

## South Beloit cookie factory eyes expansion

By Clint Wolf [cwolf@beloitdailynews.com](mailto:cwolf@beloitdailynews.com) | Posted: Tuesday, June 16, 2015 4:00 pm

The ConAgra Foods cookie plant in South Beloit has requested a 10-year property tax abatement in conjunction with a \$15 million expansion.

During the South Beloit City Council meeting Monday, council members heard about a proposal for a tax abatement on the property at 1450 Pate Plaza Drive.

South Beloit Mayor Ted Rehl said any time property tax revenue is lost through abatement it is a serious matter, but if it promotes business and jobs it will make the community grow stronger.

“This is a needed anchor for the city,” Rehl said. “We have to do whatever we can to attract and maintain commerce.”

City Attorney Roxanne Sosnowski said ConAgra Foods also is interested in a sanitary sewer service agreement with the city, which could result in added revenue for South Beloit.

The council took no action on the tax abatement request at Monday’s meeting.

ConAgra Foods announced in May that it is closing its cookie plant on the west side of Ripon, Wis. The closure will affect more than 300 workers.

The company plans to move some of the production from the Ripon plant to the South Beloit facility.

Some of the cookies made in the soft bake and enrobed (chocolate covered) cookies facility in Ripon are planned to be made in South Beloit.

The South Beloit ConAgra Foods plant, which formerly was Bremner Foods, currently employs 210 people.

Daniel Hare, ConAgra Foods spokes person, said staffing decisions at the South Beloit facility will be based on needs for operation, but he said the company currently anticipates adding about 150 positions in South Beloit.

“The investment in the facility will fund the improvements necessary to make the new products, including repurposing some of the existing facility,” Hare said in an email.

He anticipated improvements to the South Beloit facility will be complete by the end of May of 2016.

In 2012, ConAgra Foods acquired Ralcorp Holdings, which operated 17 plants including Bremner Corp. The plant operated under Bremner Corp. from 2005 to 2012. Bremner Corp. had purchased the South Beloit plant which housed Bake-Line Group and Pate Foods. Bake-Line had declared bankruptcy and closed in 2004.

Rehl said the city has received no details on the expansion of the cookie plant.