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(Photo: New Planet Energy)

**STONY POINT - Garbage in, fuel out.**

That is the aim of a recycling plant proposed for a 39-acre property on Holt Drive that would convert the region's garbage into fuel using a gasification process.

But while some are celebrating the potential return of large-scale manufacturing to the town that supporters claim will bring jobs and tax revenue, some are casting criticism on the project that would deploy a fleet of 400 trucks a day onto the area's roads.

New Planet Energy continues to move ahead with its \$700 million proposal to build a biofuel plant near the border of the Town of Haverstraw.

The plan includes a 250,000-square-foot processing facility that will use "cutting-edge technology for sorting and separating" materials, said John Cruikshank, president of the Los Angeles-based company.



Holt Drive in Stony Point on July 6, 2017 is the site where a new Planet Energy has proposed building a recycling plant in the coming years. (Photo: Carucha L. Meuse/The Journal News)

"By bringing one business like ours in, we'll attract other businesses, which is more jobs, more taxes," he said.

The company is wrapping up a nine-month traffic study. The original design also has been expanded, and now includes more office space and another underpass below CSX-owned railroad tracks that split the property in half.

Supervisor Jim Monaghan said he and the Stony Point Town Board support the plan "as long as it's safe and clean for our environment."

But Haverstraw Supervisor Howard Phillips remains unconvinced of the merits of the project. "It doesn't make any sense to do this in a highly populated area," he said.

## The plan

The two-phase proposal could make Stony Point a recycling mecca.

The facility would process upwards of 4,500 tons of garbage a day from municipalities in New York City and Westchester, among others, but none from Rockland.

The garbage will include the typical swill and detritus found in any municipal dump.

Every day, upwards of 200 round-trips by trucks are projected on Route 9W and the surrounding streets to haul the garbage to the facility.

Half the materials will be recycled into “solid recovered fuel,” an EPA-certified alternative fuel; the remaining material will be converted into sulfur-free diesel fuel.

The plant's gasification process will use a steam reformation system, rather than incineration. The facility could produce as much as 20 million gallons of diesel fuel a year.

Overall, the facility will recycle upwards of 86.5 percent of the materials that enter the facility, which otherwise would be destined for a landfill.

The entire recycling process will be done in the enclosed facility and use state-of-the-art technology, Cruikshank said.

“There will be a small degree of manual labor, but nothing like a lot of the recycling facilities in years past. This will be much more automated,” he said.

The plant will create 150 jobs.

The plan is currently in the permitting process and undergoing an environmental impact study with the state Department of Conservation, the lead agency for the proposal. The study will be followed by public meetings later in the year.

If approved, the facility will be built in two phases. Cruikshank estimated the first phase of the plan could be operational by the second quarter of 2019, after which the second phase could be completed within 18 months.

The Holt Drive property is the location of the former plastic company Kay Fries. The property is an [active Superfund site](#), which is land identified by the Environmental Protection Agency that has been contaminated by hazardous waste.

The site is still undergoing remediation, but the bulk of the cleanup has been completed, Cruikshank said.

## Too close for comfort



Holt Drive in Stony Point on July 6, 2017 is the site where a new Planet Energy has proposed building a recycling plant in the coming years. (Photo: Caracha L. Meuser/The Journal News)

The recycling facility is too close for comfort for Haverstraw's supervisor.

Phillips contends New Planet Energy was using the region as a “guinea pig” to test “unproven technology.”

The supervisor rattled off a long list of problems he foresees with the plan: Increased truck traffic that will roll through Haverstraw along Route 9W; the proximity of the processing

plant to residential neighborhoods; safety issues regarding CSX train tracks on the property; and potentially harmful emissions released into the air from the plant.

"This is an inappropriate use in a residential area," Phillips said. "The traffic will be horrendous. ... We don't want somebody experimenting in north Rockland with a product that can be very detrimental."

Monaghan declined to address Phillips' concerns, but said he supported the project as long as it was sustainable, and minimally affected traffic and the environment.

The loss of large manufacturers in north Rockland has hit the area's municipal and school tax revenues hard, Monaghan said. He added it was too early to estimate tax rates for the biofuel plant.

"It would be a real significant tax benefit. This would create jobs, not only during the construction phase of the project, but also employment," Monaghan said.

George Potanovic, president of the Stony Point Action Committee on the Environment, said he remained circumspect about the project.

Potanovic tempered his support for New Planet Energy's mission to recycle with concerns over unanswered questions about traffic, odor and noise issues, as well as projected tax revenues.

"We're keeping an open mind about it. We think it has a lot of potential," Potanovic said.

## **Traffic study**

So what will the recycling plant's impact be on the area's traffic?

"Very minimal," Cruikshank said.

Cruikshank based his answer on a traffic study commissioned by the company, which analyzed the impact of trucks and employee vehicles on Routes 9W, 303.

The full study has yet to be submitted to the town.

The peak hours of the facility's generators, and thereby truck traffic, are expected to be between 4 and 5 a.m. and 2 and 3 p.m.

The study found traffic volume was heaviest on 9W between 7 and 9 a.m., and 4 and 6 p.m. At more than a dozen intersections, traffic was projected to increase by 5 seconds or less, with some ticking up slightly higher, according to a limited overview of the study given by the company at a Stony Point public meeting in June.

Phillips doubted those traffic projections.

“I don’t care what they say,” Phillips said. “(Route) 9W can be a parking lot now. It’s an old, antiquated road that isn’t suited for the users there today.”

## **Problem plagued Florida facility**

A previous biofuel plant associated with New Planet Energy fell well short of expectations. The company had partnered with global chemical giant INEOS to build and operate a \$130 million biofuel plant in Vero Beach, Florida, which converted waste to ethanol.

But technical problems plagued the Florida facility after it opened in 2013; the plant closed in January, [according to an investigation by TCPalm.com](#), which is part of the USA Today network.

The Florida plant was bankrolled with \$129 million in grants, tax breaks and guaranteed loans, according to the report. It was unclear that the plant ever produced ethanol in significant quantities.

Cruikshank said New Planet Energy “walked away” from that Florida plant, but maintains a stake in the business as INEOS seeks to sell it.

Tom Yonge, a spokesman for New Planet Energy's Stony Point project, said it was a “business decision” by INEOS to close the plant.

New Planet Energy had “no say in the management” of the Florida plant, Cruikshank said, adding: “It just wasn’t a good fit for (INEOS).”

Cruikshank said he aims to be a “conscientious neighbor” and provide long-term solutions to the disposal of solid waste in the region.

“We have not rushed to get this done,” Cruikshank said. “We recognize the downfall of a lot of companies in this industry, and we’re not going to make that mistake. We’re doing things properly the first time and that means it takes time and more money.”

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