

Amendment to move Pratt site approved

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The Beloit City Council and Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation passed an amendment to the development agreement between the two entities and Pratt Industries.

The amendment moves the Pratt site about two miles south of the originally planned site to the corner of Colley Road and Gateway Boulevard.

The move was necessary after the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources wouldn't approve permits until it performed a site evaluation in the spring. The DNR claimed it didn't know about the Pratt project until mid-January when a report was submitted showing there were possible wetlands on the property.

A DNR spokesperson told the Daily News last week that the report was done by a "non-assured delineator," and the department would need to complete its own assessment once plants were growing on the site in the spring. Since Pratt wanted to start building this spring the site was no longer viable for its timeline.

Pratt, a corrugated packaging material manufacturer, plans to build a 350,000-square-foot facility, to support its other facilities around the country. Pratt still plans to create about 140 jobs with the project, said Andrew Janke, executive director for the GBEDC.

Janke added the new site is smaller at about 40 acres compared to the 56 acres on the original site. The city council also passed a resolution to apply for a Transportation Economic Assistance program grant to reconstruct Colley Road.

"We've been wanting to redo Colley Road for a number of years so this project lets us accelerate the reconstruction," Janke said.

City Manager Larry Arft added the Tax Increment Financing District covering Colley Road is set to expire soon, and the city would have to redo Colley Road before then. With the TEA grant, the expense to the city will actually decrease.

Janke added Pratt has mentioned the possibility of expanding the facility or building another facility, and the amendment included a provision that would allow the company the same 35 percent tax rebates on a second facility if constructed.

The total incentive package from the city and the GBEDC is about \$3.8 million, which includes a \$200,000 cash grant from the GBEDC.

Janke said the city has a tentative meeting scheduled for March 13 with the DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp and Reed Hall, executive director for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, to discuss mitigating the wetlands at the original site planned. Arft said the city can't market the land until the DNR signs off on it.

Pratt wants to begin construction this spring, and plans to open the facility in January.