

COMMISSIONER'S PROCEEDINGS
OCTOBER 25, 2021

Agenda: 8:30 – Bills
 9:00 – Karen Vines w/ HUB – BCBS Renewal
 9:30 – Tony Martin
 9:45 – Invenergy – Meredith Jeffrey

The Board of Stevens County Commissioners met in a regular session with all members present. Paul Kitzke, County Attorney, Amy Jo Tharp, County Clerk and Ruthie Wingett with the Hugoton Hermes were also present. Tron called the meeting to order. Pat moved to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Joe seconded. Motion carried. Joe moved to approve the county vouchers. Pat seconded. Motion carried. The Clerk was instructed to draw warrants on the Treasurer chargeable to the various funds of the county for the following amounts:

General	\$	43,963.50
Judicial District	\$	915.93
Road & Bridge	\$	114,058.07
Airport	\$	4,684.36
Noxious Weed	\$	4,701.65
EMS	\$	7,234.56
Fire	\$	1,665.24
Community Health	\$	17,867.51
Sheriff	\$	31,645.39
Building	\$	9,613.86
Fire Bequest	\$	1,939.19
911 Wireless	\$	115.84
Emp P/R Misc W/H	\$	33.14
Reg of Deed Tech	\$	3,375.00
ARPA	\$	225.55
TOTAL:	\$	242,038.79

Rodney was in and notified the commissioners the state changed the template for the radios. To update and optimize all the county radios including Fire, EMS, Sheriff, City of Hugoton Police, Stevens County Hospital and the Road and Bridge Department to the state's new regulations will cost \$5,200.00. Rodney said it adds 800 megahertz of backup to also be able to contact other counties in the mutual aid system. If a person wants this update on their radio, it will cost over \$100.00 to do this. Plans are for each department to split the cost depending on how many radios they have.

The grant for the new firetruck had issues going through one company, as they could not get a chassis, so after looking they found another company with a Kenworth truck that can get a chassis. This firetruck will not have all the specs on it but will have the important ones.

Richard Claggett was in attendance.

Amy Jo said the library contacted her to inform Carol Swinney has resigned from the Stevens County Library Board and they received interest from Pam Moore to serve as her replacement.

Joe made a motion to replace Carol Swinney with Pam Moore on the Stevens County Library Board. Pat seconded. Motion carried.

Karen Vines with HUB came in to discuss 2022 Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) insurance renewal for the county. The increase for insurance is 4.21%, which is better than some of the other insurance plans. She stated Etna does not help with tax-exempt entities at this time and United Healthcare has its pros and cons.

Pat asked Karen how many different counties HUB represents and how many counties pay entire insurance versus employee only. Karen said there are eighteen (18) counties, and the southwest part of Kansas usually pays more than the employee insurance compared to the northeastern part of the state.

Karen informed the commissioners there was a two percent (2%) decrease on dental due to the amount of the claims and HUB asked for the full four percent (4%) decrease. She said they pull the utilization report from Blue Cross to see if any possible changes give insight on claims and other information. She said the dental plan is the same design as the previous year and will have a 3.9% decrease. The vision has the same premium and coverage and will not change until January 24, 2023.

Pat made a motion to accept the Blue Cross Blue Shield plan for 2022. Joe seconded. Motion carried.

Tony Martin, Gina Payne, and Jimmie Cerecero were in attendance.

Tony and the commissioners presented Jimmie with a retirement gift and thanked him for his eighteen (18) years of service.

Joe asked Tony why there was forty to fifty percent (40-50%) of the Noxious Weed fund left. Tony said they are in the process of taking fuel out to reimburse Road and Bridge. Tony also informed the commissioners the road striping company completed twenty-eight (28) miles.

The commissioner meeting moved to Memorial Hall for Invenergy. The following were present: Ron Martin, Cynthia Martin, Ralph Bane, Julie Kinser, Martha Thomas, Ron Thomas, Connie

Thomas, Bob Thomas, Mary Gail Thomas, Tony Martin, Gina Payne, Neal R Gillespie, Jim Ghumm, Paul Nordyke, Josh Grubbs, Richard Claggett, Alex Kinser, Jan Leonard, Jonathan Pearcy, Corey Hunt, and Invenergy representatives; Meredith Jeffrey, Bob Brunson, Bud Jordan, William Davidson, and Paul Henderson.

Meredith explained to the commissioners and citizens that Invenergy is based on innovation and energy for a clean resource along with partnering with utility companies and landowners. She said there is an office in Hugoton at 516 South Main Street if anyone would like to go in and discuss more about the wind turbines or get more information on what they do. Currently, the project is in the early stages and will take a few years before anything is completed. Invenergy is all about answering questions and concerns truthfully and honestly.

