

# GATEWAY NEWS



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## WEBB HIRED AS PROJECT MANAGER

As work continues on infrastructure at the Rivercane development adjacent to Interstate 65, the Atmore Industrial Development Board is prepping for another huge step in the project.

In February, the Atmore City Council approved the board's recommendation to hire Joe Webb as the new project manager to oversee the 643-acre industrial venture. Current project manager Jim Corman announced in January that he would be accepting a job as an adjunct professor at Auburn University in the fall.

"I'll be teaching some entrepreneurship and small business finance courses," Corman said.

Corman has also been offered the position to head up a venture capital fund that would be headquartered in Auburn. He has also been appointed to an advisory board at Auburn.

Corman has agreed to an extension of his contract with the city through the end of May, which is the third extension to the original contract. At that time, Webb will take over as manager.

"I was impressed with what the mayor, council, Utilities Board and the Industrial Development Board had done to position the city to grow," Webb said. "I'm delighted to be able to participate in this exciting development."

Webb, a native of Atmore, graduated from Escambia County High School and received his bachelor's degree in industrial management

from the University of Alabama. He worked for 36 years with Alabama Power Company with experience in marketing, industrial sales, district management in Atmore and Mobile and economic development and government relations. Webb is currently a realtor with ERA out of Gulf Shores.

"My goal is to simply take what they have accomplished and try to move forward with it," Webb said. "They've done a marvelous job with getting the project to where it is."

Being offered the opportunity to be a part of such a wide-scale project is exciting to Webb.

"I've been in economic development and the government relations business for a number of years and it just makes me delighted that they had the vision to see this opportunity and to do all the heavy work that it took," Webb said. "The Creek Indian Nation has done a marvelous job and I'm looking forward to working with them to help maximize the opportunity for the citizens of the area."

Atmore Industrial Development Board member Tommy Moore believes Webb is the right man for the job.

"Joe is a great guy for the job," Moore said. "I think it's a great next step because he does have a lot of outside contacts and he's a hometown boy."

Atmore Mayor Howard Shell agrees. "We couldn't have tailor-made it any better," he said.

- Project manager Jim Corman announced that the city had the permit in hand from the Alabama Department of Transportation for the revision of Hwy 21 expanding it to seven lanes opposed to the original plans to expand it to six lanes.
- Since the Rivercane property went back on the market in late December, Corman said there has been a lot of interest from more than 65 perspective buyers and they have received offers on six lots totaling approximately \$3.5 million.



## Upcoming Events

CGEDA is hosting its 2nd Annual Industry Appreciation Golf Tournament for industries in Conecuh, Escambia and Monroe Counties. It will be held April 26, 2007 at the Country Club of Brewton. CGEDA hopes to build on the success of last year's tournament and provide local industry leaders with an opportunity to come out for a day of relaxation in appreciation for their hard work.

## FIRST BIODIESEL PRODUCED AT CLAIBORNE PLANT

Less than six months after a new \$15 million biodiesel plant was announced for Monroe County, Independence Renewable Energy Corporation (IREC) produced its first biodiesel from soybean oil on March 5.

The new Claiborne plant will produce 40-million gallons of eco-friendly biodiesel once the second production line is completed in early May, making IREC the largest biodiesel producer in the state and in the southeast.

Seven employees have been hired to date and three more operators will be hired once both production lines are operating. The 10 jobs will additionally support up to 150 jobs in agriculture and an estimated 100 jobs in transportation and petroleum blending industries.

The first shipment of soybean oil was delivered two weeks ago to Claiborne, reported IREC Executive Vice President/General Manager Greg Martin.

He said the primary base or feedstock for the plant will initially be soybean oil, although the facility design provides the flexibility for expansion as well as the use of alternate feedstocks. He said the company's anticipated annual revenue is \$120 million and target markets are Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Florida and Mississippi.

The project was announced in late September and two weeks later Gov. Bob Riley joined Parsons & Whittemore (P&W) Chairman George Landegger in Monroeville for a ceremonial groundbreaking.

P&W, a privately held company based in Rye Brook, NY, owns IREC and handled the project's engineering and construction. P&W also owns and operates the Alabama River and Alabama Pine pulp mills on the Claiborne site.

