

COMMISSIONERS' PROCEEDINGS  
SEPTEMBER 25, 2023

Agenda:       8:30 – Bills  
                  8:45 – Glenn Kerbs – Attorney for P/Z Assistance  
                  9:00 – Hailey Marple – Bukaty Benefits Consultants  
                  9:30 – Cammie Heaton – Community Health  
                  10:00 – Tony Martin – Public Works

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

General	\$	97,278.47
Special Law Enforcement	\$	942.10
Judicial District	\$	1,418.07
Road & Bridge	\$	55,153.89
Airport	\$	13,657.93
911 Wireless	\$	116.37
Noxious Weed	\$	3,969.65
EMS	\$	7,100.17
Fire	\$	2,398.36
Community Health	\$	12,717.73
Airport Grants	\$	11,490.00
Sheriff	\$	43,374.74
Reg of Deeds Tech Fund	\$	41.20
TOTAL:	\$	249,658.68

Ross Sullivan came in and told the commissioners the drop ceiling at the wellness center was estimated to cost \$5,380.00. He also told the commissioners the chicken wire to hold up the insulation in the gym area would not be needed, as the beams are close together, so there should not be an issue. HMH told Ross they will be starting the roof work on the wellness center this Friday, weather permitting. The wellness center will be closed September 30<sup>th</sup> and hopefully reopen on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, if the weather allows. The commissioners asked Ross if he would be able to install the ceiling tiles at the wellness center and Ross said he could order the tiles and try to install them, but it would be very time consuming. Ross was wondering if it was possible to have the courthouse roof sealed one section at a time and after speaking with Ozone, found out it is

possible. Joe told Ross he would contact him toward the end of the commissioner meeting because he had more questions.

Rodney Kelling and Tony Martin were in attendance.

Glenn Kerbs was next on the agenda via conference call. Paul asked Glenn what the process is to start the planning and zoning regulations for the solar and wind energy companies. Glenn said the Ford County Planning and Zoning Director, Elisa Drake will be going over Stevens County's zoning regulations, and will compare them to Ford County to see what would possibly need to be changed or discussed then have a meeting with Tony Martin next week to go over the regulations. Pat asked if there is a recommended distance from houses for the wind turbines and Glenn said their zoning regulations recommend 2,000 feet unless the property owners want less. Glenn further stated the Ford County Commissioners changed the distance to 1,000 feet. Discussion about solar energy took place regarding those regulations, then Glenn said the regulations for solar is less than wind due to the height of the solar structures, as well as the idea of glare and other issues. Glenn said the regulation changes will need to be presented to the planning and zoning board before going to the commissioners for final approval. The planning and zoning board will have to give public notice of the requirements or changes and give the citizens fourteen (14) days to protest before going to the commissioners. Tony said currently, the regulations in place state 1,000 feet from landowner's home but 2,000 feet from adjoining landowner's property, which can be changed.

Amy Rich was present for the presentation of the Bukaty Companies broker services presented by Hailey Marple and Derek Dick. Hailey said they would like to provide health insurance quotes to the county. Hailey asked how many employees are on the insurance plan currently and Amy Rich answered around sixty (60) employees. Derek said Bukaty uses an online system for enrollment and producing 1095's and asked Amy Rich if that is currently the method used by our county. Amy said she does online enrollment and receives 1095's directly through the BCBS online portal. Hailey said the Bukaty Companies will negotiate with Blue Cross and Blue Shield every year to get the county better rates or find other comparable insurance companies. Pat asked how many years the company has been in business. Derek said it started in 1992, and they work with entities that are not just municipal. Hailey and Derek said they provide a GAAP Plan as well. Pat said he would like to view the different health insurance plan options and would be okay with them providing some quotes. Amy Rich will gather information the Bukaty Companies require to get the county insurance quotes.

