

**Steven Levesque**

***Economic Development Advisor to the Town of Lincoln***

Testimony in Support of LD 2270

Senator Lawrence, Representative Paige Zeigler and members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Steve Levesque and I am here to speak in support of LD 2270; an Act to Create the Lincoln Mill Facilities District. With Senator Tipping and Representative Gifford, I urge your support to advance this critically important legislation.

I am no stranger to the challenges associated with large-scale redevelopment efforts in Maine, especially at its former mill sites and military bases. I grew-up in the mill community of Lewiston-Auburn and served as the Development Director of the City of Lewiston for several years. I served the State as DECD Commissioner from 1998 to 2003, and led the redevelopment effort of the Brunswick Naval Air Station, until 2022. I now have the fortune of assisting the Town of Lincoln with the redevelopment of the former Lincoln Pulp and Tissue mill site, which we now refer to as the Lincoln Technology Park (see attached redevelopment vision).

Let me tell you a little bit about the recent history of the Town's efforts. Building upon the focused efforts of the Town Manager, Staff and Lincoln Town Council to acquire the mill out of bankruptcy, I am currently helping to advance the efforts by managing planning efforts and in securing numerous sources of state and federal funds to clean up the site and rebuild its infrastructure, which is critical to supporting new business investment we are attracting. The redevelopment effort (environmental remediation, infrastructure and site work) will be a multi-million-dollar effort, currently projected in the range of \$60-65 million.

Working with the local business development corporation (Lincoln Lakes Innovation Corporation) and other key regional, State and federal partners, we are starting to realize some real success in securing business development opportunities at the site (the Biofine biorefinery project, a new business innovation center and several other exciting prospects). We are looking to assist these businesses to advance construction of their projects as soon as the last quarter of 2024 and the first quarter of 2025.

And now, most critically, we have finally made progress in identifying a federal funding source that could provide critical low-interest loan financing for a vital new industrial wastewater treatment facility, which is critical to serving the Biofine project and other new business development at the mill campus; thus, the need for prompt design and funding of this critically important infrastructure. The estimated cost of this facility is expected to be in the range of \$12-15 million. Specifically, USDA has advised that the

agency it is interested in working with a local District in funding this project, provided it is established and authorized by State legislation.

With the help of local and State advisors, we bring forward this legislative charter for a new Lincoln Mill Facilities District to engage the design, permitting and construction of infrastructure facilities and services to serve businesses committed to the redeveloped mill campus. We have worked with the management and advisors of the four incumbent utilities to scope the geography and jurisdiction of the proposed Facilities District to avoid all conflicts and not duplicate efforts. Those four incumbent utilities are the Lincoln Sanitary District, the Lincoln Water District, Versant Power, and Bangor Gas.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and I ask for your unanimous ought to pass vote. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have as we advance this important legislation to facilitate the redevelopment of this challenging property.