

NEWS

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? Contact Jason Jump at (620) 886-5654 or email ghp@gyphillpremiere.com

GOOGLE

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an important topic to the local community.

“Google cares about water,” Ramirez said.

He said the air-cooled facility being proposed will take less water than other data centers. Ramirez said the project will eventually produced “500 long-term jobs.”

“I’m super excited with these (Google) people,” he said. “They’ve been, honestly, some of the best partners I’ve ever worked with.”

Google public affairs representative Trystine

Payfer also addressed the crowd on Monday. She said their goal was to meet local people and give everyone an overview of Google data centers, as well as share the potential project the team has “just begun to assess” in Barber County.

“I do want to reiterate that this is a very early-stage project,” Payfer said. “So, we do not have every detail ironed out as those will be developed over time should this project continue.”

She did say it was “exciting” for the Google team to be in front of the local residents this early in the

process to talk about how the project could fit into the community.

She said data centers are “the engines behind digital services that power our daily lives.” Google currently owns over 30 data centers on four different continents and “continues to add new sites to better serve our customers,” according to Payfer.

The Google rep said Kansas is a “very exciting” new market for companies to explore not only from a national security standpoint, but by allowing an American company to invest in the “heartland.”

Payfer said she understands reliable broadband internet service is a struggle in rural Kansas, and Google wants to have conversations with local residents about that, as well as state and regional leaders.

She also said, “most of the U.S. economy runs on Google data centers,” such as Equifax, Pizza Hut and “all of the brands that you’re familiar with and love.”

Payfer said Google search services, maps and YouTube are also made possible because of the physical digital infrastructure the company is continuing to invest in around the nation.

Andrew Harnish, who is a part of the acquisitions and development team at Google, said the company will be looking to “review test fits with the county” in the coming weeks to make sure the project is a good fit long term for Barber County and the city of Sharon.

“We are excited to talk further about the positive impacts to the county and the chance to bolster the economy of the local community,” Harnish said.

He said the air-cooled project will use about as much water as a 300-room hotel and utilize, “two or three data center buildings,

three or four administrative buildings, a substation, mechanical outbuildings, water storage silos and two guard houses.”

Harnish said it would be at least a \$3 billion investment for Google in order for the project to “become a net benefit to the community.”

He said there would be road improvements as necessary, as well as looking at water and waste water issues with the Rural Water District.

Team members said they are still in the process of doing their local due diligence to see if the project will continue in Barber County.



JASON JUMP / The Premiere

Barber County resident Herbie Landwehr, left, talks with KSN reporter Raj Ghanekar outside of the Barber County Public Health building on Monday following the Barber County Commission meeting where representatives from Google shared information about a potential data center the information conglomerate is considering for construction just north of Sharon. Landwehr has been an outspoken critic of the project for months in person and on social media.



JASON JUMP / The Premiere

Fino Advisors founder Rene Ramirez addresses a packed house at the Barber County Commission meeting held on Monday in the county annex room in the Barber County Health Department. It has been rumored for several weeks that Ramirez’s company was trying to secure land in Barber County for a data center project. The Houston-based business owner confirmed that project on Monday.

BAN

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“We fully support the prohibition of cell phones in the school environment,” he said.

In USD 331, Superintendent Kip Wilson said that the current policy does not allow cell phone usage during instructional time. However, middle and high school students are allowed to access their phones during passing periods and lunch. Elementary students are not allowed any access to cell phones during the day.

Therefore, he said, if the proposed bill passes, it wouldn’t mean a significant change for USD 331 students. But Wilson

noted that principals and teachers have continued to examine the issue, to include professional development on the effects of cell phone usage by students.

“As a result we are very likely adjusting our policy to not allow phones to be in use from the first bell of the day until the final dismissal bell of the day,” Wilson said. “This would obviously be a step further than the guidelines in this bill.

“I agree with the rationale behind the proposed legislation. USD 331 has been proactive in its approach to this issue and will continue to fine-tune what we are doing in order to best serve our students and families.”

USD 332 Superintendent Kelly Amberger said that the school currently does not allow cell phone usage during instructional time. But he noted that the legislative proposal would be bell to bell, to include lunch and passing periods.

Amberger said that the school district will respond to whatever legislation is passed, but just wants an understanding of what is needed.

“With any statute, we just want the details – write a bill that has clarity and makes sense and we will do our part to make sure we are statutorily compliant,” he said.

Amberger noted that the cell phone, “while ubiquitous technol-

ogy, it can become a distraction. Like many other things, we’re in a response mode instead of pro active mode.

