



22 Plains Drive
Buffalo, Wyoming 82834
307-684-5775

Press Release

11-7-2017

Public Meeting November 15th 11a.m. – 1p.m. Come hear about the promising future of Mountain Meadow Wool and the importance for continued use of the 22 Plains Drive industrial building

In a period of economic shifts at the local, county, and state levels entities are making decisions to adapt to the changing economic climate. Early last month, it was reported that JOCO First, the local economic development joint powers board, was pursuing the sale of 22 Plains Drive (the industrial building that houses Mountain Meadow Wool) to overcome a budget shortfall and support new projects. 10 years ago this building was acquired to support Mountain Meadow Wool's (MMW) mission to preserve the sheep ranching heritage through fair prices for raw wool and value added processing. The continued use of the building is vital in providing cost-effective industrial space to support this mission. MMW invites all to attend a public meeting on November 15th beginning at 11a.m. to present the impact to-date on the industry and to convey the benefit of utilizing this building for continued growth and development of MMW. The following is a brief history of MMW's role and continued mission.

In 2006, MMW wrote a Business Ready Community Grant proposal for submission to the Wyoming Business Council. With the Business Council, MMW partnered with JOCO First, who became the third party and formal recipient of the state funds. The grant funds, including a 10% community match, were used in the acquisition of suitable industrial space (22 Plains Drive) to house the new corporate headquarters for MMW. An ongoing economic impact to the community was realized from job creation, lease income paid by MMW, and adding value to a raw material produced in the county.

The top 3 goals of the grant proposal were:

- 1) Startup of an industry that will support the agricultural sector of the state
- 2) Utilization of a vacant building
- 3) Bring economic diversity to an area heavily dependent upon seasonal tourism and the energy sector

The grant proposal was accepted and in October of 2007, MMW began leasing one side of the facility and acquiring equipment. In its 10 years of operation, MMW has processed over 100,000 pounds of local raw wool (currently averaging over 20,000 pounds per year). Most of the wool is purchased through a Producer Program that gives ranchers a premium over market value in an effort to help sustain American ranching. MMW currently employs 9 (full-time equivalent) positions and anticipates being at 10 within the next year.



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MMW has strived to position itself as a national leader in custom fiber processing. The 20th century witnessed a shift in textile processing away from numerous regional facilities to a small handful of large volume processors. MMW's niche is to provide high quality, custom processing directly traceable to a given ranch; however, competing against the volume driven industry presents many challenges. Having cost-effective industrial floor space is just one of many critical areas to be a competitive player in today's global market.

Public and private collaborations should pursue clear goals that address needs not met by a community and which could not be met without their mutual efforts. The costs and benefits should be carefully considered and routinely reexamined by the parties and the general public. MMW's collaboration with JOCO First to seek state funds addressed a need to slow and ultimately reverse what has become a several decades-long decline in Wyoming wool production. Wool production has dropped to a mere 10% of 1960's levels, leading to the demise of many generational ranching operations and MMW works to reverse this.

Starting a new, ranch-to-consumer, value-added textile operation, thousands of miles from existing East Coast operations presented many challenges. Cost-effective industrial space in a location with limited building availability and in competition with the demands of the energy sector was just one of the initial obstacles. The successful collaboration over 10 years ago to address this issue has created a facility that receives fiber from Florida to Alaska and neighboring Canada and Mexico for custom processing. MMW also exports Wyoming wool in the form of finished yarn and apparel across the US, Canada, Asia, and Europe.

The purposes of this grant have been realized. MMW's lease payments continue to fund economic development, jobs are being created, and Wyoming ranches are receiving more value added to their operations. Yet the future offers a much larger picture. For the past 2 years, MMW has pursued a formal R&D department to fill a void in the nation for small-scale custom development and testing. The emergence of textile finishing operations at MMW is also underway with the recent acquisition of industrial flat-bed knitting machines. After some repairs and maintenance, they will bring scarves and stadium throws into the production offerings of MMW.

In these future endeavors, new challenges will arise, and MMW will seek new solutions while tirelessly striving to create additional jobs and pay increasing premiums for raw wool. 22 Plains Drive was acquired for this purpose—to bring a little more stability to the agriculture industry in Wyoming and to cost-effectively assist MMW in its mission. To sell the building to a private third party puts MMW at risk of losing its tenancy, to the long-term detriment of the company, the ranchers, and the community as a whole.

Please join MMW November 15th from 11a.m. to 1p.m. for a presentation on the state of the company and its promising future.