

City of Ithaca ~ Municipal Viewpoint



~ Managers Minute ~

Autumn 2016

ZFS Announces Major Redevelopment in Ithaca:

There's no "I" in "Team"

By Chris A. Yonker, City Manager

West Michigan-based Zeeland Farm Services (ZFS) recently announced its intentions to redevelop the abandoned former Liberty Fuels site into a soybean processing facility. The triangular 435-acre site is located east of U.S.-127 and south of Washington Rd. (Center St. in town) and stretches east to Bagley Rd. The project is Phase 1 of a possible 3-phase redevelopment over the next 5-10 years. ZFS anticipates Phase 1 will cost approximately \$130 million, create 75 full-time equivalent (FTE) permanent jobs, and require 150 FTE construction jobs over the next three years.

ZFS's current Zeeland facility is the only soybean processing facility in Michigan and processes only about 10% (10 million bushels) of the state's annual crop. The remaining 90% is shipped out of state for processing. The Ithaca plant will be at least four times larger with the capacity to process 2,500-5,000 tons of soybeans (40 million bushels) per day, or as much as 60% of the current MI soybean crop. That will boost not only the local economy, but the State's as well, allowing for the production of a wide variety of value-added soybean products, such as soybean oil (for human consumption & industrial uses), and meal & hulls as feed supplements (for livestock, poultry & aquaculture farmers.)

"Legacy" projects of this magnitude do not come along very often in a community, especially one the size of Ithaca. Per Cliff Meeuwsen, President of ZFS Ithaca, LCC, "We are not building and sizing the facility for today, but for tomorrow. This is a 50-year investment in MI agriculture. We are building a legacy plant that will fulfill all of Michigan's soybean processing needs for decades."

As you might expect, it took a multitude of "players" over the last two years to even get this project to this point. We are fortunate in this county to have a professional team of economic development professionals to help investors navigate the many steps and layers of approvals necessary to plan, finance, construct and operate a facility this large. The Greater Gratiot Development, Inc. (GGDI) office has guided the process from first contact to the present. The City considers GGDI as an extension of our City staff, providing the expertise to supplement and coordinate the work of a large number of agencies involved to date. All of the "players" have worked well together as a team keeping our eye on the ultimate goal of getting this facility built and up and running. There is no one person who could accomplish all of this. Hence, there is no letter "I" in the word "Team".

This is one of the most complicated projects I have encountered in my 36+ year public service career. Fortunately, I went through a similar-sized project with the Gerber Products Co. while I was City Manager in Fremont. But even with that experience, I could not pull it off without myriad participation by a similar team. To get a taste for the complexity of the ZFS project, look at the number of entities (players) we have dealt with so far (and there are more to come):

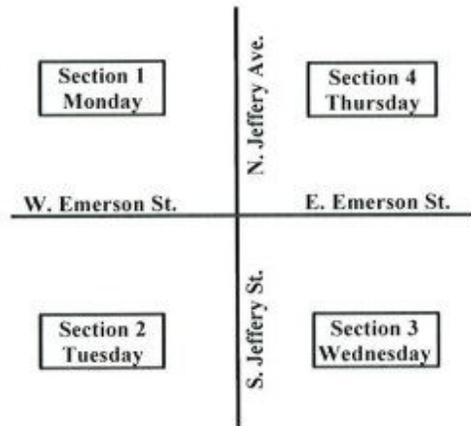
- Zeeland Farm Services (corporate, operations, engineering, finance, marketing, legal, 2 general contractors)
- City of Ithaca (Admin., Public Works, Assessing & Fire Dept. staff, legal, City Council, Planning Commission)
- Gratiot County (Co. Board, Road Commission, Drain Commission, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority [BRA], Treasurer)
- GGDI (economic development, finance, BRA staff)
- North Star Township Board (P.A. 425 Conditional Boundary Adjustment Act Agreement)
- State of MI (MEDC, Dept. of Ag/Rural Develop., MDOT [highway & rail], MDEQ [wetlands, water, sanitary & storm sewers], MI Strategic Fund Board, State Admin. Board, Treasury, MI Works! Service Center)
- Federal (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service)
- Investor-owned utilities (Consumers Energy: electric & natural gas)
- Short-line railroad (Great Lakes Central RR, MDOT rail)

