

Energy center creates excitement in Topeka

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ison said. “Thursday, Mark Justus, president of Goodland Energy Center, and Larry McCants of First National Bank, a major investor, will be presenting the details of the center operation to the House Utilities Committee.

“The committee is so interested in this project they have set aside the entire meeting time for their presentation. That is quite unusual. I expect others from Sherman County

may be attending and possibly speaking.”

The state Department of Transportation has approved an \$800,000 economic development grant to help Sherman County rebuild one mile of County Road 14, between old U.S. 24 and Eighth Street, by the plant site. The total project is expected to cost \$2.3 million to rebuild the road with concrete to handle the expected truck traffic.

Sherman County Commissioner Kevin Rasure said when he was tes-

tifying in front of the House and Senate committees on Jan. 31, legislators were asking questions about the energy center.

“I know some people believe the project is not a big deal,” Morrison said. “It is a big deal. The chief of the Central Regional Environmental Office for the Department of Defense wants information. They may be interested in assisting the project. Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, operated by the U.S. Department of Energy, is interested

in this project and wants to be involved. Clean, environmentally friendly, alternative energy that may be self sustainable is something the U.S. government is quite interested in promoting.”

The center is a unique effort to bring together the need for clean, low-cost coal-fired electric power in combination with an ethanol plant and a biodiesel plant. The three plants will work together and use byproducts, including waste steam, to reduce the cost of produc-

tion of the ethanol and biodiesel. The generators will sell power to the City of Goodland and provide power for the other plants.

Sherman County citizens will have an opportunity in April to vote on a one-cent sales tax which would provide the matching money for the road construction at Caruso as well as to rebuild city streets and other county roads, which being the entrances to the city.

“It appears that Sherman County is developing a model of energy

production for the future,” Morrison said. “Lots of other great things that will create jobs and better economic conditions for Sherman County and the surrounding area are in development. The U.S. government would not have interest in this project if Kevin, Rick, Wayne and Larry had not made the trip to Topeka. It just happened that the Department of Energy and Department of Defense area heads were in the Capitol during their visit.”

Senate passes sales tax bill; governor’s signature expected this week

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“The bill had all the stars aligned to help it along.”

Rasure said he will try to put together a joint city/county meeting in the next few weeks to talk about how and when the sales tax election will be held, and what needs to be done to explain the program to citizens.

“I am grateful to Rep. Morrison and Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer for their efforts to get this passed,” Rasure said. “I know they were working with the leadership in each house to move the bill faster than normal. I am truly amazed at how fast this has been accomplished.

“It is now up to us to explain the projects to the citizens for their ap-

proval. The new language in the bill gives the city and county more flexibility to repair streets and county roads.

“In the past, the county had an opportunity to ask the citizens to pass a sales tax to fix the major county road that crosses the county — known as old U.S. 24 — but the new bill has added streets so some major projects can be done in the city.”

Morrison said Gov. Kathleen Sebelius is aware of the legislation, and her signature is expected this week.

Once the law is published in the Kansas Register, the Sherman County commissioners and County Clerk Janet Rumpel can set the date for an election. Rumpel said Thurs-

day she expects to have the vote about the middle of April.

The bill was introduced by Morrison in the House and Ostmeyer in the Senate on Jan. 24, and referred to the taxation committees. On Jan. 31, Commissioner Rasure, Mayor Rick Billinger, City Manager Wayne Hill and Larry McCants, president of First National Bank, flew to Topeka in the bank’s plane to testify on the bill before both committees.

Morrison and Rasure were the main speakers before the House committee at 9 a.m., and Ostmeyer helped with the Senate hearing at 10:30 a.m.

The House committee quickly debated the bill and passed it to the full House. The Senate committee

did not take action at that time.

House action was taken on the floor on Feb. 2, and the final roll call was taken on on Feb. 9, with the bill passing 119-4. It was sent to the Senate and referred to the taxation committee.

Since the committee had already had a hearing on the identical Senate bill, the House bill was passed out of committee on Wednesday, and the full Senate debated and passed the bill on a 40-0 vote Thursday afternoon.

“It is important for the people to realize that the sales tax plan was being discussed and planned before the Goodland Energy Center was announced,” Rasure said. “While the new development will certainly help the city and county, the projects

included in the joint road improvement program are streets and roads that would need to be repaired even if the energy center wasn’t being built.”

The joint road program, estimated to cost about \$10 million, would include a total rebuild of 17th Street from Main east to the railroad crossing, the intersection at Eighth

and Caldwell, Caldwell north to the airport, Eight Street from K-27 east to DeLao Drive, Eight Street (County Road 65) west of K-27 to County Road 14, County Road 64.5 east of Goodland and Road 64 west of the city (old U.S. 24) and the one-mile stretch of County Road 14 at Caruso from County Road 64 north to County Road 65.

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