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Posted: 12:29 p.m. Friday, July 12, 2013

Fairfield receives grant for infrastructure upgrade

By Lot Tan

Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — Duke Energy has awarded the city of Fairfield a \$100,000 grant to improve public infrastructure.

The money will be used to upgrade an existing sewer lift station in anticipation of an expansion by Koch Foods, according to city officials.

“That existing lift station can handle what’s coming from Koch’s plants now, but once they double their production lines then that facility is too old and too small,” said Greg Kathman, economic development manager for the city of Fairfield.

Koch Foods has announced it will spend \$40 million to expand its plant by adding three new production lines and also hiring 390 new workers while retaining 700 current employees.

The \$100,000 grant plays a small role in helping continue Koch’s expansion plans, according to Duke Energy officials.

“No piece is too small in an economic development project,” said David Smith, economic development director for Duke Energy. “All the pieces and parts have to come together to make a deal work. That’s what happened here. (We’re) only as successful as our local communities are.”

Duke Energy officials said many communities in southwest Ohio competed for the grant. The company decided to award it to Fairfield and Koch Foods because the money would be used for a public project and because of the massive size of Koch Foods’ expansion plans.

Duke Energy officials presented the \$100,000 check at the July 8 city council meeting.

“We planned our public infrastructure years in advance, but didn’t plan on doing this project,” Kathman said. “All of a sudden we had this big project and we wanted to support it, but didn’t have money budgeted.”

The updated sewer lift station is currently being designed. Construction may begin later this year, according to Fairfield officials.

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