

Board hears Great Plains, wind panel updates

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OSWEGO — Labette County commissioners on Monday heard an update on last week's ceremony at Great Plains Industrial Park that recognized rail traffic returning to the park for its newest tenant.

TP&L is amassing wind turbine parts on its leased land at Great Plains. The parts come in on the newly improved rail system and will exit next month and later on trucks bound for wind farm construction projects in Missouri. Eventually, wind turbine parts will go to Neosho Ridge Wind project in Neosho County as well.

Kansas Secretary of Transportation Julie Lorenz and Kansas Secretary of Commerce David Toland attended the ceremony last week.

On Monday, Great Plains Director Brad Reams and Project Manager Becky Dantic updated commissioners on work at the park.

Reams said the rail project was completed in 47 working days and the entire project from the first visit with the Kansas Department of Transportation to completion took 67 days.

The \$1.64 million project rehabilitated 8.41 miles of track, replaced 6,500 railroad ties and 20,000 tie plates and dumped 2,800 tons of rock on the tracks. Great Plains paid \$262,342 for its part of the project.

Some work on the switches still needs to be done. Reams told commissioners that wind turbine blades began arriving on Feb. 10 and two more trains are coming this week with wind turbine parts. Each turbine blade fits across two railcars and it takes about 30 minutes per blade to remove them at TP&L's lay down yard.

Dantic gave brief remarks on the park's five-year environmental review, which took place in January. Army regulators attended, as did the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. The federal EPA was not at the review. The park is working toward moving from EPA to KDHE oversight through a corrective permit.

About 500 acres of the 13,000 acre park will stay under the corrective action permit while remediation efforts continue to clean up the result of years of munitions manufacturing at the former Kansas State Army Ammunition Plant.

“So that’s really exciting to have EPA kind of recognize their role is done. ... It’s a big step,” Dantic said.

“We’re just impressed as heck with all the progress. Good work, and keep it up. Just happy to see it happening,” Commissioner Doug Allen said.

Wind committee

The county’s wind energy study committee will discuss MET tower setbacks at its next meeting, which will be at 9 a.m. Monday, March 9, at the Mae Lessley Community Center in Chetopa. The MET tower collects wind and other data for a wind company considering wind farm development.

RWE Renewables is looking to develop the Elm Creek-West Wind project in a 99-square-mile area of southwest Labette County. So far, RWE Renewables has lease agreements that cover 10,016.5 acres split among 72 tracts.

The target area runs from Meade Road west to Douglas Road and 19000 Road (the Big Hill Lake Road) south to 8000 Road.

The April meeting of the wind committee will be at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 8, in the senior citizens building in Edna.

Charlie Morse, the county’s sanitation officer, is serving as facilitator for the wind energy committee and updates commissioners on their discussions.

Commissioner Allen asked Morse if he thought the committee could get its work done and make a recommendation to commissioners within a year and Morse said he believed the committee could.

In other business, the commission:

— Heard a review of the late January SHOT Show that Parsons Economic Development Director

Jim Zaleski attended in Las Vegas, Nevada. The show is organized by the National Shooting Sports Foundation and is the largest gathering of the world's firearms and ammunition manufacturers. The trip led to a couple of leads for the Great Plains Industrial Park.

— Heard about a postage meter issue that required extra time to get change of value notices mailed out last week. The county's postage meter didn't work a week ago Monday when the appraiser's office was wanting to apply postage to the notices that go to taxpayers. It turned out later that the meter was out of ink. The appraiser had to get the notices postmarked by the date listed on them, which was Feb. 18. Feb. 17 was a holiday but a site in Wichita allowed Appraiser DeLinda White to run the notices through its meter and charged the same rate that it would have cost in Oswego. The cost in Wichita was \$4,200 and the appraiser paid another \$400 for the bigger envelopes at the Oswego Post Office.

— Approved resolutions that appointed Kirk Wyckoff, John J. Flynn Jr. and Dee Bohnenblust to the Labette Center for Mental Health Services board for three-year terms and Melissa Morris and Drs. Robert Gibbs and Wayne Gilmore to the Labette Health Board of Trustees for three-year terms.

— Heard from Morse that he resigned as southeast region vice president for the Kansas Emergency Management Association because of his workload and because he's not happy with some of KEMA's decisions.

— Agreed to allow the city of Edna to use county crews and equipment to chip and seal 22 blocks of streets this summer. The city pays for the workers' salaries for the work and for fuel and supplies.

— Heard that repairing the south repeater for the radio system will cost \$1,528.98, much less than originally thought. Commissioners approved the bill from Commenco.

— Approved a parcel search agreement with Brian Coltrane.

— Met in closed session for 15 minutes with County Attorney Stephen Jones to discuss non-elected personnel.

— Met in closed session for 15 minutes with County Counselor Brian Johnson for an attorney-client privileged discussion.