

# NEWS

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

## Eck: 'Do Not Sell the Soul of Our Community to Google'

BY JASON JUMP  
Editor

Barber County residents continue to show up at commission meetings to voice their opposition to a data center Google is proposing to build just northwest of the city of Sharon.

Two Sharon residents were among three speakers that spoke out against the project during Monday's meeting.

Mason Eck, who grew up in Sharon, has moved back home with his family after 10 years away from the community. He told commissioners he decided to move back to the area in order to raise his family and give his son the opportunities he had while growing up in rural Kansas. He wanted his son to be able to hunt and fish and look up at the stars at night.

"I feel like they are being stolen away with the development of the data center," Eck said.

Eck said there are a number of negative impacts the data center could potentially have on not only the environment, but also to the health of local residents and local wildlife.

He said he wanted to focus on one area that had been neglected and that was the "morality" of building such a large-scale data center in the county.

"According to the Ameri-

can Academy of Pediatrics, an 18-year-old spends an average of eight hours and 39 minutes on their screens every day, so if you give an 18-year-old a phone by the time they are 75 years old they will have spent over 20 years of their life on a screen," he said.

Eck also focused on the "loneliness epidemic" that has hit the nation.

"This epidemic is increasingly linked to excessive, habit-driven smartphone use," he said. "According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth ages 10 to 14.

"We do not have a health relationship with technology. And it's not just our youth."

Eck said he was not "anti-technology," admitting he carried an Apple iPhone.

"I rely on technology for my job," he said. "We are an increasingly technological society, but there is a need - a great need - to heal our relationships with technology."

He said all of these concerns are valid and that's without even mentioning the dangers of artificial intelligence.

"I think we are deceiving ourselves if we think the pros outweigh the cons," Eck said of the potential data center. "Do not sell the soul of this community to

Google, continuing our downward spiral of loneliness."

Eck's wife, Mary Pat Eck, spoke after her husband.

She said most people may think there are only two options available when it comes to the data center. One, "build the data center out of fear," or two "let our towns die from lack of funds and dwindling community."

Eck said she thinks a there is a third option, which would have the community come together to "find ways to bring revenue and life to this unique land and community."

"My mother always taught me there are multiple solutions to every problem we face, and our job is to be the problem solvers and figure out what might be best," she said. "If we build this data center, I do believe with my whole heart we are giving into the empty promises that will only bring destruction.

"If we do nothing, then our towns will continue to die."

Eck said as an outsider that grew up in St. Louis, she understands how people may overlook Kansas. She said the only time she heard about the state was when it was discussed in relation to the Dust Bowl in school.

"Dry, flat and pointless," she said.

She said most people thought she was moving to Kansas City because that is about the only

part of Kansas that is on anyone's radar.

"When I came here for the first time and expanded my view of Kansas, (I found) Barber County is unique," Eck said. "The beautiful and breathtaking Gypsum Hills should be shared with the world."

She said hiking trails could be utilized along with places to camp in order to bring visitors and revenue to the area. Eck also talked about the local Peace Treaty celebration and pageant.

Eck mentioned the potential revitalization of the former drive-in property, saying it could be used to "show old movies, recreating a classic piece of Americana."

She said the community also needs to come together to make individual cities a "financially enticing location for locally owned businesses" that contribute to the local economy instead of giant corporations that "will just strip away what we love."

"Soon people will want to find a place to live that is not near a data center," Eck said. "If we all work together to hold onto the land here, it could be a refuge for those seeking to get away and start a family where there are no (data) centers nearby."

She said this is also a unique place to live, because kids can still play outside "without constant fear" and where "kindness" is

still shown through loving your neighbors.

"It would be a shame for this to disappear because of toxins, noise, light pollution and a never ending list of negative implications a 2,000-acre data center would bring," she said. "The part I'm greatly disappointed by is the one place I would have thought people would have fought to protect their land for the betterment of world and the people around them, they have sold out for a small piece of money. There is no amount of money that is enough to justify what is going to happen.

"Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who crooked in his ways - Proverbs chapter 28 verse six."

Jeff Woods also spoke against the "billionaires that want to buy up our land." He told commissioners that the issues with data centers are not only something that concern U.S. residents, but moratoriums against these facilities are popping up internationally as well, including the Netherlands, Ireland and Singapore to name a few.

He talked about state measures potentially in Georgia, New York, New Hampshire, Maryland and Oklahoma.

Woods said he is also extremely concerned with data centers turning the United States into a surveillance state with the usage of

### CITY

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approach to that project will be discussed and decided on next month.

Ostrom updated the council on the start date for re-finishing the slide at the city pool, which is still to be determined at this time. He also stated that his department is waiting on the stump

grinder to be delivered.

Ostrom also provided updates on a burnt out pump that has been fixed at the state well. He also said he wants to have Sergeant Drilling begin maintaining the wells. He would like to see cameras used to get a better idea of the integrity of the pipes, as well as the screens, and then have Sergeant Drilling make any

needed repairs and maintain the wells.

Ostrom has ordered new street signs for the city and also stressed the importance of residents putting house numbers up on their houses in an area that is easily visible for city workers and first responders.

There is currently an ordinance in place regarding that, but he urged

the citizens to follow that ordinance.

Ostrom also plans to purchase a new motor for a mosquito fogger to help improve that process for the city employees this coming season.

The next city council meeting will be held on Monday, March 2. The public is encouraged to attend the city council meetings.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

(Published in The Gyp Hill Premiere on Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026) 1t

**PUBLICATION SUMMARY OF ORDINANCE NO. 958 PASSED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF MEDICINE LODGE, KANSAS ON THE 16TH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2026.**

SUMMARY

On February 16, 2026, the Governing Body of the City of Medicine Lodge, Kansas, passed Ordinance No. 958 approving a water purchase agreed between the City of Medicine Lodge and Barber County Rural Water District No. 1. The complete text of this ordinance may be obtained or viewed free of charge at [medicinelodge.kansas.gov](http://medicinelodge.kansas.gov) or at the office of the Medicine Lodge City Clerk, 114 W. First Avenue, Medicine Lodge, Kansas 67104. This ordinance is not subject to a protest petition.

This summary is certified this 17th day of February, 2026.

/s/ Hannah L. Molz

Hannah L. Molz,

#27626

City Attorney

### OPINION

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Finally, we must ask: who benefits from price controls like this? Not patients. Not small businesses. Not truly transparent markets. Price controls invariably benefit

entrenched interests that can absorb regulatory costs while smaller competitors struggle to adapt. Instead of imposing broad rate mandates, policymakers should focus on real market reforms like eliminating barriers to patient-friendly

mail order prescription deliveries, stopping patent abuse by drug manufacturers, increasing access to generics, and empowering policymakers and consumers with information and choice.

SB 360's dispensing fee

might be well-intentioned, but intentions do not replace economic principles. Kansas should reject this looming pill tax and embrace free enterprise, not government mandates that treat symptoms while making the disease worse.

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