

County splits road design engineering contract

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of Old U.S. 24 from the bond money and a state economic development grant and south of there to I-70 with state and federal money.

On the County Road 14 project, DeBoer said, he had talked to an official with the Kansas Department of Transportation, who said the south project from I-70 to old U.S. 24 will be on the same schedule as the north project from old U.S. 24 to Eighth Street. He said the two projects are scheduled to bid in 2009.

Rasure said, though, the north project on Road 14 could be moved up, because it is an economic development project. The county has to wait until it has enough federal money coming to do the south project.

DeBoer said there is no way to do both projects together because the county has used up its federal match, and it would take a couple of years to build that back up.

"I have expressed concern that your firm (Penco) does not have the staff to do this as one whole project," Rasure said. "My fellow commissioners made it an issue asking if EBH could handle this. Now you come in and say you cannot do it.

"Why, my fellow commissioners, why did we do it without asking if Penco could do this?"

"I did not plan to be able to do this in two years," Commissioner Tiede said.

"You put us in this position," Rasure said. "Look at the amount of money you are going to give away."

"There is not an engineering firm out there who can handle this whole project," Tiede said.

"That is what I am saying," Rasure said. "Now we cannot do it as one project," Tiede said. "What can we do that will speed it up?"

"You are spending taxpayer money and Jerol's firm (Penco) is costing our taxpayers money," Rasure said.

"I don't see anything we can do about it," Tiede said.

"We agreed about not doing Road 14 until the energy center was done," Commissioner Thomas said.

"When was this conversation held?" Rasure asked.

Thomas said the state is not going to let the county start on Road 14 next spring.

Rasure said they could make a decision to move forward on that part.

"I think Jerol can get Road 14 designed," Tiede said, "but we might have to delay old U.S. 24."

"That will cost us more money on old

U.S. 24," Rasure said.

"He said he could get it done," Tiede said. "There is not much survey to do on old U.S. 24."

"You plan to go to bid in March on old U.S. 24?" Rasure asked. "Won't most of the contractors have their schedules filled?"

"There will be some who can bid on it," DeBoer said.

Rasure asked about Eighth Street, which was not included in the plan for old U.S. 24. He asked what might happen to the cost of asphalt.

"It is the highest it has ever been," DeBoer said.

"What will happen?" Rasure asked.

"It is dependent on the cost of the oil," Thomas said.

"It could be cheaper," DeBoer said. "If I knew what it was going to do, I could retire."

"You guys have taken \$150,000 away," Rasure said.

"That doesn't bother me that much on a project of this size," Tiede said.

"Can't you save money by doing two bond issues?" DeBoer asked.

People in the audience, many of them Evans, Bierly supporters who have jammed the last couple of meetings, laughed.

"I am tired of the laughing," Tiede said to the audience. "What do you think we are going to do?"

"You are spinning your wheels," said Josh Dechant, a city commissioner, from the audience. "You haven't done anything. Why can't you get going so we can give the contractors the option to bid on what we can do?"

"Jerol's firm cannot do it in the time we need," Rasure said.

"What do you consider a timely manner?" Thomas asked.

DeBoer said he could do Road 14 to get it through a KDOT field check and then move back to old U.S. 24, Eighth and Road 16.

"If you want a generic set of plans, I can get them done," DeBoer said.

"What is the timely manner?" Thomas asked.

"Can you get this done by the end of the year?" Rasure asked DeBoer.

"No, no one can," DeBoer said. "KDOT has the final say on Road 14."

"Can you get old U.S. 24, Eight Street and Road 16 done?" Rasure said.

"I would not guarantee I could do it," DeBoer said. "Might be able to, but I don't think it can be done."

"You cannot do the entire project?" Rasure said.

"Not by the end of the year," DeBoer said. "No."

"What do you want from us?" Tiede asked.

"Why did you guys make the decision you did?" Rasure asked.

"Why did we go with Penco?" Tiede said. "They have been our engineering firm since day 1, and I think they will do us a good job."

Thomas said he did not think Penco has cost any money. He asked about going with two bond issues.

Loescher said doing two issues would increase the cost of doing the bonds by about \$35,000, but the risk of delay could be much greater.

"What is your tolerance for interest rate risk?" Loescher said. "I won't say \$35,000 is not a lot of money or the \$150,000 in potential earnings."

"The interest rate and inflation are the big factors if you do two issues. It could be up to \$500,000 more over the 15 years. That is a significant impact."

"I would recommend going with a single issue, and if you go past the two-year window you will make some interest, but not at the higher level."

"When are the roads inside the energy center ready to be done?" Rasure asked Darin Neufeld, engineer for Evans, Bierly, who is handling the city street projects from the sale tax, plus doing the design work for the roads at the energy center.

"They are ready to go now," Neufeld said. "They could start 30 days from now or nine months from now. I think the idea was to have them done before the plants power up and need the incoming products."

"We could use a nice road over there next summer," said Mark Justus, president of ReNewable Energy Resources. "We will do anything we can to help generate the money and ask you to do what would help get the road done."

Rasure asked DeBoer what the time frame was on Eighth Street and Road 16.

"Nothing has changed on that," DeBoer said. "It would be 2010."

"You have got to let us know what your time frame is," Curt Way, public works director said.

