

Pawnee County planning commission recommends proposed solar project

BY MIKE GILMORE

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LARNED — At a wellattended public hearing held at the Pawnee County Courthouse, the Pawnee County Joint Planning Commission voted to recommend granting Conditional Use Permits to a Nebraska-based energy development corporation to construct a 2,500-acre solar energy system with its accompanying storage facility in Keysville Township near the county's southern border. The recommendation is to be forwarded to the Pawnee **County Commissioners** for the final say on approval of the project.

An estimated 50 residents joined 10 members of the board to listen and provide comments regarding the project on approximately 2,483 acres for generation as the Kinsley Solar LLC and another 20 acres for battery storage as Kinsley Storage LLC.

Pawnee County Attorney Douglas McNett opened the meeting to explain the hearing agenda to note that the Pawnee County Commissioners have had ongoing conversations throughout the project proposal initially with Tenaska and then Acciona Energia. Tenaska re-acquired the project in May. Discussions have been ongoing since 2019.

To prepare for the project, the county developed solar energy standards that have been included in Article 37 of Pawnee County zoning regulations.



MIKE GILMORE Great Bend Tribune

Mike Roth, director of project development for Tenaska, provided a Powerpoint presentation on the solar project, its components, construction timeline and projected financial benefits to Pawnee County at Tuesday's hearing.

Tenaska director of project development Mike Roth then provided a Powerpoint presentation explaining the facility components, layout, construction timeline and financial benefits to the

The zoning board considered two separate applications as well as a recommendation for a two-year construction extension. The four motions were approved 9-1, with board member Terry Ryan opposed.

About Tenaska

Tenaska, a private energy company headquartered in Omaha, has since 1987 marketed natural gas services across

the country, later expanding its scope to include electric energy generation through wind and solar facilities. The company provides energy management services to generation and demand-side customers throughout the U.S., offering optimization, risk management, power trading and settlement services. Its development portfolio currently includes carbon capture and sequestration, natural gasfired generation, renewable fuel peakers, wind, solar, energy storage and green hydrogen projects.

In 2019, Tenaska approached landowners and officials in Pawnee and Barton counties regarding the establishment of 150

megawatt solar systems to tie into an existing transmission line. In October of that year, Tenaska sold a portfolio of 3 gigawatts of solar and 1 GW of energy storage to Acciona Energia, a multinational renewable energy company headquartered in Spain.

After several years of negotiations, Acciona sold back the local projects in May 2025 to Tenaska, which now is involved in negotiations for facilities in western Kansas looking ahead to renegotiations on the Barton County proposed project. The company is currently wrapping up a 190 MW project in Saline County, Ill., after completing several projects in Texas.

COUNTY, from page 1A Transportation a major need in county

"A little background on why we decided to explore this grant opportunity is hospitals are required to do a community health needs assessment every two years," Winkelman said. "We had been invited to each of the hospitals' community health needs assessment meetings, and the top three things in each community included transportation. The other two were access to healthy foods and mental health awareness. With that said, transportation seemed like the thing that we needed to explore to see how we could support that."

The grant requires hiring a rural public transportation consultant to help determine the needs in the county. It will also support a percentage of the salaries of two individuals from the Health Department staff as well as contracting four Census Tract Coordinators. There will be some additional costs for media, social media, venue rental, supplies, transportation, printed materials for handouts at the informational meetings, and other miscellaneous items.

Commissioner Shawn Hutchinson was on board with the grant for economic development reasons as well as public health.

"I've been involved in economic development planning for over five years, and one of the main things that comes up every time is transportation," he said. "So this isn't just public health. Public health is a big factor, obviously, but this can benefit the health community as well as being an economic driver."

When Winkelman was asked how long it would take to get the project planning implemented and in progress, she replied, "We hope to have the consulting firm selected by November and to have the project launched in January, Then between January and July, we will be looking at those meetings and reviewing the pedestrian collecting data. So it seems like a long time. It's something I would like to see tomorrow, but obviously we need to get a good

foundation, and we need to do it right, so we can actually apply the data at the implementation phase."

