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Citizen Efforts Put Gotion Project On Hold



Gotion property in Green Township appears to have no changes in the past months, which could indicate project slowdown.

By Cindy Havens

The Gotion saga that has been unfolding in Mecosta County for the past two years just got a little seedier. Filled with secrets, suspense and sordid text messages, it is a story no one could have anticipated when it began. Text messages obtained through the legal discovery process of the lawsuit, reveal an unprofessional relationship at best — and an unethical one at worst, between former supervisor Jim Chapman and Gotion, Inc. VP Chuck Thelen. When asked for an update, well-known local activist Lori Brock had this to say. “The text messages between our former township supervisor Jim Chapman, and the VP of Gotion, Chuck Thelen, are quite disturbing, and show a cozy and unethical relationship filled with conflicts of interest, promises of lavish trips, and even an attempt to intimidate me personally. The more we learn, the worse it gets. This underscores why the scandalous Gotion project simply can’t continue.” According to a letter sent from Supervisor Jason Kruse to Green Township residents, “Gotion has filed a case against the township regarding a development agreement. This development agreement was worked on last fall by then Supervisor Jim Chapman.” As many readers will remember, Chapman and the entire Green Township Board were recalled by the residents last fall, due to

the board’s support for Chinese Communist Party (CCP) affiliated Gotion, Inc. Kruse’s letter goes on. “There are grave issues with the development agreement framed by the previous township board. The township has been left with no option but to defend itself from Gotion’s lawsuit. Various forms of information and documentation have been obtained during the lawsuit discovery. This information was then filed with the court and became public. The released information shows that the township’s defense is warranted. Most recently, Gotion objected to providing basic information, such as its water plans, site plans, and similar documents. Gotion’s objections demonstrate the lengths to which it will not be transparent and has tried to keep its plans from public view. Why would a \$40 billion company not be transparent with Michigan and township taxpayers? This company has successfully lobbied the State of Michigan and former township officials to locate the project here. They have been given hundreds of millions of dollars in grants and incentives. Yet the township still finds it difficult to obtain project documents from Gotion for future township planning. Gotion has not submitted anything to the township and may, in fact, choose not to proceed with its Project.” (italics mine) Supervisor Kruse also notes that

“A former board member who voted on the Development Agreement and other pro-Gotion measures appeared to have financial interest in the project as he admitted to entering into a land purchase agreement with Gotion.” Kyle Olson of the Midwesterner reported that documents from the Register of Deeds indicate that trustee Dale Jernstadt sold his property to CCP Gotion. The property valued at \$ 180,000 in 2022, went under contract for \$ 2 million in 2023. Supervisor Kruse’s letter to residents concludes by again stating that, “Gotion has set up roadblocks to prevent transparency at every possible opportunity.” The Gotion situation continues to gain attention across the state. State Senator Lana Theis, R-Brighton, issued the

following statement, which reads in part, “Gotion CEO Chuck Thelen has asserted the Chinese Communist Party was not involved in the American wing of the company, however, the latest filing undoubtedly proves where their allegiance lies and that they do indeed receive funding from the Chinese government — and thanks to our governor and Democrats in the Legislature — they’re also set to receive subsidies from Michigan taxpayers as well. Time and time again, the company has proven they can’t be trusted, and I am once again calling on the state to end all agreements with Gotion and ensure not one more dime of taxpayer money reaches their pockets.” Locally, Green Township patriots keep up the fight. Much has been ac-

complished thanks to their perseverance and diligence. But with the lawsuit pending in court, right now it is mostly a waiting game. A few months ago, Chuck Thelen proudly reported that Gotion had purchased the J.C. Penney building in downtown Big Rapids, and he was crowing that they would soon be hiring a couple hundred Gotion employees. The building remains vacant and unused. To date, their property entrance between 18 and 19-mile roads, north of Big Rapids remains untouched, showing no additional signs of “progress”. It is a fairly reliable indication that their project has slowed. And as Jason Kruse stated in his letter to residents, “...Gotion... may, in fact, choose not to proceed with its Project.” One can only hope.



The JC Penney building in downtown Big Rapids was reportedly purchased by Gotion with plans to hire over 100 employees, according to Gotion VP Chuck Thelen. To date the building remains empty.

Elections are past. We will have a report on local results next week. The World Ice Fishing Championship is coming to Tamarack Lake February 11 to 16. Let us hope we have enough ice this winter. Monday is Veterans’ Day. Let us honor our veterans for their service to our country. Freedom isn’t free.

Fall Forecast

Thu Sunny, high 55. Calm wind becoming north northwest 5 to 7 mph in the morning.
Thu Night Mostly clear, with a low around 35.
Fri Sunny, with a high near 56.
Fri Night Partly cloudy, with a low around 34.
Sat Partly sunny, with a high near 55.
Sat Night Showers likely, mainly after 1am. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 42.
Sun Showers. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 57.
Sun Night A chance of showers. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 42.
Veterans Day Mostly sunny, with a high near 56.



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Nov. 2, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

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