, and later received county approval. The company is now awaiting air quality and other state permits.

Meridian's 2016 application with

County, North Dakota

USPS 056-180

Vol. 101, No. 1

75 cents

September 14,

the county said that truck traffic for supplying crude oil and shipping refined products "will be minimized in favor of rail and pipeline transportation."

Grzanic, who lives along a road that would lead to the refinery, told the County Commission on Sept. 7 that she has been studying documents related to Meridian's requests for permits. A few other residents who indicated they shared Grzanic's concerns attended the meeting, but no one from Meridian attended. The meeting's agenda stated only that Grzanic would talk about "road concerns."

Refinery paperwork sent to the state regarding emissions and road dust in September 2016 labeled as

"With that many trucks, I'm afraid that Belfield and the surrounding area is going to be bumper to bumper"

Laura Grzanic

being from Meridian and Vepica USA, an engineering firm, states what are referred to as "assumptions" that crude oil would be brought into the refinery by rail, not trucking. Twenty-five percent of the liquid products, except fuel oil, would be sent out by trucks. The estimated number of trucks per day was listed at 81.

Refinery products sent from the facility would include gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, fuel oil, butane and

others.

The same type of paperwork in March 2017 stated it was assumed that crude oil would arrive by pipeline, not trucking or rail. However, with refinery products considered, the number of trucks was revised to 170.

Grzanic in May contacted Craig Thorstenson, permitting supervisor for the N.D. Department of Health's Division of Air Quality, about the change in the number of trucks. Ac-

NEER

017



questioned

According to an e-mail she sent to him, she said it was her understanding that trucks would be used until a pipeline system is created. She asked him to consider the dust raised by trucks if they travelled unpaved roads, emissions created by idling trucks, failure of roads due to truck weights and speeding by drivers trying to meet schedules. Thorstenson replied to Grzanic that such issues were important, but truck traffic, speed and road maintenance were under the purview of local officials. Grzanic therefore took that matter to the Sept. 7 meeting.

"With that many trucks, I'm afraid that Belfield and the surrounding area is going to be bumper

to bumper ...," Grzanic told the commissioners.

She also reminded commissioners of the county's comprehensive plan, a document intended to guide development in the county. The plan includes promoting a safe and adequate transportation system and providing a healthy and safe environment, and promoting small town and rural lifestyles.

Commission Chairman Jim Arthaud told Grzanic that county roads are capable of handling the traffic.

A woman who didn't identify herself asked who would be responsible for road damage.

Refinery (Continued on Page 8)

Refinery

(Continued from Page 1)

Arthaud said the county would take care of it.

"My concern is they (Meridian) presented it one way to the county, and one way to the state," Grzanic then said.

Arthaud said the concern for the county is whether Meridian is successful with getting an air quality permit.

Resident Ruth Molm told commissioners she was "all for the refinery." However, she also said it would be a "dangerous precedent" to have a refinery close to Theodore Roosevelt National Park. She said she wondered if there could be a different refinery site.

Arthaud replied that the county doesn't have an application for another site.

"We've been a very good neighbor to the park," said Arthaud. The county has roads near the park, and when a wind farm was proposed earlier this year, with some of its turbines visible from the park, the county turned that project down, he explained.

Commissioners Joe L. Kessel and Mike Kasian made no comments to Grzanic or the others at the meeting.

The Billings County Pioneer attempted on Sept. 11 to contact Tom Williams, Meridian's executive vice president for planning and permitting. Williams signed off on or submitted the March 2016 application that the county reviewed. The Pioneer also attempted to contact Meridian CEO William Prentice. Neither were available for comment.

However, Adam Williams, Meridian's director of corporate communications, said he would contact Meridian management and develop a response to the truck traffic issue. Due to the short notice, Adam Williams said he'd need more time to prepare an accurate reply. The Pioneer then told Williams that any replies from Meridian would be welcomed for use in an upcoming followup story.

