

Coffee warehouse operation grinds to a halt

By PAUL WAHL

MONTROSE DAILY PRESS MANAGING EDITOR

The owner of a coffee warehouse operation north of Olathe has confirmed the business has closed and the facility is for sale.

Bert Von Roemer, president and owner of Serengeti Trading Co. in Dripping Springs, Texas, announced the move to the Daily Press through an intermediary.

“It just didn’t work out,” Von Roemer said through his real estate agent John Renfrow.

Plans for the 77,792 square-foot facility were announced in May 2013. Coffee from all over the world was expected to be warehoused at the former Louisiana-Pacific building.

Although Von Roemer kept an extremely low profile, initial projections were the facility would employ 10 to 15 people with up to 50 in the coming years.

Von Roemer purchased the facility through Renfrow for \$500,000. It is listed for \$2.8 million.



Built in 1987 as a Louisiana-Pacific mill, this facility just off Highway 50 north of Olathe became the home of a coffee warehouse business in 2013. It was recently closed and is for sale. (Paul Wahl/Montrose Daily Press)

The structure was in poor condition and had been stripped of copper fixtures used in the 1985 building. Robert Lawrence was hired as construction manager and told the Daily Press at the time it would take a year to bring it back online.

According to a 20-page prospectus prepared by Renfrow, the building includes partially finished office space and a

finished high-end apartment with 5 bedrooms, three bathrooms and wood cabinetry throughout.

The 42.59-acre parcel is fenced with a security gate, has a large concrete and asphalt parking area and is designed to pull two full railcars inside the warehouse, according to Renfrow.

Von Roemer and his family have been part-time

residents of Telluride since 2010. According to a bio of his published on the Telluride Mountain School website, he started Serengeti in 2000 along with the Serengeti Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to the conservation of land and the protection of animals of the earth.

Von Roemer was quoted in a Wall Street Journal article in July 2014 commenting on the

age of coffee futures. He said roasters were sitting until the beans “get cheap enough and people start roasting them again.”

According to one source, Louisiana-Pacific’s sawmill operation on the property opened in 1987 and employed 120 workers with an annual revenue of \$48 million. The mill had been producing oriented strand board, an engineered wood particle board formed by adding adhesives and then compressing layers of wood strands (flakes) in specific orientations.

The announcement of the permanent closure came in May 2002. Operations had been curtailed in 2001 due to market and wood supply conditions. The mills 79 employees were offered severance packages.

In 2000, OSHA had had assessed Louisiana-Pacific \$95,000 in penalties, the most serious a “willful violation,” failure to prevent hazardous amounts of wood dust and process residue from accumulating throughout the production area and ventilation ducts.