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**Battle lines are taking shape over a proposal to generate electricity - and manufacture wood pellets - in a biomass plant in at the former Green Mountain Race Track in Pownal.**

**At the heart of the brewing controversy is this question: Is biomass power really green?**

***VPR's Susan Keese has more.***

(Keese) The Pownal proposal is one of two, almost identical projects proposed by a company called Beaver Wood Energy. The other plant would be in Fair Haven.

Each would burn wood to generate about 30 megawatts of electricity. And each would manufacture 110,000 tons of wood pellets annually.

The project's backers are just beginning to meet with officials in Fair Haven, so there's been little organized reaction.

But in Pownal, Beaver Wood Energy has been at a number of public meetings. And the information the company has presented has sparked a petition drive to kill the project.

Pam Lyttle is one of the organizers of Concerned Citizens of Pownal.

(Lyttle) "We're concerned about our health, we're concerned about the water source, we're concerned about the noise. A lot of people think there are going to be wonderful jobs promoted by this plant, and we're not so sure."

(Keese) Pownal has been trying to create jobs ever since the race track closed in 1992. The investors who own the property now hope to turn it into a green energy park.

A massive solar array planned for the site has already won approval from the state.

But at a meeting this week, biomass opponent Josh Schlossberg told about 100 very concerned citizens that biomass power is a threat both to Vermont's forests and to human health.

(Schlossberg) "The question is, is it possible for clean energy to come out of a smokestack? The American Lung Association opposes the construction of new biomass incinerators, citing severe impacts on the health of children, older adults and people with lung disease."

(Keese) Beaver Wood partner Tom Emero wasn't at that meeting. But Emero says the two proposed plants would be the cleanest biomass generators in the country.

(Emero) "Our emissions are governed by the federal government. The clean air act and the State of Vermont's air policies as well, and both of these projects will set an entirely new standard in air emissions from biomass power plants."

(Keese) Emero says the projects would use only clean forest and sawmill residue, not construction waste.

He says excess heat from the power operation would be used to dry the wood pellets, and that the pellets produced by both plants would displace about 13 million gallons of heating oil a year.

The company plans to file by the end of October for a certificate of public good from the state.

For VPR News, I'm Susan Keese in Manchester.