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TASK FORCE RELEASES INITIATIVE TO RELOCATE MAINE ENERGY WASTE PROCESSING LINE AND ESTABLISH A NEW ENERGY ZONE FOR DOWNTOWN BIDDEFORD

*New guidelines collaboratively adopted between MERC and the city
seek long-term municipal benefits*

BIDDEFORD—The Maine Energy Recovery Company (MERC) task force, co-chaired by Biddeford Mayor Joanne Twomey and Maine Economic and Community Development Commissioner John Richardson, announced today that it has unanimously agreed on two major initiatives aimed at providing direct benefits to citizens, small businesses, and the mill district.

First, the task force will support operational and facility design changes at MERC focused on reducing truck traffic by over 50%, an increase in current facility recycling rates by 100%, and relocation of the waste processing line. The task force will seek stimulus money to accomplish these changes.

Second, the task force shall recommend to the city council the establishment of a downtown economic development zone called the “GREENZONE: Growing Renewable Energy for Economic Neighborhoods.” Details of the GREENZONE initiative are still being resolved including certification of fuel as renewable and the creation of a “community power supply group” which produces power locally for purchase by participating residents and small businesses at a discounted rate. The city-designated **GREENZONE** will service homes, small businesses, and buildings located within a certain distance from downtown. MERC will also supply “waste heat”—heat produced from machines or industrial processes—to the **GREENZONE** for use within the mill district. In addition, the task force has discussed energy efficiency options with Citizens Energy—a nonprofit started in 1979 by Joe Kennedy—with the intent of providing energy services such as energy audits, weatherization services, alternative heating systems, and other assistance to residents.

The direct benefit of lower electricity costs, improved energy efficiency, and alternatives to fossil fuel dependence will have a significant impact on Biddeford’s position as an affordable and sustainable community.

“We are breaking new ground in economic development in Maine,” said Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner John Richardson. “The **GREENZONE** would create a new type of sustainable-energy platform for a Maine community, offering a viable option for a community to move away from its dependence on fossil fuels. Through these actions the Twin Cities will become a model green community leading the state in energy efficiency.”

“The task force has taken a very unique step,” said Mayor Joanne Twomey. “Through the leadership and collaboration of the task force, the city and MERC, for the first time ever, have agreed to a plan of action that will lead to a “cleaner and greener” downtown Biddeford while providing lower energy costs to citizens. We’ve recognized that even more can be done to re-invigorate downtown Biddeford and

this is a first step.”

The task force continues to explore options relating to public ownership and control of MERC. Additional details from the task force about its progress are expected by the end of November. Members of the task force, appointed by Governor John Baldacci, include officials from local and state government, Casella, and other community stakeholders. The task force has been meeting weekly since its inception in May.

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Proposed “GREENZONE” benefits:

- Freedom Energy Associates and MERC will establish a Biddeford Community Power Supply Group (BCPSG) authorized to provide power to residents and small businesses at rates below available standard offer pricing. All power will continue being provided via existing distribution connections but will be sourced from MERC.
- The City of Biddeford and MERC will establish an Energy Thermal Storage (ETS) protocol agreement. The agreement will make available off-peak electrical power for individuals. Individuals opting to purchase the power and install ETS will benefit from discounted electrical rates and the ability to convert and store electricity as heat to offset fuel oil heating needs. This will have the effect of stabilizing home heating costs and limiting foreign oil dependency.
- Citizen Energy will work with the task force and state and federal agencies to identify and explore grant opportunities and coordinate with local lending institutions to create a one-stop energy efficiency program accessible to community members.
- All mill owners will be offered re-development assistance and an energy purchase option from the “MERC Energy Loop.” Re-development assistance will focus on identifying and implementing construction options in accordance with LEED certified standards.
- MERC will design and offer conversion of waste heat (CHP) to a downtown mill redevelopment heating and cooling “steam loop” to assist in stabilizing heating costs and reducing fossil fuel consumption for the heating of applicable mill buildings.

Task Force Members

John Richardson (co-chair)
Commissioner, Maine Department of Economic and Community Development

Joanne Twomey (co-chair)
Mayor, City of Biddeford

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Maine State Senator

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