

Ribbon cutting, at last!

More than 300 people turned out for the standing room only ribbon cutting at Great Plains Industrial Park, where every top elected official for the region came to help celebrate the long-awaited event.

Held in one of the 22,000 sq. ft. red clay block warehouses at the south end of the 13,951 acre site, the event gave many their first view inside the property in decades.

That drive through previously forbidden grounds wasn't what they had come for though. Lined up on the stage with other dignitaries were U.S. Sens. Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran, Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins and Gov. Sam Brownback.

That rarely occurring line-up made a statement about the importance of the new industrial park and their hopes for its future.

In the audience were many other federal and state officials who had a role in helping transfer acreage of the former Kansas Army Ammunition Plant.

Great Plains' board chairman Bob Wood, who has played a leadership role in many community efforts including recovery from the 2000 tornado, commented that this was one of the most challenging projects with which he had ever been involved. He then immediately turned the focus to celebrating what was to be, rather than what has been.



A STIRRING RENDITION A trio from Parsons High School presented a stirring a capella rendition of *The Star Spangled Banner*. Bob Wood and Sen. Moran applaud the excellent job presented by Brock Willard, Hunter Goddard and Josh Burns.



ON THE COUNT OF THREE Great Plains secretary/treasurer Montie Taylor, vice chairman Dan Peterson, chairman Bob Wood and past chairman James McCarty, ready for the count of three.

Sen. Roberts, who steadfastly plowed through a maze of bureaucratic red tape and challenged agency officials, turned many of the tortuous complicating events into moments at which volunteers could now laugh.

Roberts, who first called the community to inform citizens of its placement on the 2005 BRAC list, said that this transfer had only taken place due to the vision, hard work, dedication, patience and flexibility of those involved.

Sen. Moran complimented the board and community saying there are communities that have a future, and unfortunately there are those that do not. The difference is the people – the leaders who are willing to stand up and go to work for their communities.

It was the thousands of hours worked by volunteers that Congresswoman Jenkins lauded. More than seven years is an incredibly long time for the board members to have taken extra time away from families and work in an effort to create an industrial park that will benefit all of Southeast Kansas, but they stayed with it.

Gov. Brownback came to the podium with a unique perspective of the future. As a former U.S. senator and now sitting governor, Brownback worked property transfer issues from both his Washington and Topeka offices.

His understanding of the potential for this mega-site industrial park was clear. He referenced President Roosevelt's 1940 phrase in saying that the ammunition

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Limited Edition
Commemorative Coins



To mark the historic occasion Great Plains had commemorative coins minted to give attendees and to sell to others. If you would like to purchase one they are available at the Great Plains office, 1209 Corporate Drive #6, Parsons, for \$5. Or contact us by phone: 620-421-1228 and email: mmorris@parsonsk.com

Ribbon cutting

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plant was once an “arsenal of democracy” providing munitions for WW II, but will now serve as an arsenal for the economy of Kansas.

The ribbon cutting event was even more satisfying as Great Plains had just announced the selection of its first new tenant, Progress Rail Services, a subsidiary of Caterpillar, Inc. The new company will take over operations of the rail and has plans to develop several rail-related businesses.

The event was followed by a reception that featured custom made sugar cookies with the image of both the obverse and reverse of the coin that was minted to commemorate the event, as well as to document the historic importance of the past. Each attendee to the ribbon cutting received a coin as they came in.

Community assistance was vital in helping pull off such a fete in the uninhabited remoteness of the former ammunition plant. Local businesses and agencies provided special lighting, staging, decorating, admission services, parking assistance and welcoming.

CUTTING THE RIBBON Board members and others hold their piece of the ribbon high after cutting the it during the festive opening of the Great Plains Industrial Park. Front row l to r: CEO Dan Goddard, County Commissioner Jack Martin, ex-officio (KDWPT) Rob Riggan, County Commissioner Brain Kinzie, and board members Steve Lewis, Carolyn Kennett, Montie Taylor, Dan Peterson, and Bob Wood. (cont. on pg 3)





Standing room only
Great Plains board members sat on the front row of the large invitation-only crowd attending the ribbon cutting event.



ROBERTS



MORAN



JENKINS



BROWNBACK



AYCOCK



O'BRIEN

CUTTING THE RIBBON (cont. from pg 2) James McCarty, Gary Beachner, George Knox, Pete Rhodes, County Commissioner Lonie Addis, ex-officio Bill Wheat and ex-officio (KDOC) Craig Van Wey.



Photo courtesy of Labette Avenue, Rudy Taylor

Goddard departs



Photo courtesy of Parsons Sun, C. Surridge

GODDARD'S FAREWELL County commissioner Lonie Addis and Parsons city manager Fred Gress visit with departing CEO Dan Goddard during a farewell reception.

The final transfer of property from the Army presented the Great Plains board of directors with a major shift in thinking about planning for the future. Included in that was saying goodbye to CEO Dan Goddard.

Chairman Bob Wood said, "It is with great appreciation, and regret that, we take this step. Recognizing the need for a transition in leadership that will focus on the economic development future of the

industrial park has been difficult for the board.

"Dan has worked hard for us and has provided critical leadership to make the transfer happen. But at the same time, the board recognizes its responsibility to the citizens of Labette County to continue to focus on the long-term needs that insure our success."

Goddard came to Parsons after holding the same position in the transfer of the Grissom Air Force Base in Indiana.

A retired Air Force colonel, Goddard's military background and previous BRAC experience was exactly what the Local Redevelopment Planning Authority was looking for when community members attended an Association of Defense Communities conference in 2006, and found him.

Within a short time Goddard moved to Kansas and immediately immersed himself into the challenge of setting up an office and working through the complicated and detailed process required to transfer the property.

On Aug. 27, the Army added its signature to the deed that completed the transfer of more than 6,800 acres to the Great Plains Development Authority.

Charles named interim director

Ann Charles was named interim director of Great Plains Development Authority as the board of directors seeks a new chief executive officer. Charles has been the deputy director for



CHARLES

nearly five years and previously served on the Local Redevelopment Planning Authority's steering committee.

The connection Charles has with the project goes back to the 2005 BRAC announcement when, as editor and publisher of the Parsons Sun, she received a call from Sen. Pat Roberts announcing that the Kansas Army Ammunition Plant was included on the closure list. Thirty minutes later she got a call from then Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

Charles called together the first community meeting that afternoon to begin discussions of a response.

In 2007, after 27 years in the newspaper industry, Charles took an early retirement. A year later she joined the staff of Great Plains as the deputy director.

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