

Cookie firm working with S. Beloit on expansion

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Officials from the ConAgra Foods cookie-making plant in South Beloit want to work with the city on an arrangement to handle the plant's wastewater as it prepares for a major expansion.

ConAgra Foods South Beloit Plant Manager Tommy Perry and ConAgra Director of Engineering Tom Stachura spoke before the South Beloit City Council Monday evening, giving an update on the plans to expand the plant at 1450 Pate Plaza Drive. The company is planning a \$15 million expansion that could result in 100 to 200 more jobs in South Beloit. The plant currently employs about 210 people.

"We want to grow this community and grow our employment pool," Perry said.

He said most of the employment growth will happen next year. He said the expansion of the plant and the added employees will be both challenging and exciting.

Daniel Hare, ConAgra Foods spokesperson, had previously told the Daily News that the improvements to the South Beloit facility are expected to be complete by the end of May of 2016.

Stachura said one issue he wants to work with city officials on is how to handle wastewater from the plant. Currently wastewater is transported off site by a wastewater hauler. ConAgra would like the South Beloit Wastewater Treatment Plant to treat the plant's wastewater.

"The money we are giving the hauler right now will go to the city," Stachura said. He added that amounts to about \$20,000 to \$30,000 a month.

He said the plant produces about 8,000 gallons of wastewater a day and he wants to work with the city on sampling the wastewater from the plant to determine what would be needed for treatment.

ConAgra Foods also has requested a 10-year property tax abatement on the property.

Mayor Ted Rehl said city officials would like to work out the details of what the company would need, regarding its wastewater treatment requirements and the expansion plans, before entering into a property tax abatement agreement.

In May, ConAgra Foods announced it would be closing its cookie plant on the west side of Ripon, Wis. and the company plans to move some of the production from the Ripon plant to the South Beloit facility.