

# SEITZ <sup>FOR</sup> MAYOR

*Bridging Jasper's Past with Its Future*

## **A Position Paper on the Conversion of the Jasper Municipal Electric Plant to Natural Gas/Biomass**

Written by Terry Seitz  
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As a candidate for Mayor of Jasper in the May primary campaign, I advocated for the negotiation process between the city and its prospective partner on the municipal power plant conversion, Twisted Oak LLC. My reason was so the public could be better informed. Having gleaned much from attending meetings of the Utility Service Board (USB) and the Common Council since announcing my candidacy, I believed the public needed to know as much as possible to provide input to appointed and elected officials.

Additionally, after going door-to-door across the community in March and April, I benefitted greatly from my conversations with citizens, neighbors and those conducting business in our community. My goal after the primary was to continue listening to constituents and I have done so. As the time for a decision is near, it is also time for me - as a candidate for mayor of this fine city - to state my position on this issue. I do so with these acknowledgements:

- 1) I have attempted to listen, learn about and comprehend this multi-faceted issue to the best of my ability.
- 2) I wish to thank the members of the USB and city employees for their work on this project. I understand the consideration which needed to be given to determine the future of the electrical production in the city.
- 3) During the process I have been disheartened on many levels by the discourse.

I am officially opposed to an agreement between the City of Jasper and Twisted Oak LLC. My decision is based on these key factors: Economic Development; the Business Plan; the Marketplace and Community Wellbeing.

## Economic Development

I have campaigned on my support for economic incentive programs. The current administration has opposed them. As recently as May, 2011, our mayor adamantly resisted consideration of the Jasper Action Team's Economic Incentive proposal. This proposal is a broad-based economic incentive program which would be open to nearly all existing and future businesses creating new jobs.

At the same meeting, the power plant conversion project was cited for its economic development impact. Subsequently at the June 20, 2011 USB meeting the preliminary agreement shared with the public reveals tax abatements to be part of the lease agreement - incentives which the city never liked before.

I am disturbed that our administration has fought against incentives for our local business community, yet - only when the city will be the direct recipient of income from a company requesting incentives - finds them worthy of support.

I remain open to consideration of a natural gas conversion of the existing plant.

## The Business Plan

My firm, InterComm Group LLC, is a single person company. I am InterComm Group. Similarly, Jay Catasein is Twisted Oak LLC - a single person company. Even with experience of brokering projects myself, I have publicly expressed my concern of placing a project of this magnitude in the hands of a partner without depth or breadth.

My opposition on this point is not to cast skepticism on Mr. Catasein personally or professionally. Having met him several times and in speaking at length with him he is quite knowledgeable on the subject of energy, its creation and deliverables.

Yet, the complexity and size of this project, and the fact that it binds an entire community of 15,000 people into a deal with a one-person entity, requires a tremendous trust that I cannot muster. Simply put, for this project to be successful in a timely manner the sun, stars, moon and earth would have to be perfectly aligned and I don't have confidence in such an outcome.

We've been down this road before with the former Jasper Middle School property and we were very fortunate to have been able to call back that deal. It's a lesson that needs to be heeded again.

## The Marketplace

Another business component which has far too much risk is the development of the miscanthus market. Although my initial concerns about the introduction of this non-native species have been diminished, I raise the following questions:

- When has such a significant project not faced delays - whether from contract issues, financing, permitting or lawsuits?
- Will the agricultural community sign production contracts to grow miscanthus if there is any doubt about the timing and viability of the singular market? After all, there is a 3-4 year growing cycle and the only buyer for the crop would be Jasper Clean Energy.
- What happens to the crop in the ground if the project gets delayed in any manner?
- How do farmers receive compensation if there is no market for the product because of delays?

## Community Wellbeing

Community wellbeing means more than physical health. To me, it encompasses the fundamental reasons we live here, work here, thrive here.

I see a growing number of concerned citizens expressing fear of the unknown. In the journey our family took with the health of my wife we faced a similar situation. We learned that she had extraordinarily high levels of toxic metals in her system which could be causing her symptoms. We went on a two-year mission to find out why and what could be done about it. Ultimately we had no answers and no more time.

To those who have brought health risks to light, I share our story to indicate empathy with yours. While I don't agree with everything I've seen and heard, I acknowledge the role you have played.

In addition, as Jasper is home to a regional medical center, it would be foolhardy to ignore the public stand of many qualified members of our medical community who have chosen to make Jasper home to their practices.

Recently, in team training for Jasper's upcoming participation in the Indiana Home Town Competitiveness program, we learned that the top attachment of an individual to a community was the openness of it. I am convinced that approval of this agreement has the potential to further polarize our community and seal it off more than bring opportunity.

I have been advised that a signed agreement in 2011 is something that cannot be undone in 2012 or beyond without violating the terms of the lease. Therefore, I see our community potentially becoming bogged down rather than moving forward. Your newly-elected mayor, clerk-treasurer and common council will be similarly affected.

Should I have the honor of being elected your next mayor it is my desire for us to invest our time and talents towards the future rather than be tied down by a mistake from our past.

Respectfully,

Terry Seitz