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## Fayston Municipal Building gets Biomass Heat System



Submitted Photo Gov. James Douglas' final ribbon-cutting ceremony marks energy-efficiency retrofits and biomass heating installation at the Fayston Municipal Building. From left to right behind the ribbon: David Frank; Robert Vasseur of the Fayston Select Board; Mike Quenneville, project supervisor and Fayston resident; Gov. Douglas; Patti Lewis, assistant town clerk; Ed Read and Jared Caldwell of the Fayston Select Board; and Marc DiMario. The ribbon holders are Fayston residents Patti Greene-Swift and Cyril Swift. In the background is Fayston's wood pellet silo.

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The town of Fayston celebrated energy-efficiency upgrades and its transition to biomass heating with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday at the Fayston Municipal Building. Gov. Jim Douglas did the honors in his last such ceremony before handing the reins over to Gov.-elect Peter Shumlin this week.

Thanks to a handful of locals who applied for the grants and planned the project, along with some donated labor, the town's cost was virtually zero. The project included comprehensive weatherization, lighting upgrades and installation of a highly efficient biomass heating system — all from local contractors.

The Biomass Energy Resource Center in Montpelier defines biomass as any biological material that can be used as fuel. Biomass fuel is burned or converted in systems that produce heat, electricity or both. Wood chips, wood pellets and other low-grade "wood wastes" are the major type of biomass fuel, according to the center.

The Fayston municipal building, constructed in 1976, was originally equipped with an oil furnace and was poorly insulated. A few years ago, the Select Board began to consider the cost advantages of energy-efficiency measures and biomass heat, based on data from other projects throughout the state.

Many schools in Vermont now use biomass heat, including Fayston's local high school, Harwood Union in Duxbury. Additional applications include community housing in Rutland, Vergennes and Brattleboro and other public buildings, such as the recently constructed East Montpelier firehouse.

Fayston's assistant town clerk, Patti Lewis, and town energy coordinator David Frank applied for and were awarded more than \$75,000 from a program funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which covered 90 percent of the cost of the project.

Local contractors Marc DiMario, Kerry Hale, Richard Migneault, Bob Richard and Rick Ingram provided all the design, labor and materials. The town met nearly all of the required 10 percent match through in-kind labor from town employees.

"This is where energy-efficiency measures combined with renewable energy pay back to the taxpayer while reducing our dependency on foreign oil," said Frank. "This wood pellet boiler burns at 86 percent efficiency and is rated in the top five boilers internationally in terms of low emissions, efficiency and ease of use. This building and project mark the beginning on a trend of a new era of municipal buildings for Vermont." Frank also serves on the board of Renewable Energy Vermont, Vermont Technical College's curriculum advisory board and the Green Jobs Council.

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The boiler operates like a typical home-heating appliance but is fired by wood pellets that are automatically loaded while ash is automatically extracted.

The town expects to offset 1,600 gallons of fuel oil annually and save more than \$2,500 a year due to energy-efficiency measures — and with wood pellets less expensive to heat per Btu compared with fuel oil.

The wood pellets will be provided by Vermont Wood Pellet through annual contracts with the town. Vermont Wood Pellet, in North Clarendon, produces wood pellets made of Vermont wood.

“I happen to think that it’s important for Vermonters to know that biomass heating with sustainably harvested wood is not only better for the environment, it also saves money,” said DiMario.

“The biomass boiler we’ve installed for Fayston is efficient and clean-burning, and from now on the town’s heating-fuel dollars will stay in Vermont’s local economy.”

Questions on the Fayston project can be directed to David Frank or Patti Lewis at 496-6666. Inquiries on the biomass system can be directed to Marc DiMario at 583-9300 or SunWoodBiomass.com.

Gaelan Brown is a renewable energy consultant who lives in Fayston. He can be reached at [gaelanb@gmail.com](mailto:gaelanb@gmail.com).

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