ExxonMobil exec gives the lowdown on Growth Project

Posted: Wednesday, June 7, 2017 12:00 am

[**ExxonMobil exec gives the lowdown on Growth Project**](http://baytownsun.com/content/tncms/live/baytownsun.com/news/article_6265f620-4b42-11e7-8dad-9bd7a786ceaf.html) **By Matt Hollis** [**matt.hollis@baytownsun.com**](mailto:matt.hollis@baytownsun.com) **Baytown Sun |** [**0 comments**](http://baytownsun.com/news/article_6265f620-4b42-11e7-8dad-9bd7a786ceaf.html#user-comment-area)

Paul Guilfoyle said there is a lot to be proud of concerning how far ExxonMobil has come in Baytown over the last few decades.

Guilfoyle said that with the multi-billion-dollar expansions happening with the North American Growth Project, which he oversees, Baytown and Mont Belvieu are about to experience an economic impact unlike anything they have seen in the past.

Speaking to members of the Baytown Chamber of Commerce at their member luncheon Tuesday, Guilfoyle shared with them about the ethylene plant and polyethylene plant the company is building at the Baytown Olefins and Mont Belvieu Plastics plant, respectively. He said two-thirds of their investment is in the Baytown plant while another third is in the Mont Belvieu Plastics plant.

“This is a part of the shale revolution,” Guilfoyle said. “It is the combination of two technologies — hydraulic fracking of shale and horizontal drilling. They have really opened up the shale fields in the U.S. In addition to keeping your utility bill low, it also provides feedstock and cheap energy for chemical manufacturing plants.”

Guilfoyle remembered 10 years ago just after ExxonMobil had updated their chemical strategy that he was not expecting another major investment to take place in the U.S. during his career.

“But just in that amount of time, the whole industry has flipped around, and all of the investments we were making in the Middle East and Asia have come back home,” he said. “It is a nice thing to see.”

The Baytown Olefins is going to have three large facilities and, according to Guilfoyle, it will be the largest ethylene production facility in the world. In addition, they are doubling the size of the Mont Belvieu plant, and once that is complete, it will be the largest polyethylene plant in the world.

Guilfoyle said they expanded in the area because they already have huge facilities here.

“It allows us to invest where we have a lot of infrastructures,” he said. “It also allows us to be capital efficient. If you look outside our plant, particularly around Mont Belvieu where there are underground storage domes and salt formations, we really have an advantage of being able to take all of that infrastructure without a lot of investments in pipelines, tankage and storage facilities. So, it is an advantage here in Baytown.”

Baytown is a supportive community, Guilfoyle said.

“Here, in Chambers County, Mont Belvieu, our neighbors, the business community. It makes a difference to us and it influences our decisions around investment when we have a supportive community,” Guilfoyle said. “I thank you all.”

The contractors that have been working on the expansions at both plants have brought a lot to the economy, but also traffic, Guilfoyle said.

“I am part of the traffic problem in Baytown, and I apologize for that,” Guilfoyle said playfully. “But the good news is we are almost done.”

Guilfoyle said the workforce in Mont Belvieu is coming down to about 200 people from over 2,000. In Baytown, it is closer to 4,500. Guilfoyle said to expect that to come down over next several months.

On the subject of jobs, Guilfoyle said that 350 full-time employees will be taken on as a result of the venture.

“The direct and indirect jobs, the support needed to manage and maintain and handle logistics, and chemical deliveries, all of is what we need to support this venture,” Guilfoyle said.

Overall, Guilfoyle said he expects about 4,000 jobs to be created in the community.

The economic impact will also be huge, Guilfoyle said. He expects there to be an $870 million annual economic benefit and about $3.3 billion added annually to the national economy.

“These are big ventures with a lot of impact and we are very proud of it,” Guilfoyle said.

Guilfoyle said they also expect to generate about $80 million in tax revenue for the local community.

“That has actually started to happen,” he said. “Since 2015, there has been about $50 million in tax revenue paid to the local taxing authorities to support some of the infrastructure schools in Chambers County, Baytown and Harris County. While we are not up yet, our property values are being assessed based on investment people that make in it over the years and that is already starting to play into additional tax revenue for the city.”

Guilfoyle said they are now moving into the start up phase of the plants. One part of this involves some new technology on ground flaring. Guilfoyle described it as well-proven technology with high-efficiency combustion, rows of individual burners, a 40-foot high surrounding fence, and it will be less visible than elevated flares.

Baytown Councilman Terry Sain said what Guilfoyle was saying was exciting.

“Where it said the best is yet to come, that says it all,” Sain said. “We have really enjoyed and benefitted from ExxonMobil being here all of these years providing good jobs and a good tax base for the city. With the growth that we are seeing, I think it will continue. I think there will be more good projects that will come along. I feel some of the other companies will see the benefits of the shale growth and will take advantage of that.”

