Mitsubishi Evaluating AR Turbine Plant

Associated Press

FORT SMITH, Ark. (AP) — Mitsubishi is evaluating its completed but unopened $100 million wind turbine factory in Fort Smith now that the company has settled a technology lawsuit with General Electric Co.

Mitsubishi Power Systems Americas Inc. had been in a dispute with GE since 2009 over elements of the wind turbine designs, but the Japan-based company has not yet announced any plans for the Fort Smith factory.

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reported (http://is.gd/0xnasU [1]) that a Mitsubishi spokesman said the company is prohibited from publicly discussing terms of the GE settlement.

"(Mitsubishi) is considering its options for the future use of the Fort Smith facility," company spokeswoman Sonia Williams said

Arkansas heavily recruited wind energy companies but the sector has struggled without long-term tax incentives for windmill-produced electricity. Nordex USA recently ended production at its turbine plant in Jonesboro. LM Windpower in Little Rock, which makes windmill blades, went through a round of layoffs in 2013.

Federal tax credits for wind-turbine manufacturers expired Dec. 31, 2012.

The 200,000-square-foot plant was projected to employ 400 people and was to be Mitsubishi's first wind turbineplant.

Ivy Owen, Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority's executive director, said he had no information from the company about its plans. He has said in the past that he was "confident" Mitsubishi would find a use for the factory.

Fort Smith spokeswoman Tracy Winchell said city officials are eager to help Mitsubishi start production.

"We've done everything we can," Winchell said. "We've done everything they asked for. It's been in the court system. Business models change. Hopefully it will all work out."

In February 2008, GE filed its initial complaint against Mitsubishi with the U.S. International Trade Commission. GE filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in September 2009, and Mitsubishi countersued in Florida and Arkansas in 2010.

The settlement enables the companies to retain their own patents on wind turbines and "auxiliary matters." The agreement also provides for a "cross-licensing

agreement" through which the companies are able to use each other's intellectual property.

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