

SODI hosts developers at A-Plant site to discuss plans

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PIKETON — The Southern Ohio Diversity Initiative (SODI) invited representatives from Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service, Oklo, Trillium and the Department of Energy to Twin Lakes Resort Thursday to discuss with community members the progress at and future of the former Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant.

Oklo and Trillium are two of many companies that are looking to expand activity at the A-Plant site. Oklo's business deals with advanced small nuclear reactors. Trillium is a hydrogen power company. Another company at the plant site is Centrus, which started operations last October. Centrus deals in the enrichment of High-Assay Low-Enriched Uranium (HALEU). John Hanson, chief of staff of Oklo, talked about a plan to build two reactors at the site.

"That's a total of 30 megawatts of electricity," Hanson said. "As part of that we've been in close collaboration with SODI, OU and others on community engagement, on workforce development and education about nuclear energy."

Hanson explained that it is important for Oklo not to just provide electricity but to be a member of the community.

"We intend to have local jobs. There will be folks working at the site operating the facility. Obviously the construction will be an additional influx of jobs at the start, but it is important to have a local workforce."

Hanson spoke about the importance of clean energy in today's world.

"It's not just nuclear (energy) there's all other kinds of clean energy we kinda need to build all of them," he said.

"We (Oklo) think we have a really good answer to how to provide more reliable, affordable clean energy. We have to beat it, not just being clean, but beat it on price."

Hanson said that it is crucial to have a site where there is a community that understands and supports nuclear (energy), that has people who have worked in that field, and is excited to bring more jobs to that area.

"We have great partners on site like Centrus. We have an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) we intend to sell them electricity from our reactors. We intend to buy fuel for them. It's a very good relationship," Hanson said.

Vice President of Trillium, Caitlin Holley, talked about how important it was to utilize a workforce that is already here.

"One of our core missions is to bring high quality jobs to southern Ohio," Holley said.

Holley explained that Trillium has a construction window of approximately 20 months starting in late 2025 or early 2026.

"That will be over 2,000 jobs and those will be high quality, high paying construction jobs. We're going to use every possible (workforce) resource locally," Holley said.

"When we finish that construction window we move to operations in 2027 -2028. We're going to have 300 jobs that are full time high quality jobs utilizing the workforce that's already here," Holley added.

SODI was the organization that hosted the event and invited the interested parties to talk about their plans.

SODI Board Member Tony Montgomery said it was great to see so many people turn out to learn more about what is going on at the plant.

“This is wonderful. To see this much interest, not only the developers that are here, but the community, the whole area showing up to see what they got going,” Montgomery said.

“These are the guys that are making it happen. It’s one thing to hear about them, but they are here. The CEO of Trillium is here; Oklo has scientists and engineers here. For these guys to show and just be here and available is huge,” Montgomery said.

Montgomery said that he thinks the plant can return and perhaps surpass what it once was.

“There is a lot of interest — not just what you see here. ‘Can the site ever be what it once was?’ I think if the players stay and we get state and federal support, it can be more than it ever was,” Montgomery said.

Montgomery spoke about the facility and the advantages it has.

“There’s not another site in the nation like this one with infrastructure and access to utilities,” Montgomery said. “There’s not another site in the nation that has what this site has to offer.”

“We’re the prettiest girl at the dance. We just need some attention from our state and federal delegation,” Montgomery said.