Cammie Heaton came in and discussed the issues she is having with Nex-Tech and the cost of the server Nex-Tech is stating the county needs to purchase for the community health department and the courthouse. Currently, Nex-Tech has given a quote for the community health department of \$743.43 and the courthouse of \$754.43 every month for sixty (60) months which will include the server, battery backup, installation, monitoring, drive time, warranty (parts and labor), remote system monitoring, ongoing support for length of contract, antivirus, and patching. Cammie said she is asking other IT professionals why the cost is so high, and they stated it probably has to do

with virtual server hardware. Cammie and Amy Jo discussed other issues with Nex-Tech but feel they have nowhere else to go to get decent service at a better cost.

Cammie stated the flu block the community health department usually gives adults 50-64 years of age is egg free but this year the FDA has not approved the vaccine and that vaccine is what helped bring in income to the health department.

Amy Jo said Ted is still questioning the gravel issue of his drive/road out at Feterita and wanted to know what the decision was since one was not made the last time this was discussed. Tony said the state statute says a government entity cannot haul gravel to individuals and the last time the issue was mentioned, Tron offered to deliver to Ted. Pat stated there is no paperwork showing where the county owes Ted anything else or how much money Ted paid in total for the work done in 2006. Tony said the only thing he can find at the road and bridge department is the work order for work done years ago which includes how much the work cost at that time.

Paul Nordyke was in to discuss the water dock with the commissioners. Joe asked if it would be better to put the water dock on the west side of town and Pat said there is flooding in that area and stated the northeast side of Hugoton is possibly the best place. Paul Nordyke said there is no power and would take more work and money to get one on the west industrial side of Hugoton. Tony said at this time the only concern of putting the water dock in by the landfill is the guide wires but could be worked around. Paul Nordyke said the total cost is \$43,710.00 which does not include freight and he is under the impression freight should not cost more than \$2,000.00. Paul Nordyke said the city will cover the power, internet and run water to the water dock, and he will speak with the City of Hugoton about paying for the concrete pad. The county will cover the cost of the water dock and work for the asphalt driveway to the water dock with ARPA funds. Paul Nordyke and the commissioners agreed there needs to be an MOU for the water dock.

Amy Jo said she looked into having all the commissioner journals and election results scanned and put on a disk for saving. The cost is close to \$3,000.00. Amy Jo said she has money saved in her tech fund to cover the costs but will see if there is a grant out there to use for putting those books on disk. Amy Jo informed the commissioners there are still no taxes being paid to the state from one of the county entities. It was suggested the department having sales tax issues reach out to the state and request a letter from them stating the county will be forgiven any penalties or late fees due to the issue being on the state's end with logins. Amy Jo also asked about a vacuum large enough for Memorial Hall stating Ross told her Pat did not want to spend \$5,000.00 on a vacuum and to find something cheaper. Joe replied with it would be hard to find a vacuum large enough and of good quality cheaper than probably \$3,000.00. Amy Jo also asked about finding someone to shampoo the Memorial Hall carpet as it looks dirty due to food and liquids being spilled on it. She stated Ross had mentioned it needs to be deep cleaned.

Tony was in and requested approval from the commissioners to give Blane Grogan and Haden Daharsh an increase of \$1.00 per hour since they have been there for six (6) plus months. The commissioners agreed. Tony presented the commissioners with two (2) crossing permits to be

signed. Tony stated the road and bridge department is still working on asphalt and trying to get it completed as soon as possible. Pat said the Moscow Cemetery looks much better after the potholes have been patched. Tony and Jeff Cox will be gone next week from Monday through Thursday for classes and the following week Jessie and Jeff will be gone for their recertification on noxious weeds. Tony said there will either be an email or letter about the landfill from KDHE and asked Amy Jo if she receives it to email or get him a copy of the information. If Tony receives the information, he will pass it along to Amy Jo.

