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The new county nursing home will include a \$325,000 wood pellet heating system that is being paid for through a federal grant.

## Wood pellets will heat the new nursing home

Commissioners use federal grant to purchase two boilers and 34-ton storage silo

BY DAYMOND STEER  
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OSSIPEE – A wood-pellet boiler system at Carroll County's new nursing home won't just heat the facility and provide it with hot water. It will also create a market for heating-fuel producers in New England.

County commissioners signed a purchase-and-sales agreement with a Massachusetts company called Biomass Commodities Corp. at their meeting on Nov. 3. The commissioners bought two boilers and a fuel silo for a cost of about \$325,000, which is being paid for through a federal grant.

The new \$23.5 million nursing home is expected to be complete next summer. It will be 8,500 square feet, or about twice the size of the current facility.

The new nursing home is under construction near the county complex on Water Village Road. The boilers will be housed in a portion of the old nursing home, and the heat will be piped underground to the new facility. The piping cost is also covered with federal money.

"A project of this size is what we needed to create a local fuel supply," said commissioner Chip Albee who spearheaded the effort

to use alternative heating methods. "It's a chicken-and-the-egg thing. If there's not a big enough user, then no one is going to be able to invest the money to be a producer."

The new nursing home would probably be the largest pellet-burning facility in Carroll County for the purpose of heat and hot water. There is already a local power plant that burns wood pellets, but that's for producing electricity, said Albee.

Why not go with oil or propane, the traditional heating fuel sources?

see **PELLETS** page 18

## PELLETS from page 13

"There are no oil wells in Carroll County and there are no gas wells in Carroll County but there a lot of trees in Carroll County," said Albee. "From an economic standpoint, if we can take the fuel money we spend and turn it back into the county for purchases, we will have a multi-fold return, employment, sales, taxes paid, etcetera."

The wood pellets could come from several suppliers in New Hampshire and Maine, said Charlie Agnew, of Biomass. As examples, Agnew listed Jesse E. Lyman, of North Conway; Lakes Region Pellet Company, of Barnstead; WoodPellets.com, of Goffstown; and New England Wood Pellet of Jaffrey.

In the cold months, the pellets will be delivered once a week in 25-ton trailers and stored in a 34-ton silo, said Agnew. The county decided to buy two boilers as opposed to just one large boiler for efficiency reasons. One large boiler can only be scaled down to 20 percent of its operating capacity. Getting two smaller boilers allows the county to run at peak efficiency in the summer and in the winter.

Specifically, the two boilers are BioMax 300kW and a BioMax 500kW. The boilers were manufactured in the United States, said Agnew, who predicted the system would save the county about

\$60,000 in the first year. That assumes propane would cost \$2 per gallon and pellets at \$200 per ton. The boilers are 92 percent efficient, said Agnew.

They have the capacity to displace over 65,000 gallons of propane per year by consuming 360 tons of wood-pellet fuel. There will be environmental benefits, Albee and Agnew said.

"We will get close to a 50 percent reduction in our carbon emissions," said Albee.

The commissioners also investigated using a wood-chip heating system, but they felt the initial capital cost would be too much for the legislative delegation to swallow. The legislative delegation is a group of 14 state representatives who approve the money to run the county. The new nursing home will also be equipped with a full propane backup system.

Biomass Commodities Corp. has offices in Williamson, Mass. and Portland, Maine. Biomass has been in the renewable energy industry for 20 years.

"Biomass (BCC) provides pellet boiler installations and services throughout the Northeastern United States. Common applications are in centralized heating plants, buildings 10,000 square feet or more including schools, manufacturing facilities, assisted living complexes, hospitals and residences," states its Website [www.biomasscommodities.com](http://www.biomasscommodities.com).

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