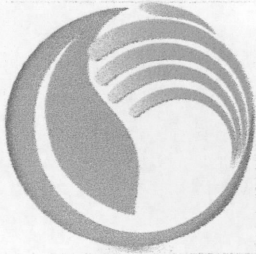
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 **Dave Cole Sr.** Why so close to <https://www.nps.gov/thro/index.htm> ???
Like · Reply · 1 · November 15 at 11:54am

 **Laurie Hodgson Prentice** Mr. Cole, it isn't a matter of being close to the TRNP, it's a matter of being in the right location for the needs of the refinery, the oil business, and the state and its people. • The site Meridian selected is a perfect location from the point of view of proximity to the Bakken fields and gathering pipelines, and for access to road, rail and pipeline transportation of refined products. This is the culmination of the BakkenLink crude oil gathering system. Our location eliminates the need to transport the crude by rail, and it reduces the length of pipeline needed to transport the crude to refinery.

- The site chosen has prevailing winds that blow downwind of TRNP the vast majority of the time. Absolutely no proven environmental impact on the Park at all.


- As shown in the Meridian air quality permit application for the Davis Refinery, Davis will be the cleanest refinery in the world, and demonstrates that a facility like this can essentially be placed anywhere and meet the local standards. Meridian resents the implication that facilities like this should be moved to some industrial ghetto where it can presumably pollute all that it wants to. The local residents need and want the high paying jobs that the Davis refinery project will provide.


- The Park's Management evidently has a history of being against local industrial development, and of trying to bully and impose its will & opinion way past their own borders.

- The main recent objection from Park "defenders" is that people traveling on I-94 to visit the Park will be upset when they drive by Davis. This doesn't credit the measures being taken to ease visual impacts, including the natural and agricultural buffers around the site. Nor does this seem credible given the other things visible on their way to the Park, including water tanks, cell towers, bill boards, other oil facilities, and the freeway itself. Those large wind turbines everywhere are incredibly unsightly. Why are those more acceptable to be seen by Davis refinery opposition when driving than a green refinery that sits two miles away from the Interstate Highway?

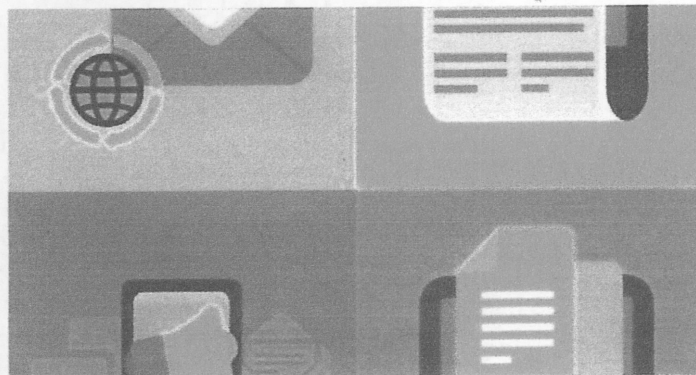
- The truth is that it wouldn't matter if Meridian had moved the Davis Refinery further away— the Park people would still vehemently oppose it, like they have opposed anything like this as far away as Dickinson. The Davis refinery high paying jobs will attract more families to the local area, and result in increased tourism to Medora and TRNP. That should be regarded as a win-win situation!

Like · Reply · 1 · November 16 at 4:54pm · Edited

 Write a comment...

 **Meridian Energy Group Inc.**
November 9 at 12:30pm ·

Meridian Confident of Draft Permit to Construct Issuance





Meridian Confident of Draft Permit to Construct Issuance

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OIL & GAS JOURNAL

Meridian Energy Group plans refinery for North Dakota

HOUSTON, Dec. 23

12/23/2015

By Robert Brelsford

OGJ Downstream Technology Editor

Meridian Energy Group Inc., Irvine, Calif., has let a contract to Vepica CA, Caracas, and BASIC Equipment, Houston, to provide preliminary studies for its proposed 55,000-b/sd Davis refinery to be built on 620 acres near Belfield, ND, in the heart of southwestern North Dakota's Bakken shale region.