This project will have a very large positive impact on our local economy by: providing employment opportunities; increasing commodity prices for regional soybean producers; lowering the cost of feed for livestock & other operations; increasing tax bases for property & income taxes; increasing service areas and capacities for public and investor-owned utilities; increasing the need for housing (both rental & owner-occupied); and the potential for development of businesses complimentary to the ZFS facilities (suppliers, plant & vehicle maintenance, etc.) both within the ZFS property and outside the perimeter both north & south of Washington Rd. We welcome ZFS to our community and look forward to a long, strong and mutually-beneficial relationship.

GO TEAM!



The leaves are falling fast, and Fall leaf pickup has already begun. Please rake leaves into a wind row along the edge of the street on the night before your scheduled pickup. (Please do not put the leaves directly on the street or sidewalk.) Any leaf piles that contain **grass clippings, walnuts, sticks or other debris** will not be picked up as they plug up the leaf vacuum. For brush and tree limbs, the City maintains a brush pile located at the east end of Meadow Lane Estates that is free to residents in the City. Consider helping a neighbor if they do not have the means to take brush to the brush pile. While we encourage you to utilize the curbside pick-up program, the City also has an ordinance for burning leaves. During the months of **October** and **November** you can burn leaves. Keep the piles small and under control. The burning piles must be attended at all times. Leaves can not be burned on the city streets, alleys or sidewalks. Burning items of any other kind is prohibited. Please be conscious of neighbors that may have difficulty breathing, asthma or use oxygen before choosing this option over the leaf pickup program.



With winter weather being around the corner, we are starting to prepare for the snow and ice. Many times we must start plowing and salting the streets during the early hours of the morning. In order for us to do a thorough job, all vehicles must be kept off the streets. **City ordinance states that no vehicle can be parked on the streets during the hours of 2:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. year around. We appreciate your cooperation.**

Election News



The City General Election is Tuesday, November 8, 2016. City of Ithaca residents vote at the Ithaca Community Center located at 120 N Maple Street. Polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. Absentee ballots are available from the City Clerk's office during normal business hours and also on Saturday, November 5, 2016 from 10:00 am until 2:00 p.m. Contact Barbara Fandell for election information at 875-3200 or email clerk@ithacami.com.

Reminders



Trick-or-treat hours are from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Monday, October 31st. Please take caution during these hours and watch for the little ghosts and goblins! Remember to only visit homes who have their porch lights on during the trick-or-treat hours.

Winter Taxes will be mailed on December 1st, 2016 and are due on February 14th, 2017 to avoid penalty.

Buck Pole

The Annual Buck Pole will be held November 15 in downtown Ithaca around dusk. Stop by and check out this years great shots!



Christmas Under the Stars & Santa Parade will be December 2nd starting at 6:00 PM in downtown Ithaca. Visit our website at www.ithacami.com for the latest information.

happy holidays

HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSINGS

In recognition of the approaching holiday season, city offices will be closed on the following dates:

Thanksgiving
November 24th & 25th

Christmas
December 23rd & 26th

New Year's Day
January 2nd, 2017

Starting January 2017, the City of Ithaca will offer paperless billing for all water & sewer bills. If you would like to go paperless and start receiving your utility bill by email, please complete the enrollment form and return to City Hall.

You can also choose to enroll to have your utility bill auto-deducted from your bank account each quarter if you prefer by enrolling in ACH deductions. Both forms can be found by visiting our website at www.ithacami.com, and clicking on City Services/Water & Sewer Services.

At this time, we do not offer online payments or credit/debit card payments. Cash or check only please.



Veterans Day Ceremony

On November 11th at 11 a.m. on the Courthouse Lawn, come and join the community in honoring those that have given their lives, and for those presently serving. This service is hosted by the Ithaca VFW and the Ithaca American Legion Post.



Daylight Savings Time ends on November 1st, 2016. Remember to turn your clocks back one hour on Saturday night. This is also a great time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors, too!