

# Gibson talks gas: Looking at the upcoming Alton (green) waste treatment plant

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**ALTON** - After Des Moines, Iowa-based firm Ecoengineers delivered a presentation at the April 12, 2017, Alton City Council meeting, Treatment Plant Manager Steve Gibson is giving an in-depth look at Alton's upcoming waste treatment plant.

Gibson gave the council background on the upcoming project, which is partially the result of more than four years of extensive research regarding his idea. As the current treatment plant manager, Gibson knows the current facility operated by the city is out-of-date, and would need to be replaced soon. Upon that replacement, Gibson thought the city could utilize a new plant, which would be needed anyway, to make additional revenue for Alton through green energy.

Currently, the Alton facility is at risk for having its waste digester fail. If that occurs, annual disposal costs of an estimated 23.8 tons of biosolids will increase to as much as \$275,000-\$400,000 annually. Possible environmental damage may occur as well - putting the city at risk of potential fines as high as \$10,000 a day. According to the Ecoengineers presentation, "doing nothing is not an option."

The new facility, which would act as a "resource recovery center," would create a waste-to-energy opportunity using tried and tested technology. Revenue could be generated by methane produced as well as low-carbon fuel standard (LCFS) credits and Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) credits. Those credits will only be given under certain conditions, however.

"The natural gas we inject into the gas grid must be proven to be used as transportation fuel in order for us to claim and collect environmental attributes revenue."

Total annual revenue from the new facility is estimated by Ecoengineers to be as much as \$11.7 million, with the facility having a possible annual profit as high as an estimated \$7.16 million. However, as much as \$8,567,031 of that income is tied to "environmental attributes," which is seconded by ammonia sulfate struvite, which may create as much as \$1,277,780 in possible revenue. Renewable natural gas may generate as much as \$884,585 and dewatered solids, such as retail-grade fertilizer, may generate as much as \$354,090 for the city.

Economic impact is also a huge factor in this project, with as much as \$18 million in possible investments, \$4 million in revenue, \$2.7 million increase in tax receipts over project life, \$158 million in total economic output over project life, 188 jobs created during construction phase and nine permanent jobs, according to the Ecoengineers presentation.

A feasibility study for the plant is expected to be finalized by the end of April. Following that, a three to six month process of feedstock analysis begins, followed by a final design within a year. Construction should be completed within two years, and revenue will be generated within four.