



In the last article about Lincoln Premium Poultry (LPP), we looked at the site selection process for the Costco/LPP project. In this article, we will examine the months that followed the selection of Fremont for the location of the state-of-the-art poultry processing facility, hatchery, and feed mill. We'll also look at the public approval process associated with the site.

When I originally went to investigate the beginning stages of this project, I was introduced to Jessica Kolterman, who joined the project in April of 2017 through the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. Jessica's background was in governmental and public relations, and she was on a temporary assignment through the department's agriculture-promotion division to help navigate the complicated process that was to come in Fremont.

I sat down with Jessica at her office in Fremont, as she is now currently serving as Lincoln Premium Poultry's Director of External Affairs, and she reflected on that April when she joined the project. "I really didn't know much about where the project stood," said Kolterman. "I drove into Fremont, googled the address of the Greater Fremont Development Council (GFDC) and showed up, and assumed there would be a pathway to find another viable option for a site in the area," she continued.

While Kolterman was introducing herself to the GFDC staff,

another new member of the team, Walt Shafer, now project manager and COO of Lincoln Premium Poultry, was out scouting alternative locations with area leaders.

Later in the day, the team rallied for a large group meeting where Schafer led the group through what he believed should be the next steps of the project. Kolterman reflects, "I had literally just walked in the door and I was ushered into a meeting where Walt [Shafer] started to lay out a new location that he believed could work."

The City of Fremont and the site selector team started to work through the due diligence on the site, and Kolterman began working with the GFDC on a public relations strategy.

"What was needed at that point was an opportunity for supporters of the project to come out and say that they were in support, and tout the benefits of the project," said Kolterman. Knowing that the Dodge County Board of Supervisors was meeting the next morning and that those opposing the project would attend to offer concerns, the project team decided to pack the room with supporters.

"That meeting was a turning point for the project," said Cecilia Harry, who was serving as the Executive Director of the Greater Fremont Development Council at the time. Harry recalls a respectful meeting where those who had concerns could voice them and those who were excited about the opportunities could



share that excitement.

Following the success of the County Board meeting, supporters of the project decided to move forward with a large event over the weekend to better capture the excitement they were seeing from area farmers. A large farm picnic and press event was planned, complete with "We Love Costco" signs, Costco representatives, and food from the Omaha Costco store.

"We had a lot of fun planning the farm event," recalled Kolterman. "We heavily relied on AFAN (the Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska) and area farmers to put together the large event in a few days."

Willow Holoubek, now Director of Grower Engagement with Lincoln Premium Poultry, but serving as Executive Director of AFAN at the time the project was being recruited, shared that growers came from all over the region to meet the Costco representatives and share their excitement with them. Holoubek shared, "This project was very important to the State of Nebraska, not just for the economic development benefits for the City of Fremont, but also for the opportunities for the area farmers to diversify their farms, and in many cases, bring their kids back to the farm."

At the event, area farmers learned more of Costco's and LPP's plans and became even more energized about the opportunity. Project proponents cited local grain purchasing, which is

expected to improve the local price basis. They also shared plans for the processing facility, feed mill, and hatchery, which included new state-of-the-art technology.

"The event featured the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, AFAN, and area business leaders," recalled Harry. "I was later told that the Costco reps were very impressed by the cooperation and collaboration they saw among the group and renewed their commitment to finding a workable solution in the area."

A few days following the farm event, Governor Pete Ricketts expressed his public support for the project.

On April 20, 2016, Costco and LPP announced they would no longer consider the Nickerson location, but that "eastern Nebraska" was still a top choice of the company.

In early May, the company publicly identified an area south of Old Highway 275 in Fremont's south industrial district as a site they were considering for the processing facility, hatchery, and feed mill. The site, however, still needed to be annexed into the city limits so that the land could receive tax-increment financing.

"I remember sitting in a meeting with the team and listening to them outline the crazy amount of public hearings that would need to take place for this location to work and thinking 'that's

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more public hearings than I've attended in my entire life" – and they were all planned in a six-week period of time," said Kolterman.

The team had outlined public hearings related to the Sanitation Improvement District connected to the site, the Dodge County Planning and Zoning Board, the Dodge County Supervisors, the City of Fremont Planning and Zoning Board, the Fremont City Council, the City Utilities Board, as well as various LB 840 committees.

