

1.5M OK'd for research center

State board talks for 2 hours before approving grant for carbon research

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The Wyoming State Loan and Investment Board has approved a \$1.5 million grant to Campbell County to build a carbon products research facility.

The board, made up of Wyoming's five statewide elected officials, discussed at length about the benefits of the the project, how many jobs it would create as well as national and international business interest it could attract.

Energy Capital Economic Development CEO Phil Christopherson said the board discussed the grant for two hours Thursday morning before awarding it.

"It was a good discussion," Christopherson. "A lot of great questions were asked and the board was able to have a final review of the entire project before they made a decision."

Christopherson said the next step is for the Wyoming Business Council to develop a grant agreement that will be signed by the attorney general and the CEO of the Business Council which should take anywhere from 30 to 60 days.

After that, the design phase for the center can begin as well as acquiring the land.

The 5,000-square-foot research facility will be located at the former Fort Union mine site near the current operations of Atlas Carbon.

The mission of the research facility would give Gillette and the Powder River Basin a leg up in recruiting and attracting production facilities to commercialize the production of carbon-based products.

When built, the research complex will give companies and researchers access to local coal to develop innovative uses for the carbon beyond burning it to produce power, he said.

Those innovations include turning coal into carbon nanotubes, graphene or carbon fiber, which is used in the exploding 3-D printing industry.

The research center is estimated to create up to 20 jobs in Campbell County once it's up and going.