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## Work progressing on port improvements for Cool Planet

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*Rep. Abraham impressed with port facilities*



(Photo: Melinda [Martinez/mmartinez@thetowntalk.com](mailto:mmartinez@thetowntalk.com))

Work is progressing on several million dollars of improvements to pave the way for construction of a Cool Planet Energy Systems plant at the Port of Alexandria.

The larger portion of the improvements began a few weeks ago, though rain has robbed contractors of many of those days. The \$6.4 million project includes construction of roads, fire suppressant equipment and an operations center for the plant, which will manufacture gasoline and agriculture-boosting biochar out of wood chips.



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On Wednesday, the port's board of commissioners approved advertising for an additional \$1.8 million in infrastructure improvements related to Cool Planet.

"We're pleased it's underway," said board President Bryon Salazar. "Cool Planet has spent several million dollars of their own money on site improvements, so they have skin in the game at this point."

The plant is the first commercial facility for Cool Planet, a startup utilizing new technology.

Current plans call for the company to first start producing CoolTerra — a biochar-based product the company says can increase crop yield by two times or more while decreasing the amount of water and fertilizer needed — before manufacturing fuel on a large-scale basis.

"Personally, I think it's going to revolutionize farming," Tim Palcuict, Cool Planet's site leader, told commissioners about CoolTerra Wednesday.

The port investment in the Cool Planet project is eventually expected to be \$10-12 million, with the funding coming from the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and the Red River Waterway Commission.

"That's a huge investment for this port, and long term it will be helpful for projects beyond Cool Planet," said port Executive Director Blake Cooper.

U.S. Rep. Ralph Abraham attended Wednesday's commissioners meeting and toured port facilities afterward.

"I think the potential here on the river is great," Abraham said. "You have everything you need here. We just have to find a way to fund it and make it happen."

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