



JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSION

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During the past few days, the County Commission has received comments from several citizens expressing concerns about the proposed Rockwool Plant in Ranson. Additionally, the Commission is aware of social media posts and local news coverage regarding the impact the facility will have in our community. This memo is intended to address those concerns and provide some background information about the project. The Commission will post all information in its possession concerning the project on its website and will continue to update the site as it receives additional information. Additionally, representatives from Rockwool have committed to schedule a public forum with a full question and answer session. The Commission will also post information concerning the public forum on its website and social media pages as soon as a date for the forum has been selected.

In early 2017, the County Commission became aware that Rockwool was considering Jefferson County, among a few other jurisdictions, for the location of its new facility. At that time, the Commissioners, officials from Ranson, and some staff members signed non-disclosure agreements, agreeing not to reveal that Rockwool was expanding its operations or that Jefferson County was among one of the sites being considered. The non-disclosure agreement was not designed to hide information from the public, and addressed only the site acquisition. At the time the agreement was signed, in addition to Jefferson County, Rockwool was still negotiating with several other jurisdictions to acquire a location for its new plant. On July 5, 2017, Rockwool issued a press release announcing it was planning on constructing a facility in Ranson. No approvals were granted to Rockwool by any local or state government agency prior to its announcement on July 5, 2017.

Rockwool is the world's largest stone wool manufacturer and is headquartered in Denmark with production facilities throughout Europe and the United States. Its North American operations are headquartered in Milton, Ontario, Canada. Rockwool has expressed its commitment to producing its product in an environmentally conscious manner as possible. It currently operates one USA-based manufacturing facility in Byhalia, Mississippi. Officials from the Commission as well as Ranson and the Jefferson County Development Authority visited the sister facility currently operating in Mississippi to familiarize themselves with Rockwool's operation and obtain information about what to expect if Rockwool decided to build its facility in Jefferson County.

Once Rockwool had chosen the location in Ranson, it approached the relevant local levying bodies, which were the Board of Education, the County Commission, and Ranson, about the possibility of a Payment in Lieu of Taxes Agreement, also known as a PILOT agreement. This agreement was executed in accordance with the provisions of the West Virginia Open Meetings Act. In addition to the County Commission, Ranson and the Board of Education also agreed and executed the PILOT agreement.

The Agreement was recorded as a public record in the Jefferson County Clerk's Office on October 10, 2017.

The property on which the proposed facility is located was annexed into the municipality of Ranson in December 2004. As such, the Rockwool facility lies completely within the municipal boundary of Ranson. Once Rockwool chose the Ranson location, the County Commission had no authority over the project. The only official action the Commission has taken with regard to the facility is the approval of the PILOT agreement. Additionally, the zoning designation of the land, the land use process, and any other permitting process governing the construction of the facility are all controlled either by the municipality of Ranson or the State of West Virginia. The Commission does not possess any legal authority to regulate any aspect of the location or construction of the facility. However, it is the Commission's understanding that Rockwool fully complied with both WVDEP's permitting and Ranson's land use requirements, and the entire process was noticed and open to the public.

In closing, the County Commission is committed to addressing our residents' concerns surrounding the Rockwool facility. An agenda item will be placed on the next meeting's agenda to open up a dialogue about the Rockwool facility, and the Commission will continue to provide information as it becomes available.