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By Edith Tucker

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GORHAM — Second District Congressman Charlie Bass, a Republican of Peterborough, missed Lynn Tilton's paint party celebration on June 10, but he more than made up for it by spending over an hour touring the reopened Gorham Paper & Tissue LLC on Tuesday, Aug. 16. Mill manager Willis Blevins said that the rampup is on track and has been a team effort.

Bass examined the temporarily idled No. 9 toweling machine, watched the No. 4 specialty paper machine turn out 40-lb. offset paper, and learned more about the Tilton's plans to purchase a tissue machine to make 100 percent virgin toilet paper for the private-label market.

Machine specs call for a lightning- fast 6,000-feet-per-minute machine that would cover nearly a quarter-acre of existing space not far from the loading docks, now used to store baled recyclable paper scrap.

Long-term, the plan is to add two more tissue machines, making the mill an über profitable enterprise that will provide many well-paying jobs, Blevins explained.

A duplexing machine will also be installed to allow two-ply tissue to be fabricated at the mill. If all goes as planned, the mill manager said that the tissue machine would be up and running in Sept. or Oct. 2012.

The No. 10 machine was sold to Panama, and the No. 2 machine was scavenged for three-quarter of a million dollars in spare parts. The No. 1 machine is expected to begin running this week, possibly tomorrow, Aug. 25, Blevins said, adding that a number of factors must be taken into account when deciding what day a machine should be restarted after being idled for 10 months.

Bass chatted with No. 9 manager Leo Carrier and Mark Mullins, both of Gorham, as well as machine tender Rollie Leclerc, all of whom were operating No. 4.

Bass eagerly toured the first floor, the below-first-floor groundlevel space, and then visited the second-floor offices where he shook hands with administrative assistant Peggy Gunther of Shelburne. Two Gorham men with 44 years of paper mill experience under their belts — Dennis LaRoche and Maurice Bagley — were painting offices.

Gov. Rick Perry of Texas, who is running for the Republican Presidential nomination, called Chandler on his cell phone and Chandler handed it to Bass when he was through speaking.

Bass was accompanied on his mill tour by his political man-on-the- ground, former N. H. House Speaker Gene Chandler of Bartlett, and joined by DRED's economic-development-expert in Coös County Benoit Lamontagne of Colebrook.

At a luncheon at the Town and Country Motor Inn in Shelburne with Androscoggin businessmen— Mark Kelley of White Mountain Lumber, Tony Urban who helped Bass when he was out of office for four years and worked for Laidlaw, Randy Labnon of the T & C, plus Androscoggin Valley Hospital marketing director James Patry and former state Rep. Renny Morneau of Berlin.

"We must readjust our expectations about the extent to which the government can solve our problems," Bass said. "We have to reassess the appropriate response, given what our resources are."

He expressed alarm at the increase in the nation's ratio of debt to its Gross National Product (GNP) and that federal spending has risen by 40 percent in four years. "Show me the money on the spending side first, before any talk of increasing taxes," he said. Solutions, he said, must be bipartisan.

Bass also said that there were too many federal regulations, including new costly ones imposed by the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act. He would have preferred better enforcement of already- existing legislation.

Bass said he has stayed away from the complexities of the Laidlaw- Berlin Station because he would like to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest. Urban and Barry Kelley were an enormous help to him when he represented Laidlaw, Bass said. Bass noted that wind farms, such as Granite Reliable Power now under construction, receive much higher subsidies than most other sources of electrical power. He believes in subsidies when a new technology is first utilized but not permanently, he said. "Oil subsidies should be on the table," said Bass, who serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

He handed around a sample given him by Wayne Presby during his tour of the biofuel plan in North Haverhill.

Bass said that he, Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Kelly Ayotte are collaborating to try to get the federal prison funded in the FY12 budget. "However," he warned, "should Congress operate under another Continuing Resolution by not signing an Appropriations bill by Sept. 30, we would remain right we are now. The empty prison is at the top of my Appropriations list."

Bass warned Patry, who said AVH is doing well by collaborating with other hospitals and bringing new services to the community, that if the new Congressional committee created as a condition of reaching an agreement to increase the debt ceiling does not complete its work by Nov. 23, then an automatic sequestration provision would go into effect that could adversely affect hospital payments paid under federal government programs.

Bass also visited Don Noyes at Auto North, which has created 33 to 35 new jobs, according to Lamontagne, and had a chance to speak with Mayor Paul Grenier of Berlin.