As part of the contract, Vepica and BASIC Equipment will perform a series of engineering studies to define the design basis, costs, and schedule for the planned high-conversion refinery, which would serve Bakken crude oil producers and local liquid fuels and chemicals markets, the service companies said.

Upon completion of the studies, the two service providers additionally will work with Meridian to complete permitting and approval requirements as well as finalize full-project financing for the refinery, including support services during the project's detailed design, procurement, construction, and startup phases.

A value of the contract was not disclosed.

While Vepica and BASIC Equipment did not reveal a specific timeframe for execution of preliminary studies for the grassroots refinery, the companies said Meridian recently has undertaken a series of scoping and optimization studies based on crude assays provided by its likely tolling partners and expects to begin detailed design and engineering on the project during early first-quarter 2016.

according to Vepica and BASIC Equipment.

Meridian, which expects to receive expedited permitting for the proposed plant, currently is finalizing plans to break ground on the project during first-half 2016, the company said.

Pending permit and regulatory approvals, the refinery would enter operation sometime in 2018, according to Meridian.

If approved, the Davis refinery would become North Dakota's third, as well as only the second greenfield construction in the US since 1976 (OGJ Online, May 4, 2015).

With proximity to nearby crude feedstock and ample supplies of low-cost natural gas supplies to fuel processing activities, the Davis plant also would have direct access to major transportation infrastructure, including two main highways, oil and gas pipelines, and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail line, which runs directly through the refinery site, according to Meridian.

As part of the proposed construction plan, Meridian said it also intends to build a crude oil feedstock offloading and refined fuels uploading terminal to take advantage of BNSF rail line access.

A first phase of the refinery's construction would feature at least a 20,000-b/d processing plant as well as associated terminal installations, according to the company's web site.

Meridian's move to advance the Davis refinery follows a July announcement from Quantum Energy Inc., Tempe, Ariz., and joint-venture partner Native Son Holdings LLC, The Woodlands, Tex., that the pair will build a new 40,000-b/d refinery in Berthold, ND (OGJ Online, July 21, 2015).

While the partnership already has filed a minor-source air quality construction permit application for the proposed Berthold plant with the North Dakota Health Department's division of air quality (OGJ Online, July 30, 2015), a specific timeline construction of the planned \$645 million refinery has yet to be released.

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Building the Bakken continues with a new refinery near Belfield

On the cusp of the new Dakota Refinery's losses and potential sale, the Bakken's long term vision and plans



JASON SPIESS
For Bakken Breakout
Weekly

continue. The Meridian Energy Group is continuing their plans to construct a state of the art refinery near Belfield, ND.

"Meridian Energy Group is a development stage company that was formed to build and operate a refinery in western North Dakota," William Prentice, chairman and CEO, Meridian Energy Group.

Currently the Meridian Group is doing the lion's share of their work both in Houston and California, however, as the project date nears the offices will be moving to the Bakken.

"We are a North Dakota corporation," Prentice said. "Our headquarters will be up here."

Prentice said they began detailed engineering and permitting on the project last January and have been pushing the new Davis Refinery through the various state agencies. The refinery is scheduled to begin construction and operation sometime in 2017.

"Upon release of the air quality, probably in February this coming year, we will start construction and the first phase will be operation by the end of 2017," Prentice said. "We have a site located just west of Belfield."

To the casual observer this may appear to be a risky venture, but to the

Meridian Energy Group, it is a perfect opportunity to satisfy a growing need in the country's constant quest to become energy independent.

"It's much easier to take an existing refinery and modify it or expand it that it is to start with a blank piece of ground and go from there," Prentice said. "I think the Dakota Prairie refinery and one or two smaller plants in the Houston area are the only brand new grassroots refineries in the past 30 years. The Davis refinery we are building will be the fourth such new plant, but it is substantially bigger than the other ones that have been out there."

According to Prentice, the Davis Refinery will take Bakken crude from the surrounding area and refine it, then ship the products by rail and pipeline to market.

