



Municipality of the District of Argyle

Item: Feasibility study request – Pellet initiative

Date: September 29, 2020

VISION

We see Argyle as home to a healthy and thriving rural population. Our municipality promotes and supports economic and social opportunities for the region and engages in the active expression of our unique Acadian heritage. We are a place of choice for rural living and are widely recognized for our warm hospitality and joie de vivre. Surrounded by fresh air and cool ocean breezes, we work and play in the great outdoors. People choose to live in Argyle because of our commitment to each other, to our community and to our neighbors. Argyle is a place we are proud to call home.

Background:

The Municipality of Argyle was approached by WestFor as well as Torchlight Resources to be a part of a study of the feasibility of using specialized residential pellet burning systems as a replacement for oil or electricity as the main source of heating for residential homes.

WestFor was established in 2016 by the Provincial Government to increase the efficiency of forest management on Crown Land in Nova Scotia. They assist 13 mills in their day to day operations while also assisting the government, the people and the forests. Their goal is to practice sustainable forestry that benefits future generations to come, both environmentally and economically.

Torchlight details are attached to this request.

Essentially, the request is to select Argyle as a pilot project to assess the feasibility of establishing a wood pellet based heating initiative. Here is what Council should know about the project prior to moving ahead, or not:

- There is not cost to the Municipality for this feasibility study, other than staff time when needed.
- Estimated time for staff is unknown, Hans Pfeil would lead any request coming from these organizations, and the team would likely include members of the Western REN, as they are engaged in energy related projects separately, and have good knowledge of the forestry sector, built by engaging consultants in this area.
- Feasibility study would be dependent on WestFor's application being accepted by the Province, so even if you are willing to participate, there may not be a study.
- The feasibility study will answer many questions we would have about the pros and cons of this type of initiative. It is commonplace in Europe, and the technology has been around and used in the past.
- Pre-feasibility information suggests that residents would save considerable money on heating with this option as opposed to other traditional models, but has a high capital cost, which would have to be sponsored by Provincial/Federal government grants to be viable.

MGA considerations:

None noted

CAO's Recommendation:

Since there is no cost, and the potential up-side of such a project is considerable, I would recommend that Council endorse this request. The forest sector is a sector very much underutilized in this area, and there are many advantages to utilizing local resources in as many ways as possible, instead of importing that resource. It opens up local economic growth opportunities, and aligns well with our regional economic development work at the WREN.

Once the study is completed, we will know more about the project, and the feasibility study does not commit Argyle in any way to actually execute the project.

Suggested motion:

Move that Council accept the WestFor/Torchlight Resources request to participate in a study, at no cost to Argyle, to determine the feasibility of using wood-pellet technology for a residential heating source for our residents