

New power plant in Town of Beloit

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Alliant Energy plans to invest up to \$725 million to expand its Riverside Energy Center with a new natural gas fueled power plant located in Town of Beloit.

The proposed plant will be near Alliant's existing location in the township and will be on the property the company owns at 1401 W B-R Townline Road.

The expansion comes after a year of study conducted by the company and considering other options such as partnering with other utilities and reviewing proposals from providers, but none were as feasible as the expansion, said Scott Reigstad, communications representative for Alliant.

Alliant bought the current plant — which had been in operation since 2004 — from Calpine Corp. in 2012. The company found it needed a new source for the energy demand as older plants faded out.

“We were looking to find out how to supply our customers for the future and we needed 24/7 energy for our customers,” said Reigstad,

The expanded facility will replace three older coal-operating units in Cassville and Sheboygan, expected to be closed in 2015. Reigstad said the company also plans to close other aging natural gas generated plants in the next several years, totaling 700 megawatts.

Combined, both Town of Beloit facilities will generate power to produce 1,300 megawatts — roughly enough to power 1 million homes.

Currently, the plant is 675 megawatts in a combined-cycle natural gas-fired generation plant with 25 employees and two gas-fueled and one steam-fueled generating unit.

The plant's operations return the Town of Beloit more than \$1.7 million annually through the state's shared revenue program, an amount which Town Administrator Brian Wilson said could increase with the expansion.



Looking to expand

Alliant Energy's existing Riverside generating plant sits along the Rock River in the Town of Beloit. The company will seek regulatory approval to invest \$725 million to expand Riverside with a natural gas-fueled plant. Plans call for construction to begin in 2016, with projected completion in 2019.

“We could make an additional \$800,000 in shared revenue,” said Wilson, who has been in talks with Alliant since last summer.

Wilson said the town also could become eligible for Tax Increment Financing funds from the state. The town needs \$500 million in equalized assessed value to be eligible; it is currently at \$400 million.

The expansion will cost between \$725- \$775 million and bring in 25 new employees when completed. Alliant also estimates at least 200 construction workers will be at the site during building the 650-megawatt combined cycle natural gas facility. Combined cycle facilities use both steam and natural gas to power turbines, combining power production and making the plant more efficient and environmentally friendly.

“An investment in new, highly efficient natural gas generation provides significant environment benefits to Wisconsin, brings hundreds of construction jobs to the state and delivers an economic boost to the region,” said Alliant Energy Chairman, President and CEO Patricia Kamping in Thursday’s statement.

“The proposed expansion of the Riverside Energy Center provides short-and-long term economic development benefits for Rock County, as well as the State of Wisconsin. In terms of employment, the plant’s construction will generate a substantial amount of employment for the construction industry. From an infrastructure standpoint, this expansion will enhance the area and the state’s energy capacities, as well as its capabilities. Lastly, this plant will provide a stream of additional revenue via the gross receipts taxes for both the town and county,” said James Otterstein, economic development manager for Rock County, in an emailed statement.

The expansion comes after over a year of concern with coal-burning plants from the Environmental Protection Agency which has proposed to cut as much as 30 percent of carbon dioxide from coal plants by 2030.

Reigstad said the company took that into consideration during the year, but also had been planning to become more environmentally responsible for quite some time. He added that it was no longer cost efficient to use coal facilities.

“We are initiating plans that reflect our commitment to the environment, while at the same time implementing innovative, reliable generation to meet the long-term needs of our customers,” said John Larson, president of Alliant Energy’s Wisconsin utility in a statement.

Alliant Energy expects to file for regulatory approval of the plant with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin in early 2015. If approved, construction would begin in 2016, with expected completion in 2019.

The earliest customers would see new rates related to the cost of the plant will be 2017.

Wilson said the only change residents should notice at the site will be to the skyline, since the noise level would be the same.

“I feel like a kid at Christmas,” said Wilson. “I’ve been wanting to jump up and down.”