“Maybe response mode is to better understand how to make technology useful and not a distraction. I don’t think a sensible person would want to fight that. I see some sort of legislation passing both houses and we will work with it.”

USD 361 Superintendent Chris Whetzel said that the district plans to do an extensive review of the issue in the coming months and expects to know more about the next steps once the review is complete and the district knows how the bill takes shape.

The bill does allow for a student to access an electronic device if it is necessary for an education or specialized instruction program or if a doctor deems it medically necessary for a student. The bill allows for students to contact parents or guardians via the school telephone.

As for teachers, they will not be prohibited from using such devices, but the bill does require new policies banning school employees from privately or directly communicating with a student via a social media platform for official school purposes. But a school board could approve such a platform to be used for official school purposes.

PUBLIC NOTICE

(First published in The Gyp Hill Premiere on Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026) 2t

REQUEST FOR BIDS

Notice is hereby given that Barber County, Kansas, is soliciting bids for the construction of Sun City Road Crack Seal. The project consists of crack sealing on Sun City Road, starting at the north KDOT ROW of US-160 and proceeding north approximately 5.5 miles to the end of pavement north of White Sands Road. Barber County shall provide all the funds required for this project. All Federal, State, and County regulations must be complied with.

For this project, bids will be received and accepted via the online electronic bid service through QuestCDN vBid online bidding or by sealed paper bid until 9:00 a.m. local time January 26, 2026. Bids will be presented to the Barber County Commissioners at their meeting in the Barber County Courthouse Commission room at 10:15 a.m. local time January 26, 2026, at which time and place all bids will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bidders are encouraged to be present at the bid opening. Paper bids must be delivered or mailed to

the following:

Barber County
120 E. Washington Ave.
Medicine Lodge, Kansas 67104

All Bidders are to be prequalified with the Kansas Department of Transportation, as outlined in Section 102 of the KDOT Standard Specifications or receive approval to bid the project from the owner.

All bids shall be accompanied by a Bid Bond or a Certified or Cashiers check in the amount of 5% of the total bid.

Checks or bonds are to be made payable to Barber County and serve as a guarantee of the sincerity and integrity of the bidder, and shall be forfeited to the County if said proposal or bid is accepted and the bidder fails to execute the contract and file the required statutory and performance bonds as required in the contract documents.

Work will commence no sooner than March 23, 2026 (earliest start date) and no later than September 21, 2026 (late start date). All work shall be completed within 20 working days after the Notice to Proceed. Plans, Specifications and Contract Documents may be examined at the Barber

County Courthouse, County Road & Bridge Office, and at the Engineer’s Office at the following address:

Kirkham, Michael & Associates, Inc.
202 N. Main St.
Cheney, Kansas 67025

The contract documents are available at www.questcdn.com. This contract is QuestCDN project #9987238. A contractor may view the contract documents at no cost prior to deciding to become a Planholder. To be considered a Planholder for bids, a contractor must register with OuestCDN.com and purchase the contract documents in digital form at a cost of \$22.00. Registering as a Planholder is recommended for all prime contractors and subcontractors as Planholders will receive automatic notice of addenda and other contract document updates via QuestCDN. Contact QuestCDN Customer Support at 952-233-1632 or info@questcdn.com for assistance in membership registration and downloading digital project information and vBid online bid submittal questions. To access the electronic bid form, download the project documents and click on the online bid button at the top of the bid

advertisement page. After the bid closes, bidders will be charged a fee of \$42.00 for successful bid submission. For this project, bids will be received and accepted via the online electronic bid service through QuestCDN vBid online bidding, or by sealed paper bid. Prospective bidders must be on the Planholder list through QuestCDN for bids to be accepted. Paper copies may be obtained at the above address upon receipt of deposit of Fifty Dollars (\$50.00) cash, check or money order for each set, none of which is refundable. Bids will only be accepted from bidders receiving contract documents directly from QuestCDN or Kirkham Michael. Questions regarding bids shall be directed in writing to Jacob Crowell jcrowell@kirkham.com a minimum of two (2) calendar days prior to the date of the bid opening.

NO REFUNDS WILL BE MADE.

Barber County reserves the right to waive any and all technicalities and to reject any and all bids.

Larry Conner,
Public Works Director

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The Gyp Hill
PREMIERE

PO Box 130
Medicine Lodge, KS 67104
620.886.5654
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STAFF OF THE PREMIERE

JASON JUMP - Owner, Publisher, Editor
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