

Rep. Shankland, U.S. Rep. Kind: Disappointing response from Verso Corporation on halted Wisconsin Rapids mill sale

Posted on Thursday, Oct 22, 2020

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WISCONSIN RAPIDS – Yesterday, during a meeting of the Wisconsin Rapids Together Task Force, a group formed to help respond to the closure of a Wisconsin Rapids paper mill owned by Verso Corporation in July 2020, Verso made it known that they are suspending the active search for a buyer for the mill. This development follows months of task force meetings and attempts by the Great Lakes Timber Producers Association of Rhinelander to form a cooperative to buy and operate the mill.

In response, State Representative Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point), a member of the task force, said, “The closure of the Wisconsin Rapids paper mill has been devastating to Central Wisconsin workers, families, and businesses, as well as disrupting the softwood paper pulp, logging, and trucking industries in our state. Despite the best attempts by people locally to form a cooperative to purchase and return the mill to operation, Verso announced that they would not immediately pursue a sale. When pressed, their representatives indicated they were waiting on ‘better economic conditions’ for a sale. We can’t afford to wait. Let’s face it, these are tough times for everyone. However, we have everything we need at our fingertips to get this mill back up and running, and I believe in Central Wisconsin workers’ ingenuity and dedication. We will not accept this as our fate, and I urge Verso to reconsider and work in good faith with any interested buyers as soon as possible. The Wisconsin Rapids Together Task Force has been working with local, state, and federal leaders, workers, and industry to advance our shared interest, and we will continue to support these efforts as we work together to protect the Central Wisconsin community and economy.”

Congressman Ron Kind, also a task force member, added, “I am deeply disappointed by Verso Corporation’s recent decision to halt efforts to find a buyer for the Wisconsin Rapids paper mill. Wisconsinites’ livelihoods are on the line, and it’s unacceptable and unwarranted for Verso to not respond to interested buyers. To that end, I’m calling on Verso to immediately restart these talks and work in good faith to find a buyer for the mill. The Wisconsin Rapids community is dedicated and hardworking, and I know that given the opportunity they will continue to innovate and succeed. I will continue to work alongside local, state, federal, industry and labor leaders to support Wisconsin Rapids workers and families through these challenging times and ensure the community is able to build back stronger than ever.”