

Local CTL plant plans move ahead

By Carrie Moore

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Staff Writer

A year ago, the Mingo County Redevelopment Authority signed a memorandum of understanding with Rentech Clean Coal Technologies, Inc. to bring a coal-to-liquid plant to southern West Virginia.

Today, the project is in its second and third phases. It should produce a small amount of product within two years and reach its full capacity of 25,000 barrels a day within five, according to project manager Randy Harris.

At Thursday's MCRA meeting, Harris suggested calling the project the Hybrid Energy Center. Board members discussed prefacing the title with "Mingo" or "Mingo County," but did not make a final decision.

Harris also said project members are "looking at negotiations for options of property" in the Gilbert area for the plant's location.

Christy Risch, director of the impact study MCRA officials commissioned Marshall University to perform for the plant, came to Thursday's meeting to give an update on the study's findings. While Riche remained tight lipped about the study's specific findings, she did say that the plant's impact to the area would be gigantic.

"We're close to submitting a full draft — essentially getting our hands around the enormous scope of this project [was difficult]," she said, and added that those working on the study wanted to be sure they modeled such a large project accurately, and measured everything from the scope of the construction project to its vast spillover effects in the community. Riche said the CTL project was the largest in not only the county but the overall region.

MCRA Executive Director Mike Whitt announced Weatherford Fracturing, Inc. is expanding operations in Mingo County. It is currently constructing a \$6 million office complex for a \$60 million economic project to begin next year. The expansion will create around 30 new jobs in the office complex and 40 to 50 at the start of the project.

Also at Thursday's meeting, Whitt announced updates on the county's new airport project and the King Coal Highway. He said the board is keeping a close eye for potential clients for the aircraft facility and, in two or three years, will be in a position to "bring people in."

Whitt said the board is in the process of permitting for the Millers Creek area, which is on the southeast end of the King Coal Highway project. King Coal Highway is the name

given to the West Virginia portion of the Interstate 73/74 project which, when completed, will run from Michigan to Myrtle Beach. The West Virginia portion of the interstate will be built through public/private partnerships that have received praise for being cost-effective and environmentally beneficial.