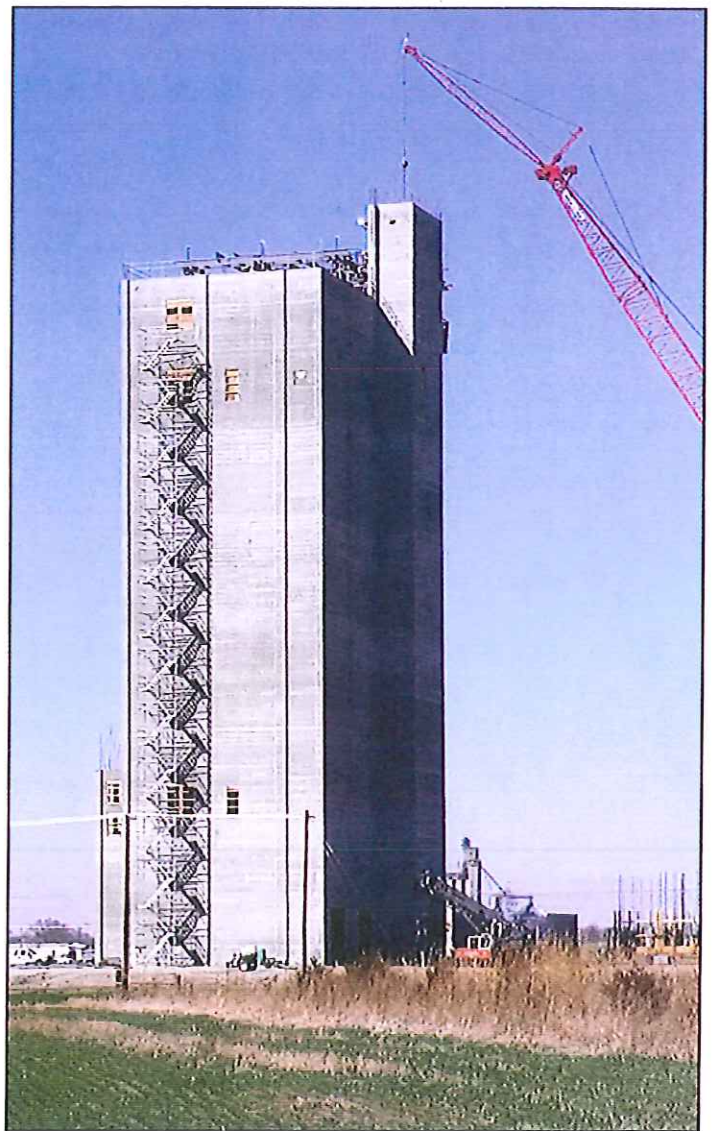
Hearings for the project started mid-May and continued weekly, sometimes with two or more hearings a week, all the way into July. "The hearings kind of became our social time of the summer," laughed Kolterman, as she recalled the many days and nights spent in public hearings. "We got to see the same people every week, sometimes two or three times a week, from May into August. By the time it was all done, everyone had gotten to know each other very well and we had all become good friends."

Harry echoed her sentiments, saying, "Economic development projects can be hard. We tried to find the fun where we could. Going through that process as a project team was like fighting it out in the trenches with them. We all became close and formed friendships that will last a long time."

When the project team wasn't in hearings, they were participating in public relations efforts across the region. They made presentations to civic organizations, church groups, schools, area businesses, and anywhere else they could find an audience. They also started a door-to-door campaign to educate area residents about the facts of the project, as well as offered supportive yard signs to those who were interested in showing their support publicly. They were assisted by community supporters who wanted to help land the project in Fremont.

All the effort paid off when in late July, the project completed its final public hearing and Costco announced that they intended to purchase the land and formalize the site in Fremont as the location for the project. In August, Lincoln Premium Poultry rented office space in downtown Fremont and started working on the many steps that needed to be completed prior to the formal groundbreaking, slated to happen in 2017.

Both Kolterman and Holoubek ended up joining the LPP team formally, although neither considered it a part of the original plan. Kolterman said, "For me, it was an opportunity to continue to use my experience in public relations and governmental relations to work on something I love, which is growing the state's economy through agriculture."



Holoubek echoed Kolterman's sentiment, saying, "I appreciate the opportunity to continue to engage with Nebraska's farmers on this new and innovative project that will help them diversify their farms and give them the opportunity to add another member of the family to the farm operation."

Both Nebraskans themselves, Kolterman and Holoubek were two of the first team members to join project manager and COO, Walt Shafer, on the LPP team.

In the next article, we will learn about the groundbreaking. We will also examine the live side of the poultry project as it relates to the growers who will grow the birds that will later be processed in the facility.

To find out more about Costco and Lincoln Premium Poultry, you can call them at 402.704.2200, or visit their facebook page at [facebook.com/lincolnpoultry](https://www.facebook.com/lincolnpoultry). ■