

Construction of Fairfield power plant to begin in December

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By [Nicholas Sohr](#)

Daily Record Business Writer



Patrick Mahoney, chairman, president and CEO of Energy Answers International, speaks in front of the site for the Fairfield Renewable Energy Project after a press conference on Monday, Oct. 18, 2010 in Curtis Bay. (Maximilian Franz/The Daily Record)

Energy Answers International will start construction of a \$1 billion, waste-fueled power plant in December and begin selling electricity in late 2013, the company announced Monday.

Those involved with the development of the 140-megawatt plant on East Patapsco Avenue said they hope it will be the cornerstone of new industrial development on a 90-acre site that used to produce agricultural chemicals.

“It’s like building a mall by having a Macy’s here,” said Robert T. Forbes, environmental director of **FMC Corp.**, which owns the property. “You have to have the anchor tenant first.”

City, state and federal officials lauded the **Fairfield Renewable Energy Power Plant** as an example of the high-tech innovation needed to form the foundation of Maryland’s post-recession economy.

“It’s always been Maryland’s karma, Maryland’s role, to lead those movements and show the rest of the country that the pity party is over, that we’re moving forward,” said Gov. Martin O’Malley.

Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake called the plant “a national model for green, renewable energy.”

“This project will allow the city government and surrounding jurisdictions to add more renewable energy to our regional portfolio,” Rawlings-Blake said. “It means that Baltimore city will be purchasing less power from coal-fired plants to power government buildings.”

Energy Answers President and CEO Patrick Mahoney said the company is negotiating power contracts with the city, state and utilities, and hopes to have them in place by the end of the year.

“We’re putting new [power generation capacity] right in the center of the area of highest need,” Mahoney said.

The plant could also provide electricity for businesses that move to the industrial park to be built on the adjacent 70 acres, and consumers that want their power from a renewable source.

Kurt Krammer, the project’s manager, said a bio-diesel production facility, which would use an energy-intensive process to create cleaner-burning fuel, could eventually be a tenant in the park. Krammer said it was too early in the process to discuss other potential tenants.

Development of the plant will be supported by up to \$300 million in stimulus funds and support an average 400 jobs during the three-year construction period. The plant will be staffed by more than 180 workers once operational.

Mahoney’s company had tussled with environmentalists and regulators over the proposed plant. The Maryland **Department of the Environment** had opposed the plant, and sought to require Energy Answers to apply for more air and water permits, but dropped its opposition after entering a settlement with the company that includes environmental safeguards.

On Monday, Environmental Protection Agency Deputy Administrator Bob Perciasepe called the plan a “green and appropriate” reuse project.

“This is a really simple and important formula,” said Perciasepe, a former Maryland secretary of the environment. “We get toxic pollution out and we bring jobs and opportunities back in.”

Energy Answers will fire its plant with municipal trash, tire chips, automobile waste and other items that would have been destined for a landfill. The waste will be processed off-site into four-inch chunks and burned to create steam and electricity. The energy produced by the plant will qualify as renewable energy.

The plant will burn 4,000 tons of waste per day, or the equivalent of 115 acres of landfill piled 15 feet high per year. The ash leftover in the boilers can be used in concrete products and for building materials.

“This project is more than sustainable,” Mahoney said. “We’re taking a site that otherwise wouldn’t be used, would be fenced in, and we’re putting it to good use.”

The site of the plant had been in use since 1915 as an ethanol and acetone production facility to provide war materials, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. FMC bought the site in 1954 and produced herbicides and pesticides there until it ceased production at the plant in May 2008. The site was mostly cleared by the end of 2009.