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EDITOR'S PICK

Developer Calls Plans for B.L. England Site a 'Legacy Project'

Details Remain Unclear

By Camille Sailer

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File Photo

MARMORA - At an Upper Township Business Association member mixer held Oct. 6, a contingent from the Beesley's Point Development Group described what the company has in mind for the B. L. England site.

The B.L. England plant was in operation for almost 60 years. It was a key factor in job creation, production of electricity, and funding since Upper Township, the municipality, which is home to the station, received energy tax receipts of more than \$6 million each year for hosting the plant.

Led by President Chris Wilson, the development group acquired the 350-acre property in November 2021. Clean-up costs are estimated at around \$13 million. Although the 2021 purchase price is undisclosed, the seller, RC Cape May Holdings, bought it in 2007 for a reported \$12.2 million.

The most recent sale process took about four years. To assist the process, the township gave the property a special redevelopment zone designation.

That designation gives the group a range of options for the property. The sprawling property on the Great Egg Harbor Bay could be used for a hotel, marina, restaurants, retail shops and even residences.

While the focus of the redevelopment is commercial, the location is expected to be an onshore landing area for power cables carrying power from the proposed, controversial Ocean Wind 1 project.

At his presentation Oct. 6, Wilson recognized the demolition technician who oversaw the uneventful implosion of the cooling tower at the generating station Sept. 29.

“We are ahead of schedule for the complete demolition of the entire site. We anticipate (the work) to be underway by...early 2023,” explained Wilson.

Wilson emphasized to the Township business gathering that, “this is to be a legacy project, and we and the community are all going to be very proud of what we're building and creating. For example, we plan to use native plants, and establish bird viewing areas. I want to sit on the dock after the project is finished with my grandchildren and say, 'See what I built!'.”

Wilson stressed that the company is not looking to quickly capitalize on its initial investment and move on.

“We are working now with various permitting agencies, especially the state Department of Environmental Protection regarding the concept and vision, especially as the site is in a wetlands area,” Wilson explained. “The new mayor, Curtis Corson...has been fantastic to work with; I've

learned that way back when his forebearers were instrumental in settling this very same area. Curtis' grandfather was mayor of the township when the plant opened in 1961. So, we both share a love of history, especially this part of Cape May County which is so rich in all kinds of interesting historic connections.”

Though Wilson spoke of the project in grand terms, he declined to give details at this early stage.

“To talk about specifics as to what the area will see for development and amenities is premature. But I really want to continue to say that this is going to be something everyone will be proud of. We intend to have great engagement with the community and their involvement is important to us.”

In previous statements at the time of the sale, company officials talked about their goal of “reimagining this underutilized and contaminated location and protecting the environment while exceeding expectations in its development.”

Want to find out details about what's in store for the B.L. England site? Connect on Facebook and with Township officials to encourage more sharing of information and updates or email csailer@cmcherald.com.

Camille Sailer

Reporter

Camille Sailer, who covers Dennis Township, Sea Isle City and Upper Township, enjoys covering the northern part of the county as an interesting counterpoint to her work as an international trade consultant.