The Stevens Eco Devo Board consisting of Neal Gillespie, Jan Leonard, Doug Martin, Walt Beesley, Ron Honig and Curtis Crawford were next on the agenda. Jan Leonard told the commissioners Robert Harrington said to begin the RHID's (Rural Housing Incentive District) process there needs to be a survey completed at a cost of \$6,500.00. Jan said the RHID will help the contractors with the costs of building homes which makes it more appealing to build in Stevens County. Jan said Robert Harrington plans to be at the commissioner meeting on October 10<sup>th</sup>. Neal Gillespie said the Eco Devo would like to request a larger appropriation from the county to get back up to the \$35,000.00 to cover Jan's expenses/salary.

Neal said he had been reading the commissioner minutes and approves their voicing opinions about not being satisfied with more MET towers for the wind farms but stated they are needed by the lending institutions for funding purposes. However, Neal said the Eco Devo board is concerned about the commissioners' opinions causing a negative impact for the wind farms. Neal said many landowners and Eco Devo would like to see green energy in Stevens County as it would not only benefit the landowners but also the schools and the county taxpayers. Neal said in 2008, wind farms came to Stevens County but had to end due to a funding decline at the time. Invenergy will bring in not only funding and relief for the economy, but also good jobs. Neal also stated that research shows Invenergy is a good, solid company. Pat voiced his concern with the controversy and other issues along with too much government control over citizens and feeling like this wind farm is dragging out. Neal said Invenergy is not stringing people along, it just takes time to plan, receive funding and get things started because it is such a large-scale project. Pat said Glenn Kerbs, the attorney for Ford County, is assisting Stevens County with the planning and zoning regulations to keep Stevens County protected, which Neal stated is a good idea since Ford County has at least seven (7) wind farms currently and is looking at two (2) additional windfarms in the near future. Neal said Stevens County is known for gas and agricultural production, but the gas field has gone down substantially, and resources are diminishing. Neal said there was a time when Stevens County was in the top three (3) of the state of Kansas with the lowest property tax for many years and now they have raised so high just to keep the county going. After more discussion of the wind farms coming to Stevens County, Pat stated he would like to see the 2,000-foot distance from structures and Neal said it would be best to put the distance at 1,500 feet, which is what Invenergy is currently willing to do.

Ron Honig spoke with the commissioners about the vehicle at the extension office and asked if the county still wanted to purchase it for the airport.

Joe made a motion to bypass the county bidding process and purchase the extension office's Crown Victoria for \$7,000.00 for the airport. Pat seconded. Motion carried.

Joe announced Jennifer Featherston has replaced Linda Stalcup at the Hospital and would like the commissioners to give her a welcome party along with the acknowledgment the county made the final payment of the Pioneer Manor bond. He asked Amy Jo to get something together or get in contact with someone to help with the event.

Pat said he will contact the department in question about the state sales tax and see what can be done.

Ross Sullivan came back in, and Joe said to bring in several quotes of vacuums capable of cleaning the Memorial Hall and to find a way to get it shampooed either by finding a shampooer or a company to come in and shampoo. Joe also expressed his concern with the west entrance of the courthouse by the Memorial Hall doors and the tile which is coming apart. Ross said there had been water getting in during the hard rains and feels there is probably mold in the walls and insulation on that side. Ross said he needs to know if the commissioners want to re-tile the walls or just sheetrock. The commissioners told Ross to get estimates on the wall repair.

Added and Abated Orders were reviewed and approved by commissioners and given to the County Treasurer; for tax year 2019 numbers 273 and 274 total valuation added 310,943 and tax assessed \$61,718.14; for tax year 2020 numbers 87 and 88, total valuation added 408,019 and tax assessed \$86,358.86; for tax year 2021 number 109 with a total valuation removed of 2,604 and tax assessed of -\$350.58, and order number 110 through 111 with a total valuation added 541,461 and tax assessed \$122,242.41; 2022 order number 227 with a total valuation removed of 7,587 and tax assessed of -\$1,144.03, and order number 228 through 229 with a total valuation added 630,447 and tax assessed \$122,242.41. Total valuation of 1,880,679 and total tax assessed \$382,941.50.

By motion, the Board adjourned.

Attest: Amy Jo Tharp, County Clerk

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Pat Hall, Chairman