

REPUBLIC COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 2, 2022

The Republic County Commission met in regular session on Monday, May 2, 2022, at 8:30 a.m. at the Republic County Courthouse. Commissioners present were Melvin Jeardoe, Edwin Splichal and Doug Garman. Clerk Kathleen Marsicek was present to record the minutes. Deb Hadachek from The Belleville Telescope monitored the meeting.

The meeting was called to order and attendees pledged allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Lay Pastor Kathleen Marsicek, Little Blue River Parish, offered Morning Prayer.

Commissioner Splichal made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Jeardoe seconded the motion. Commissioner Garman made it unanimous.

Commissioner Jeardoe made a motion to approve the April 25, 2022 minutes. Commissioner Splichal seconded the motion. Commissioner Garman made it unanimous.

Pawnee Mental Health requested that Republic County proclaim May as Mental Health Month.

Commissioner Splichal made a motion to proclaim May as Mental Health month. Commissioner Jeardoe seconded the motion which was made unanimous.

Marilyn Abel, Lorene Holloway, Joanne Baxa, Doris Kauer, Idan Kauer, Peg Lesovsky, Tom Lesovsky, supporters of the wind farm proposed project explained why they support the project:

- Good asset to Republic County
- Will bring monetary increases for the county.
- One person has a turbine on property in Cloud County and feels it is a great idea for people in Republic County.

Nick Reynolds, Annette Bredthauer, Jeanette Sheets, Jennifer Loring, Terry Gile, Harold Wilber, Layne Holmes and Randy Junek from Republic County Responsible Wind Energy Group attended the meeting.

Reynolds stated that the road in front of his house needs work and if a laydown station is planned in a close location the road will really need more work. Reynolds is concerned about his livestock and the wildlife in the area if the turbines are installed. Reynolds is also concerned with any commissioner voting for this project if that commissioners' family will profit from the project.

Wilber requests that the commissioners not make a hasty decision about this project. Wilber also stated that the commissioners made a very unfair decision when they allowed the large wage increases to the employees of the Health department and need to act to reverse that action.

Bredthauer presented a summary from Acoustic Ecology Organization regarding the health issues related to living around wind turbines. The full report if read online presents both sides of wind turbines that can be found at acousticecology.org.

- Estimates that 33.3% to 50% of residents feel negatively impacted.
- About 20% are strongly impacted.
- There are 5% extremely impacted.
- Listed chronic sleep disturbance.
- Listed the people most susceptible to health issues.
- Wind turbines produce sound energy at a variety of frequencies and infrasonic range humans can hear.

Holmes explained that a few years back he dealt with another wind turbine group and attended many meetings. The most disturbing information to him was if a landowner signed the lease, the landowner no longer had any rights as to what could be done on that section of land. Another issue dealt with the decommissioning of a tower when it's no longer

usable. When the commissioners are reviewing the contracts make sure that it specifically states that the Windfarm pays for all the decommissioning expense and not Republic County or the landowner.

Junek's concerns are for his neighbors and the neighbors of all landowners that install a wind turbine to make sure the setback is far enough to protect the neighbors. Junek requested that the commissioners keep researching for additional knowledge not expressed by groups for or against the project before making a final decision.

Sheets also requested that the commissioners research the setbacks of the towers. The World Health Organization says it should be 1.2 miles or at least 1 mile not 1,250 feet.

Loring asked if the decommissioning plans for the turbines are included in the contracts.

Commissioner Garman explained that he has been researching the setback distances and there is no consistency with the distance.

Commissioner Garman stated that the residents of the county need to remember that NextEra contacted the county about a wind farm project, not Republic County reaching out to NextEra. The commissioners are reviewing and requesting changes to the original agreements until they meet the needs to protect everyone in Republic County.

Chuck Westin sent a letter to the commissioners requesting that they NOT make a hasty decision before the entire county has a right to vote on a Wind Farm project.

David Cox, Ken Robbins, Barry Porter, Cindy Coons, Patrick Comstock, Raymond Raney, Stacey Bowen, Nathan Craig, Justin Ferrell, Levi Whitley, Jeff Beikmann, Danielle Swanson and Sandee Swanson joined the meeting to discuss wage increases for the Health Department.

Sandee stated that at the last meeting the time ran out before the commissioners could explain why they made the decision to increase all the employees in the Health Department, so would the two commissioners that made the motion explain their reasons.

Commissioner Jeardoe explained that trying to replace those positions would cost more than increasing the wages of the persons wanting to leave.

Ferrell stated that many departments are having a difficult time hiring employees with the budgets that were approved for 2022 because commissioners have asked department heads to reduce budgets to keep taxes down and now they are too low to draw qualified applicants.

