Vineland OKs Italian meat processing facility

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VINELAND – An Italian meat processing company is making its move into the American market with a roughly 64,000-square-foot production and wholesale distribution facility in Vineland, a city with historic connections to “the old country.”

Rovagnati USA intends to expand the facility to about 500,000 square feet over approximately the next five years, according to testimony at a special meeting of the Vineland Planning Board.

The board took two hours Wednesday night to grind through the issues. The site plan recently was revised to significantly enlarge the proposed first phase. Members approved it largely intact on a 5-0 vote. Lois Kelley, the project planner for Rovagnati, said the company has been looking to set up in the United States because of restrictions on food imports from Europe. Rovagnati’s base is in Biassano, Italy where it has a facility with 750,000 square feet, she said.

Engineer Ted Wilkinson (right) explains design points for a Rovagnati USA meat plant that will be built in Vineland. City planners approved the plan Wednesday night: Left to right: Rovagnati attorney Louis Magazzu and project planner Lois Kelley. (Photo: Joseph P. Smith/The Daily Journal)
“They need to have a facility in the U.S. in order to sell to the wholesalers,” said Kelley, who works for CMC Design Build. “They are currently planning on building a … 64,000 square foot facility to produce salami, bresaolas, and sliced meats. The sliced meats will actually be proscuitto and mortadelle.”

As originally presented to the city a month ago, Rovagnati had proposed a facility of 44,757 square feet for phase one.

“But due to the tariffs that are being placed on the Italian industry, they want to build additional square footage now … so that they can get more into the U.S. economy than what they (originally) had thought,” Kelley said.

Kelley said more aging and fermentation rooms will be built now instead of waiting until phase two to generate the additional product. Products sit for weeks awaiting slicing and shipment from the facility, she said.

Kelley testified the plant will employ 10 to 24 people to start and not more than 60 after phase four. The site is just less than 26 acres and close to Route 55 where it swings past the Vineland Industrial Park. The other borders are the north side of West Oak Road and west side of North Mill Road.

Before it could approve the site plan, the board had to approve subdividing the 25-plus acres from a larger piece of city land. That, too, was on a 5-to-0 vote.

Mayor Anthony Fanucci joined the board for the special hearing, joining Councilman David Acosta. Both normally would not have taken part in the hearing because it involved city property.

However, the city in August turned over ownership to the autonomous Vineland Industrial Commission. That freed Fanucci and Acosta to take part in the hearing, Solicitor Frank DiDomenico said.

The commission that has a sale contract with Rovagnatti conditioned on the company securing local, county and state government approvals. Also voting were Chairman David Manders, Vice Chairman Michael Pantalione, and member Stephen Plevins.

Attorney Louis Magazzu represented Rovagnati USA, which has offices in New York City.

The Italian company originally was on track to build in Millville and, as late as July, was talking to that city. By August though, that plan was replaced in talks with Vineland.

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