Winkelman envisions the finished product somewhat like the General Public Transportation system, but countywide.

'There are people struggling in a community. Maybe the transportation they have available to them only runs between eight and five," she said. "They may have needs beyond those hours, or maybe the cost of the transportation — the fee that's charged for pickup and drop-off — is a barrier for them. Is it for medical — out of town? Are we looking at appointments in Hays, Wichita? What are their needs? There are people who are needing preventive tests done, like a mammogram, and they have no transportation to get there to get that done."

Although the final product will be a collaborative effort between the consultants, commissioners, community leaders and the health department based on the information gathered through the census taking and community meetings, Winkelman has a vision of the program in her mind.

"I don't know how all of this will play out," she said. "My view would be to have some kind of central hub where the calls could come in and there would be transportation available, 24/7. Obviously, if it's an emergency, we have ambulance services, but if it's to get to the ER for something in the evening or the night that doesn't warrant an ambulance call, you could call a transportation calling center to get you there. Or maybe it's somebody who does shift work and they need a ride to work at two in the morning — they could call in.

"Some of the things I foresee would need to have some type of scheduling to it. I think just good accessibility, and knowing that there's something out there to get you from point A to point B. I want to make it equitable for everyone to have access. That's what I would like to see."



COURTESY PHOTOS

Ellsworth County Sheriff's Office reports eastbound traffic on Interstate 70 was detoured Wednesday night after a semi sideswiped another semi that was parked on the emergency shoulder.

One semi sideswipes another on I-70

The Ellsworth County Sheriff's Office Deputies assisted the Kansas Highway Patrol Wednesday night following a non-injury accident on I-70 at milepost 227-228. According to a social media post by the ECSO, an eastbound semi side-swiped a semi that was broken down sitting on the emergency shoulder. The collision sparked a fire.

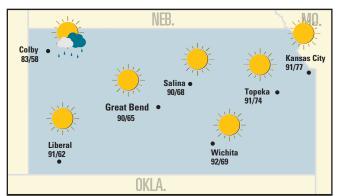
"Fortunately ... no injuries with this one but hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of damage to the vehicles, cargos, and the Interstate itself!! This fire was so hot that the concrete surface is badly damaged and will require an overlay repair!!!"

Traffic eastbound was diverted for a time. The Kansas Department of Transportation set up temporary traffic control

devices and had personnel on scene notifying drivers of the detour. The ECSO post also

urged motorists to "PLEASE Leave your CELLPHONE ALONE while operating a Motor

Forecast: Sunday, August 09, 2025



GREAT BEND AT A GLANCE

Today's Temperatures: High 90° Low 65° Precipitation for the month is 1.17 inches. Sunset tonight: 8:36 p.m. • Sunrise tomorrow: 6:46 a.m.

Vehicle. ... ESPECIALLY AN 80,000 POUND COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLE!!!'

FRIDAY'S CLOSING

COMMODITIES QUOTES
 Location
 Wht
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 Un Ag
 4.32
 2.80
 3.65
 9.24

 Ellsworth
 4.61
 2.84
 3.54
 8.94
Kansas Common: 50.50

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Police use drone to end standoff

Great Bend Police officers used a drone to locate a man barricaded inside a residence at 217 Pine St. Tuesday morning and then created a distraction while they gained entry, Police Chief Steve Haulmark reports.

The incident began with a domestic disturbance reported around 10:45 a.m.

Officers were advised that the suspect, Robert C. Amador, 34, was damaging property inside the residence and making threats to harm others with a homemade hatchet, Haulmark stated in a news release. Upon

officers' arrival, they were able to get two other occupants of the home out safely.

Amador barricaded himself inside the residence and refused to come out. Officers tried talking him out of the residence for approximately an hour and 15 minutes and were unable to get him to cooperate. They then used the department drone to help pinpoint his location in the residence; using a distraction on the opposite side of the building, officers made entry into the residence and took Amador into custody.

He was transported to the Barton County Detention Center where he was booked for aggravated assault domestic violence and felony obstruction in lieu of \$20,000 bond.



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