Commissioner Splichal had researched the starting wage and the average starting wage in Kansas was \$31.00 for an RN and Cloud County Hospital starting wage was \$30.00.

Ferrell explained that the department heads would like the commissioners to rescind their decision to increase the wages of the Health Department and research a more reasonable increase to wages.

Commissioner Garman explained that he abstained because he wanted to wait until all the wage scales were presented so that Republic County could have more competitive wages so employees won't want to leave just because of wages.

Commissioner Jeardoe stated that everybody deserves wage increases but the overall budget needs to be evaluated to meet this goal. The department heads may need to decrease other areas of spending to increase wages.

Coons and Marsicek explained when a department has only one or two employees and there is no advancement except to run for the position of the elected department head, creating a wage scale is more difficult than a department where employees can earn additional steps or go up the chain of command. Even researching other counties, it is a difficult job because job descriptions vary so much.

At 10:10 a.m., Commissioner Splichal made a motion to recess into executive session for 15 minutes to discuss Attorney-client issues relating human resource. Commissioner Jeardoe seconded the motion which was made unanimous by Commissioner Garman. Attending the session were the Board, Ferrell and Clerk Marsicek.

The Board reconvened at 10:25 a.m. taking no action.

At 10:25 a.m., Commissioner Splichal made a motion to recess into executive session for 10 minutes to discuss Attorney-client issues relating human resource. Commissioner Jeardoe seconded the motion which was made unanimous by Commissioner Garman. Attending the session were the Board and Ferrell. Commissioner Splichal requested an additional 5 minutes.

The Board reconvened at 10:40 a.m. taking no action.

At 10:45 a.m., Commissioner Garman made a motion to recess into executive session for 5 minutes to discuss Employee-Employer negotiations. Commissioner Jeardoe seconded the motion which was made unanimous by Commissioner Splichal. Attending the session were the Board, Ferrell and Danielle Swanson.

The Board reconvened at 10:55 a.m. taking no action.

Philip Murrow, New Sanitarian for the North Central Kansas LEPA area, introduced himself and explained if Republic County remains associated with the NCKLEPA to contact the Smith County Health Department just as the county did when Sherry Koster was employed.

All department heads rejoined the meeting to receive any decisions that the Commissioners will share.

Coons requested a direction to create a wage scale. Is the starting wage to be the new wage that was set in the Health Department? Commissioner Garman instructed Coons to set her own starting wage from the research from other businesses or counties.

Commissioner Splichal made a motion to rescind the original increase of wages to the employees at the Health Department with the understanding that a correct wage scale be presented from each department that has not already presented a wage scale by June 1st and be effective January 1, 2023. Commissioner Garman seconded the motion. Discussion followed that wage scales can be reviewed and updated yearly if necessary but need to be accompanied with job descriptions and reasons for the requests. Commissioner Garman asked for a vote by yes or no. Commissioner Jeardoe voted no. Commissioner Garman and Commissioner Splichal voted yes. Motion carried 2-1.

Permission to travel was granted for Clerk Marsicek to attend the annual Kansas County Clerk and Election Official Association meeting in Salina from May 3 to May 6.

Permission was approved for Mary Simmons to attend the mandatory Election Official training on May 5 in Salina.

Clerk Marsicek presented two State of Disaster Emergency Proclamations from Governor Laura Kelly.

Sandee Swanson asked permission to order a receipt printer from Fidlar to replace the printer that was outdated. The cost will be \$990.00 and the funds will come from County Equipment Reserve. Commissioner Splichal made a motion to approve the purchase of the printer. Commissioner Garman seconded the motion which was made unanimous by Commissioner Jeardoe.

Kenneth Robbins, Highway, Transportation and Bridge Administrator left for review the weekly community concerns and projects completed report.

Commissioner Splichal made a motion for Republic County to remain associated with the North Central Kansas LEPA and use Philip as the sanitarian. Commissioner Jeardoe seconded the motion. Commissioner Garman made it unanimous.

Clerk Marsicek will contact the Smith County Health Department, the KDHE and Marlene Stamm to advise of the board's decision.

At 12:20 p.m. Commissioner Splichal made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Garman seconded the motion. Commissioner Jeardoe made it unanimous.

The next regular meeting will be on Monday, May 9, 2022 at 8:30 a.m. at the Republic County Courthouse.

ATTEST: _____
Kathleen L. Marsicek, Republic County Clerk

APPROVED: _____
Doug Garman – Chair

Edwin Splichal – Member

Melvin Jeardoe– Member