

City plans work session on energy center

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News
Plans to build a new coal-fired power plant, an ethanol plant and a biodiesel plant four miles west of Goodland have people buzzing, and a few are raising questions.

The city commission will hold a work session at 5 p.m. on Monday to discuss the impacts and development issues the proposed plants pose for the city.

Citizens are invited to attend the meeting, and representatives from two firms involved in the development, Renewable Energy Resources and Goodland Energy Resources, have been invited.

The city commission will be voting at its next regular meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 6, on a recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Commission to change the zoning of the annexed land from residential to industrial.

The zoning commission recommended the change after holding a public hearing on Aug. 16.

A rumor has been circulating about an injunction against the power plants, but there is no evidence of any court filing.

Ron Pickman, head of the Goodland Energy Resource effort to build the coal-fired power plant, said Tuesday the company has not been served with any notice of an injunction. A check with the Sherman County District Court found no case of that type.

There is no evidence that an injunction has been filed in federal court, either.

Citizens question safety of plants

These questions were posed by two Sherman County residents, David and Denise Floyd, when they appeared at a city commission meeting on Aug. 1.

David Floyd works at the National Weather Service office here. The couple lives about three miles west of Goodland off of County Road 64, old U.S. 24, and about 1 1/2 miles southeast of the proposed Goodland Energy Center.

Answers were provided by Mark Justus, of Renewable Energy Resources, which is promoting the biodiesel plant, and Pickman, Goodland Energy Resources, which would build the power plant. *The Goodland Star-News* is printing the questions and answers as a service to citizens. We have made no attempt to verify any statements by any of the parties.

Q. Is it true that the Gopher State Ethanol Plant in St. Paul, which the promoters here bought, had four fires, two caused by thermal oxidizer equipment used for reduction of air pollution?

A. We are aware that the thermal oxidizer equipment can cause fires if not appropriately sized, as was the case with Gopher State. However we are not using dryers on our plant installation and therefore have eliminated this concern.

Q. There have been a lot of ethanol plant disasters occurring around country, such as the ethanol plant in Atchison, Kan., and the explosion in Benson, Minn., that killed one man.

A. Industrial accidents occur daily in a variety of settings and are not limited to ethanol production. We will take all steps necessary to minimize the potential for disasters to occur at our facilities. The Atchison incident was not at an ethanol plant.

Q. The purchased coal plant in Moorhead, Minn. has been shut down since 1980 and in 1993 was determined to be cost ineffective to bring back on line.

A. We have made a business decision to purchase this plant and feel that the cost/benefit analysis conducted by our group does make this a viable and cost effective decision. We have chosen to use certain components from this plant and coupled them with new equipment that meets environmental regulations to make this an effective and environmentally friendly facility. The economics of this plant have been enhanced by the conversion to a cogeneration plant.

Q. Coal plant emissions are clear causes of health problems, including asthma, bronchitis and heart attacks.

A. The plant emissions will comply with all federal and state regulations now in place, as well as proposed regulations now being considered by federal and state agencies. To our knowledge there have been no studies or reports published that have categorically proven that coal plant emissions are "clear causes" of the aforementioned health problems.

Q. Goodland being windy, will



Parts (above) for the new ethanol plant keep arriving by truck and are being stored on the south edge of the city. Chuck Lutters (right) operated the crane to unload the storage containers on Wednesday.



coal dust cause issues?

A. All on-site coal handling and transfer points will be fitted with dust control equipment.

Q. There is no such thing as a clean power plant?

A. We will employ the best available technologies and employee training programs to ensure that our facilities will meet or exceed industry standards in regard to clean operations.

Q. If plants are cleaner now, why do ALL the local residents hate them so much?

A. The large majority of residents who have visited with us have not indicated a hatred of the plant but instead have supported our decision to construct.

Q. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has stated no application for an air permit has been received nor has an air quality study on Prevention of Significant Deterioration of atmosphere been done.

A. Engineering has been ongoing the past several months in preparation of the application. Air quality testing is in process. A meeting with the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the state regarding the application was held in Topeka on Aug. 4.

Q. The air permit process takes six months to complete but construction is to begin in 30 to 45 days.

A. Even though the air permit time line may take up to six months, the construction on infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) can begin within the next 30 to 45 days.

Q. Will this energy center attract more "dirty, smelly, high negative impact" plants?

A. We do not believe the proposed energy center falls in the category of "dirty, smelly, high negative impact" plants and therefore do not believe the energy center will attract that type of industry.

Q. Will this center have a negative impact on other economic development opportunities?

A. Just the opposite, we firmly believe that the energy center will have a positive influence on the economic well-being of the community and promote growth.

Q. Is the city open for lawsuits in the event of accidents, pollution, health concerns, decreased property values, and other nuisance factors?

A. The city is not responsible now for the operations of private enterprise and the energy center will be no different.

Q. Which local entity will see that the buildings are up to code.

A. The city Building Inspection Department will be responsible for oversight in this arena.

Q. Which local entity will ensure pollution is at a minimum and regulations are enforced.

A. EPA and the state health department will be sure that the energy center will be in compliance with regulations.

Q. Does the city have money to train the city attorney in environ-

mental law.

A. Training of the city attorney will be decided by the city. There are resources available at the state and federal level to provide assistance and guidance to the city attorney.

