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Wisconsin Whey Protein coming to Darlington

By: Tallitha Reese

A company by the name of Wisconsin Whey Protein recently purchased several acres of land that sits behind Subway in Darlington's industrial park for the purpose of developing a whey processing plant.

The plant will produce ultra pure whey protein products for use in infant formula, baby food, sport nutrition, health and wellness industry and geriatric products.

K. Kachadurian, founder president and CEO of Wisconsin Whey Protein said, "Our products are to be sold and used both domestically and internationally. There is very high demand growth in the international market. We have been working with this industry for fifteen years in Wisconsin and we are excited to bring this modern, proprietary and high-tech technology plant to Darlington."

Wisconsin is a leading producer in cheese, and with cheese production comes the byproduct of whey: the liquid left behind after milk has been curdled and strained.

Once upon a time, dealing with whey posed to be somewhat of a disposal problem for cheese makers and other dairy food producers, as whey contains suspended solids that can potentially overrun a smaller sewer system when disposed of in large quantities.

Often cheese producers must haul whey elsewhere, either themselves or pay to have it transported; or they must construct their own sewage system in order to deal with the byproduct.

This is something especially relevant to Lafayette County considering the number of cheese factories in the area and the extreme focus on agriculture.

But now, with the construction of a whey processing plant in Darlington, cheese producers in the area will have the opportunity to profit off of the byproduct. "It's a win-win situation," said Ken Harwood, Executive Director of Lafayette County Economic Development Corporation.

The company hopes to be in the ground by May of this year with June being the latest projected start date for construction, according to Bev Anderson, former mayor and current alderperson for the city of Darlington. The company will be looking for employees immediately.

The plant will grow in phases to a total investment of over 20 million dollars and around 50 total employees in the Darlington area. This is the second facility for Wisconsin Whey Protein Inc., with the first being in Turtle Lake Wisconsin, which began production in 2012.

"Whey is a byproduct of cheese production that, at times, can be difficult to get rid of. A facility to convert it to a useable food grade product will help the existing cheese industry in the area as well as help attract new plants to Lafayette County. This is great for jobs and agriculture in the area," said Anderson.

Darlington mayor Dave Breunig said, "Working with this company to bring good jobs and support for the dairy industry was exactly what we had in mind when we created the industrial park. We are fortunate to have projects of this quality in our city." Breunig further suggested that tax incremental financing will be used to help finance the project along with small loans from the city and county, and a grant from the state of Wisconsin. "The

community also has agreements in place with Wisconsin Whey Protein to protect our investment well into the future,” Breunig added.

Ken Harwood, , said, “It takes a team of individuals and business support to bring a project to the area. I want to thank the county, state, and of course Darlington for seeing the value a company like this brings to the area. We are very happy that they chose Lafayette County.”

Back in November of 2012 the Lafayette County Economic Development Corporation hosted a bus trip to Turtle Lake to give Darlington city officials the chance to see the whey processing plant that has been established there.

Breunig, Anderson, and Harwood were some of the participants in the trip along with Darlington Police Chief Jason King, Darlington city alderpersons: Don Osterday, John Sonsalla and Steve Pickett and the city clerk/treasurer of Darlington: Phil Risseeuw among others.