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## Renewable Energy Center on EIU Board of Trustees' Agenda

Jun-17-2009



Proposed EIU Renewable Energy Center

Eastern Illinois University's Board of Trustees' expected approval of an \$80 million contract with Honeywell International Inc. will be the next step in making the institution's planned Renewable Energy Center a reality.

Trustees are scheduled to meet at 1 p.m. Monday, June 22, in the Grand Ballroom of the MLK Jr. Union. The public is invited to attend.

If approved, the contract would authorize Honeywell to oversee the construction and installation of agreed-upon energy conservation measures at EIU. In return, Honeywell would guarantee that Eastern will attain annual energy/operation cost savings equal to or greater than the annual cost of financing the project. Annual energy savings of less than the guaranteed amount would be supplemented by Honeywell, and that supplement would be used to repay amounts financed.

The largest of the energy conservation measures -- with a price tag of \$44 million -- would be the construction of a Renewable Energy Center, an economical and ecologically friendly answer to Eastern's critical power needs and made necessary by the deterioration of the university's current coal-fired power plant. Built circa 1925, the plant has been plagued by persistent equipment failures and replacement parts have been difficult, if not impossible, to find due to the age of the equipment.

The new facility would be a "biomass gasifier" that could supply the university's heating and cooling needs by burning plant matter. Eastern will be permitted to burn two-inch virgin, or non-treated, wood chips obtained as by-products from the lumber industry. The wood chips will be much more "clean burning" than the coal used currently, thus reducing the overall air emissions being released into the environment.

Additional "biomass" fuel sources may be considered in the future.

The university outlined details of the planned facility during a series of public meetings in November 2008; revisions addressing issues of public concern over the original design were unveiled in April.

A new facility would be located on the east side of campus, occupying existing university property located near the intersection of 18th Street (Illinois 130) and Edgar Drive. The location -- a site chosen in accordance with Eastern's Campus Master Plan -- will allow easy access to semitrailers hauling product, while keeping the heavy vehicles off the narrow roads in the center of campus.

Original plans called for traffic to enter the energy center lot via 18th Street. Due to concerns voiced by nearby residents, Eastern will consider moving the entrance to Edgar Drive.

University officials also announced that the new building will be aesthetically pleasing, incorporating more brick and glass and less metal in the exterior than was originally planned.

In addition, fuel storage and handling equipment will not exceed the height of the building. Originally, the tallest object on the project was to have been an approximately 120-foot-high bucket elevator, responsible for loading wood chips into a fuel silo. Plans now call for two shorter silos which, together, will maintain the capacity of the one taller silo, but eliminate the need for a bucket loader.

In addition to the Renewable Energy Center, the Honeywell contract would also make way for miscellaneous other energy upgrades across campus, which will further reduce the university's consumption of electricity, steam and water. Also studied within the project are possibilities of electrical generation from wind turbines.