Biodiesel is a renewable fuel that can be made from a variety of vegetable oils and animal fats. The new Claiborne biodiesel plant will use more than 27 million bushels or nearly a million acres of soybeans a year for its production, based on the formula that one bushel is required to produce 1.5 gallons of biodiesel.

The biodiesel market is growing rapidly due to rising environmental awareness and a movement toward less dependence on foreign oil, Martin explained.

Biodiesel is used in conventional diesel engines in various blends with petroleum diesel fuel. Many states are mandating that a percentage of this eco-friendly fuel is blended into all petroleum-based diesel fuel, which offers comparable operating performance while reducing greenhouse gas and toxic emissions associated with petroleum diesel.

Martin said the Claiborne refinery's biodiesel will be sold to local distributors and blenders and mixed with petroleum diesel to make different grades for end-users. Plans are for IREC officials to deliver the first gallon of biodiesel to Gov. Riley at the state Capitol March 22 at a press conference scheduled for 10 a.m.

A Grand Opening ceremony on the site will be held in May.

## POARCH CREEK INDIANS LAUNCH STATEWIDE MEDIA CAMPAIGN

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians announced in January that they launched a statewide advertising campaign aimed at educating Alabamians about the tribe, its history, and its business enterprises.

"For years, our tribe has been relatively unknown to many Alabama residents," said Tribal Chairman Buford L. Rolin. "We played a very important role in settling the state," he continued, "and we would like for more people to know about us and what we try to do as citizens and neighbors."

The commercials began airing January 15th in four cities: Huntsville; Birmingham; Mobile and Montgomery. No actors or television professionals were used in the spots. Instead, tribal members and community members are the spokespeople.

"Many people know us only from our gaming operations," said James T. Martin, President of Creek Indian Enterprises. We hope that viewers will see a much more complete picture of who we are and how we have worked for centuries to be good neighbors."

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPTION HEADS TO VOTERS

Alabama voters will decide in June whether to increase the state's borrowing limit by \$400 million in hopes of luring 12 companies to the state and creating thousands of new jobs, including 2,700 at a steel plant that may locate in northern Mobile County.

The legislature unanimously approved a constitutional amendment on March 2—the last day of a special session called by Gov. Bob Riley to increase the state's borrowing limit for economic development from \$350 million to \$750 million.

"I feel that this sends a message loud and clear across this nation and across this world that Alabama is open for business," said Sen. Jabo Waggoner, R-Vestavia Hills. "Our economy in Alabama today is sizzling."

Waggoner, the Senate minority leader, said economic development boosts both income and sales tax receipts in Alabama, which in turn helps everyone through increased funding for education.

Voters will decide June 5 whether to allow the increase.

Among the major companies considering Alabama is German steel giant ThyssenKrupp AG, which has narrowed the choices for its \$2.9 billion plant to a location along the border between Mobile and Washington counties and a site in Louisiana.

Leaders in both states are actively pursuing the manufacturer, with trips to Germany, incentive packages and letters from top elected officials.

"This is a historic day in economic development in this state," said Lt. Gov. Jim Folsom. "We are the envy of much of the nation, much of the South."

Riley applauded the bipartisan nature of the special session.

"All our goals were accomplished in the minimum amount of days," the governor said in a written statement. "I hope the strong

bipartisan cooperation we saw, the willingness to come together and address critical needs of our state, is something that will continue in the regular session."

House Speaker Seth Hammett said the decision by the German steel giant could come as early as this month. He said company officials hope to break ground this summer.

The speaker traveled to Germany and Austria last month with Riley and Folsom to talk with ThyssenKrupp officials and with other companies about the possibility of locating in Alabama.

Folsom said the February meeting with the company officials was "very positive".

"I think we left a favorable impression, and we put our best foot forward," he said.

Hammett said he anticipates that voters will pass the constitutional amendment and expects lawmakers to lobby for its approval in coming months.

"Alabama now understands the importance of incentives when you are prudent," Folsom said.

Sen. Charles Bishop, R-Jasper, said he was in the Legislature in 1993 when the state approved the incentives package to recruit Mercedes-Benz, which jump-started a recent series of major economic development projects.

Bishop said he supported the proposal at the time and voted for it but was worried about whether the state was giving away too much to the company.

"Had we not made that investment, we wouldn't be here today, and we would not have all these manufacturers in Alabama," he said.

### Point To Ponder

Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises.

Demosthenes (384 BC - 322 BC)

