



Grafton mayor: Business to provide fresh start for fishermen, help rid area of Asian Carp

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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On Wednesday, Grafton Mayor Tom Thompson officially issued a business license to American Meixi Fishing Industry, Inc.

The business will lease the building at 20201 State Highway 3 in Grafton, owned by American Heartland Fish Products, LLC. The new business plans to buy Asian Carp from local commercial fishermen, freeze the fish in a blast freezer, package them in cardboard containers, then ship the containers by ocean freight to China customers. They will only purchase fresh fish.



Gray Magee, American Heartland Fish Products CEO, said American Meixi Fishing Industry Inc. will have the option to buy the building in 18 months.

Thompson said he presented this to the Grafton City Council on Tuesday night out of courtesy and to be transparent, but he is the business license commissioner of the city and allowed to issue or revoke any and all businesses as prescribed by law.

“I feel very confident this company will not only do what they say, but they will absolutely not cause any odor or pollution outside the plant,” he said. “They (the company) will hire as many fishermen locally as possible. The fishermen will be able to provide all the Asian Carp they want.

“The fish are frozen like bricks immediately when they come in to the plant. They take the whole fish and do not remove the heads, tails or anything else. They will then truckload them to another facility. I don’t think they have figured out where they will take them, but the Central Port comes to mind.”

Thompson said he believes the goal for American Meixi Fishing Industry Inc. is to have the new plant open and operating by the first of September. He said there are already local fishermen who have been hired to bring in Asian Carp.

Presently, there is expensive equipment inside the American Heartland facility, but that will not be used and eventually moved, Thompson said. American Heartland said the machinery will be moved somewhere in the South, where they will relocate that plant.

One executive from the new fishing company has already leased a place to live in Grafton and there could be a few others coming, Thompson said. Local people will also be hired to work inside the plant, assisting with the freezing and distribution of the Asian Carp, but the mayor didn’t know a number yet.

“The new company has a lot of work to do before they open,” Thompson said. “They have to buy freezers and equipment they will use.”

The mayor said curtailing the spread and bringing down the population of the invasive Asian Carp species is not only a priority here, but all along the Mississippi River. He said this priority goes as far as the Great Lakes and Minnesota bodies of water.

“This will help us down the road in getting rid of the invasive fish species,” he said. “Asian Carp are one of the biggest problems along the Mississippi River. We had a couple people come from China to see the Asian Carp and we took them out on the river and they were jumping in and out of the boat. We just wanted to show them the amount of Asian Carp that are out there. They are a real menace. They are a menace to our native species of fish and to recreation and transportation along the river.”

Thompson again emphasized he was very open to the Grafton City Council about the business and the fact that it is environmentally safe. He said the new company contacted the Environmental Protection Agency and they clearly saw there was no problem with it, because they were simply unloading and freezing the fish to 50 below zero and not processing them in Grafton.

“I don’t think we could have asked for a better business to take over the building up on Route 3 in Grafton,” he said. “Right now it is a pole barn sitting out in a field close to the road not being used. Also, they are going to hire local people and I think help revitalize the fishing industry here in Grafton.”