Joe asked how many wind farms they have. Meredith said there is one (1) in Ellis County, producing 200 Megawatts, which is their largest, and they currently own over 100 windfarms which produce roughly 17.2 Gigawatts of power. Bob Brunson said there are three (3) windfarms in Oklahoma that produce two (2) Gigawatts of power combined. Meredith stated Invenergy builds, develops, and operates all their wind farms.

Joe asked the size of the wind farm in Stevens County and Meredith replied it is too early to tell as they are still gathering data on wind resources, wind speeds, engineering, and environmental impacts. Tony asked about transmission lines and Meredith said they look to see where they can interconnect lines. Meredith said Bob and his team will need another year to be comfortable before moving forward.

Ron Martin asked how many acres are needed to set up a wind farm. Meredith stated anywhere from hundreds to thousands of acres or more to continue the benefits of agriculture. Another question asked was what kind of revenue that brings in. Meredith said it depends if the line crosses your land or you have a windmill. Ron questioned the effects on CRP land and if it absolves the criteria the FSA has. Meredith said they will engage with CRP and will pay for the CRP land to come out of CRP. Bob said if there are 160 acres of CRP land and Invenergy only needs one quarter (1/4) of an acre they will buy that amount out of CRP.

Jim Ghumm asked what hurdles or concerns the landowners have asked about. Bob said the concerns they have heard was the lengthy contract. Invenergy must educate landowners and landowners must have the resources and ability to support a wind turbine. Jim also asked what the minimum amount needed of wind turbines is to get a job started or completed. Bob said the project must be large for the pipeline and depends on how much power can be sold.

Ron Martin said there were issues with a wind farm south of Guymon, Oklahoma and it is all deserted now. Bob said the developer was foreign, had no contracts and ended up bankrupt. Meredith said out of 3,000 turbines they have only replaced three to four (3 – 4) blades per year. Ron also asked who foots the bill if a windmill were to break or needs taken down. Meredith said Invenergy puts money into a decommissioning bond and the cost will never come from the

landowner. Ralph Bane asked if there was a deadline. Meredith said they are looking at larger projects and stated it will be in or after 2025 before anything gets completed or close to completion.

Bob said the market is huge and they sell chunks of power. He insisted people look at their portfolio and compare it to other wind energy companies. It takes at least three (3) years for the project to get ready and roughly one and a half (1 1/2) to two (2) years to acquire the real estate. Ralph asked if they keep the landowners who sign a contract in the loop of the windmill production. Bob said they stay in communication with the landowners.

Jim asked what the wind farms will bring to the community and how they help. Bob said it brings people into the community through jobs, wind techs, full-time operational staff, construction, etc.

Tron asked if the wind farms bring in any revenue to the county. Meredith said according to K.S.A. 79-201, there is a ten (10) year property tax exemption for new business. Invenergy does customize a contribution agreement and those payments are made during the ten (10) year tax exemption.

Neal said he noticed Invenergy is number two (#2) in the country. Meredith said yes, Invenergy stands behind what they do with power.

Jan asked if the wind farms help lower the mill levies. Meredith affirmed it helps with mill levies and there is a pilot cost agreement.

Jonathan asked if they work with landowners with center pivots as most of the farm ground in Stevens County has center pivots. Bob said they do work with those landowners and understand they need their land to farm. He said they will put a windmill on the corner of the property and not within the circle so it can still have the center pivot and be farmed.

Corey asked about the concerns Invenergy has for crop dusters. Bob said their wind turbines are not like Met-Towers and can be seen. Corey asked about the landowners who request spider mite applications, indicating it is hard and next to impossible to do. Bob said he understands there are good and bad and sometimes the landowner signs not thinking where the turbine will be built.

Tony said there is still a responsibility with planning and zoning on giving a layout of the plans and getting conditional use permits. There will be a public planning and zoning hearing, then on to the commissioners for the final say. Everything has a time-consuming process.

The commissioners reconvened to the commissioner's meeting room.

Amy Jo told the commissioners Angela had reported there was no drop in valuation if land had wind turbines.

Joe started a discussion about COLA, stating the State of Kansas has raised the COL (cost of living) 5.8%. Further discussion about COLA's was tabled for later.

Abatement Orders for 2017 tax numbered 113 and 2018 tax numbered 163 were reviewed and approved by commissioners and given to the County Treasurer; total valuation removed 23,181 with a relief assessment of \$3,762.26.

By motion, the Board adjourned.

Attest: Amy Jo Tharp, County Clerk

Tron Stegman, Chairman