"Some of the markets are here in the Dakotas, otherwise generally speaking those products go east and south," Prentice said.

The Davis Refinery will be different than the Dakota Refinery, which opened last summer. Prentice said the Davis Refinery will refine a variety of finished products, like gasoline, jet fuel and other petrochemical starting points for other products.

"The Dakota Prairie refinery, which we know quite a bit about because we are the in industry, was built to take Bakken crude and distill out of it the diesel that was used in the local market," Prentice said. "They were looking to serve the drilling industry primarily as I understand it. And since that has fallen off, the local market has been more difficult for them."

Prentice continued explaining the specifics on how the Davis Refinery differs from Dakota Prairie, and how more opportunity will be presented to oil and

gas production in western North Dakota and the nation.

"(Dakota Prairie is) a topping facility, not a true refinery," Prentice said. "Our refinery is much more complex plant."

"For years and years we have seen refineries cluster in on the coast feeding off oil tankers from everybody from Venezuela to Saudi Arabia, the Bakken has brought back the domestic industry."

— William Prentice, chairman and CEO,
Meridian Energy Group

Much bigger. And we will produce all the products a refinery typically produces."

The Meridian Group has committed to a total 1900 acreage of the sites with Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail line running directly through the site. Prentice believes this will facilitate the construction of a crude oil feedstock offloading and refined fuels uploading terminal.

The Davis Refinery will not need the total 1900 acres for operation and the extra acreage will act as geographical cushion for the area.

"Quite a bit of that acreage will be devoted to agriculture buffers, new tree lines and some programs we are discussing with the local university," Prentice said. "Things like woody plant development ash tree, beetle resistance kind of species. It just makes it a more attractive site for the surrounding community."

The initial phase of the Davis Refinery will be 27,500 barrels per day and doubling by the end of 2018 to 55,000 barrels per day, according to Prentice. The total investment will be just under a billion dollars over the next 4-5 years.

"The construction will peak out at about 500 people. Permanent employees will ramp up to just under 200 over a two year period," Prentice said.

"The state of Washington did a study on the total impact of a refinery, looking at the refineries in Anacortes (WA), and they determined every refinery job created total employment from 10-12 other

jobs. So at 200 employees we will be producing a total of 2200 to 2400 new jobs."

Prentice was quick to point out their primary objective will be to hire local rather than import workers in from other parts of the country.

"We are not bringing in a whole bunch of refinery people from the Gulf Coast," Prentice said. "We are going to start here where the labor pool is exceptionally well qualified from an agricultural based economy. The work ethic is great and there is a familiarity with machines and tools. We are going to start our labor pool here in western North Dakota."

Another unique aspect of the Davis Refinery is the technology. Prentice appeared proud of the "new type of refinery" and believes it is going to impact the industry "that'll become standard for the next 10 to 20 years".

"We are structuring this as a tolling services refinery, in that we entering into long term agreements with crude producers and product off-takers, where they actually pay us a fee to produce those refined products," Prentice said. "There are a number of firms we are in discussion with but I cannot publicize those at this time."

Over the past ten years, with the advent of shale oil, the technology and innovation has created new markets giving the industry a rebirth of the domestic energy industry. Prentice sees the Davis Refinery as another means to energy independence and global capitalism, a choice the U.S. has not seen in quite some time.

"For years and years we have seen refineries cluster in on the coast feeding off oil tankers from everybody from Venezuela to Saudi Arabia, the Bakken has brought back the domestic industry. We are going to be upstream to where the oil is, not down on the coast trying to feed on foreign stuff."

□ □ □

Jason Spiess is an award-winning journalist, talk show host, publisher, author and executive producer. Spiess is a North Dakota native and NDSU graduate. He currently creates multimedia content for newspapers, magazines, and online news services. He is also the host of Building the Bakken, MonDak OilField Review and Coffee & Capitalism Radio. Spiess also is author of the book Building the Bakken. For more information or to contact Spiess, email jason@buildingthebakken.com.