Q. If the plants fail, will the city be responsible for dismantling or will they remain an eyesore.

A. The city is not responsible for dismantling of any industry or business that fails unless condemnation of the property becomes inevitable and a majority vote of the governing body dictates the city stepping in to clean up the property. We do not consider failure of this energy center an option. We plan for our facilities to be a first-class operation and a pleasure to view.

Q. Will the city's fire department have to have additional training and equipment to fight the types of fires associated with these facilities?

A. We plan to meet with all emergency services in Sherman County to review our facilities and will be asking for recommendations from them to assist all parties in the case of an emergency. The training needed by the fire department will be a determination left to them.

Q. Will waste from these plants go into our landfill?

A. We will attempt to reuse all waste products to their fullest extent through a vigorous recycling program. Normal domestic waste will enter the landfill but industrial waste will be at an absolute minimum.

Q. Who is paying to bring gray water from city's wastewater plant?

A. The energy center will be responsible for all costs.

Q. How much wastewater will be brought back into the city's wastewater plant and can the city's plant handle any extra load.

A. None.
Q. How safe are these plants.

A. These plants will comply with all federal, state, and local regulations. We will have employee-training programs to create a safe workplace.

Q. When will the public be invited to an open meeting to discuss issues relating to these plants?

A. As part of the air permit application, we have requested a public hearing to be held in Goodland by EPA and/or the state. Public announcements of this hearing will be forthcoming.

Q. Does the city have a noise ordinance and will it be enforced at these facilities?

A. The city could better answer this question. We believe that the noise generated by the energy center would be no greater than any other existing industry currently in operation within the area.

Q. Who is paying for curb and gutter, sidewalks, hydrants, sewers, and roads?

A. Within the confines of the industrial complex, we will be responsible for these items.

Q. Will the plants use city water or well water? Will any water permit be required and who will monitor groundwater quality.

A. We plan to acquire the necessary water rights to serve this complex with its water needs.

Q. How many employees will be paid minimum wage?

A. None.

Q. Will employees be required to live in Goodland or Sherman County or will Goodland be supplying the economy of other locations, such as Colby and Burlington.

A. We will make every attempt to hire employees from within the Sherman County area. We will be looking for quality employees to fill these important positions and ensure operating compliance with all federal, state, and local regulations.

any of the above-mentioned variables at the Sugar Hills Golf Club or anywhere else.

Q. Will new residents want to settle in Goodland when they see smokestacks, coal dust and pollution?

A. We firmly believe that this development will attract new residents to the Goodland area.

Q. Are policies in place to handle coal transport into the plant?

A. Yes.
Q. Will transport vehicles be covered?

A. Transport vehicles will be governed by Department of Transportation regulations.

Q. Has the state health department been contacted to see what the health risks are to older adults, to children, to those with asthma and other respiratory illnesses in association with these facilities?

A. Although we do not believe these facilities present any health risks, we will abide by all state regulations in our operations.

Q. Scientists at the Nevada's Desert Research Institute have conducted studies and published a report that fine particles from coal-burning power plants may add to drought conditions in the West.

A. There are various scientific studies that show conflicting conclusions concerning environmental impacts from all industries. However there have been no studies conducted to our knowledge that the drought facing this community the past six years can be attributed to a coal-burning facility.

Q. Why has everything associated with these plants been done in secret? What is the rush and why is it so secret?

A. We have received considerable publicity from all levels of the media. We have been present to explain our operations at a variety of public meetings. We have attempted to answer any questions that fall in the public arena. We do not believe that we are attempting to operate in secret. We have invited questions and offered answers to alleviate any concerns about our operation. If it appears there is a "rush" to proceed, it is due to our excitement concerning all the positive opportunities that will be generated in this northwest Kansas area by the construction of the energy center.

If an employee is hired from outside the area, we would hope they would choose to relocate to this area, however we cannot control the individual's choice of where they live.

Q. How will farmers benefit from this development?

A. There are many areas of benefit to the agricultural community, including market availability, reduced fuel costs and agricultural waste disposal, to name a few. We see this development as a benefit to the overall community and not limited to the agricultural section.

Q. Who will want to play golf with the odor of burnt corn, black coal dust on golf carts and greens, factory noise in background, and inhaling pollutants?

A. It is the golfers' determination as to where and under what conditions they will play. We do not accept that our plants will generate

Q. Is this Energy Center good for Goodland?
A. We believe it is. The following benefit analysis is an example of the "good" that will be forthcoming:

CITY OF GOODLAND BENEFIT ANALYSIS

ELECTRIC POWER PURCHASE	
GOODLAND ENERGY CENTER	OTHER ENERGY PROVIDER
Cost of Power	Rate fluctuation at mercy of market
Fixed rate for 10 years	
Ownership	Outside ownership by for-profit company — only interest is exporting dollars from the community
Owned by residents of Sherman County with vested interest	
Employment	
200-400 temporary construction	0 jobs here.
60-80 full-time employees	
Investment in dollars	
\$30 million-40 million in construction and infrastructure	0 dollars
Tax Base	
City alone \$400,000 plus	0 dollars
Spin-Off Jobs	
100-200	0 jobs
Wastewater	
Center will dispose of all gray Water from Wastewater plant	City will still have cost regarding discharge and City will be in compliance of effluent with state permit
Other Benefits	
Housing market will improve	None
Increased school enrollment	
Increased sales tax	
Additional state revenues	
Increase in visitors	
Rail system improvements	
Increased construction	
Agricultural Market expands	
City not as dependent on federal and state support	
Every aspect of community benefits from the development	