"Our time frame was to get this done as a joint project," Rasure said. "Not to get it done over four years."

"I am sorry, Jerol, but that was not our intention or the intention of the taxpayers."

"If that is what you want, you had better hire another firm," DeBoer said.

"Road 14 needs to be done before 2010," Tiede said. "What did you plan to do?"

DeBoer said Road 14 would get done in 2007, old U.S. 24 in 2008 and Eighth and Road 16 in 2009.

"What if we find a firm to handle Eighth and Road 16," Tiede said. "Jerol can get Road 14 and old U.S. 24 done."

"We need to have it ready for bid by this winter," Rasure replied.

"I don't remember anything about having it done by this year," Tiede said.

"Yes," Neufeld said. "I was asked if we (Evans, Bierly) could have it all ready to go to bid by the end of the year."

"That doesn't give us the contractor who would be able to do all the projects," Tiede said.

"When I was asked about the process," Neufeld said, "I said it would be best to have it all ready for a single bid package to see if there was a contractor who would be able to do this whole package."

"Last week you asked if I could do it all. I cannot do it now in regular hours. It could be done with overtime hours — put off other contracts on the list. It still could be done, but not the most cost effective."

"Well, what do you think about Penco doing Road 14 and old U.S. 24?" Tiede said. "Then contact engineers about doing Eighth and Road 16. We are not meeting everybody's satisfaction."

Rasure, stood up from the table and stepped away saying he was frustrated, asked why they were losing sight of the joint project?

"Why do you keep going back to that?" Tiede asked. Thomas voiced the same question.

"I ask you to be more professional in the meetings," Thomas said to Rasure.

Rasure asked Thomas if his phone calls to EBH in Great Bend were professional.

"That is not showing good leadership," Tiede said to Rasure.

"We are in a bind," Rasure said. "What are we going to do?"

"You may want to pull Road 14 out," DeBoer said. "It is costing me money, but I would do it to help the county. I might be able to get Eighth and old U.S. 24 done at the same time."

"The only way to get it done is to pull one out," Tiede said. "Old U.S. 24 doesn't look like a problem."

DeBoer said he is not sure a three-inch overlay is the best answer is for old U.S. 24,

and is worried about having enough money for the road.

Thomas asked Neufeld how the city figures are coming out. Neufeld said the costs are not out of line.

"My gut feeling — we are OK with what we estimated," Neufeld said. "We built in a one-year inflation factor and believe we are in line."

DeBoer said he estimates it will take \$5 million for old U.S. 24.

Thomas asked if the project had to come to the exact \$12 million. Loescher said that was what was in the tax election.

County Clerk Janet Rumpel said it was "not to exceed \$12 million."

"No matter what we do, issuing the bonds in June is going to be a short deal," Thomas said.

Neufeld said he thought the county should look at moving the bonds to August or September.

Thomas asked September would be better because that would be closer to the end of the construction season.

Tiede asked Neufeld if he could do a part of the county project.

"We are still capable of squeezing one of those in," Neufeld said.

"Do you want to do that?" Tiede asked.

"Will that make everybody happy?"

DeBoer said he would try to do all the asphalt work — Eighth Street, old U.S. 24 and Road 16 — as one project "and see what we get."

Tiede asked Thomas if he was in favor of getting it done that way.

"Yes," Thomas said, "get it done."

"I move to give Road 14 from old U.S. 24 to Eighth Street to EBH for design engineering," Tiede said.

Thomas seconded the motion. Rasure asked for the vote, and it passed unanimously.

Loescher said he would target the bond issue around Sept. 15.

Rasure asked DeBoer to get all the asphalt roads ready in one package. He asked what happens if the bids come in high.

Tiede and Rasure agreed if that happens, they will have to make some choices.

The commissioners approved the design contract with Penco for old U.S. 24 for a cost not to exceed of \$125,000, and DeBoer said he would have a similar one for Eighth Street and Road 16.

Neufeld said he would have the design contract for Road 14 to the commissioners by next week for their approval at the meeting on May 31.

Task force to research Chamber merger, office options

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She said the county commissioners were vocal they did not want to combine the two organizations. At the City Commission meeting, she said, there were two or three who were pretty vocal against a merger.

She said both the city and county thought it would be good for the organizations to continue to work together and share office space and a secretary.

Debbie Reed, Chamber board secretary, asked Kirk if the Chamber board had been told she was meeting with the county and city.

Kirk said she did not call the Chamber. She said she felt it was important to talk to the two commissions because they put up the money for the economic development group.

"I was wondering why," Reed said. "I am saying we (Chamber) should have known that was going to happen."

Don Newell, council vice-chairman from S&T Communications, said Kirk had been invited to the City Commission to introduce herself. County commissioners had to approve her hiring.

Richard Breininger, council sec-

retary and owner of Sunflower Computers, said he had been talking to people in the community and business people.

"I talked to some of those who worked with the old Chamber," Breininger said. "I got feedback on both sides of the fence. In general, it was that both boards need to work together, but the idea of combining under one entity is not in our best interest."

"Working together and combining secretarial is the best use of resources."

Kirk said she had received a letter from the Convention and Visitors Bureau board inviting the development council and the Chamber to consider moving into office space in the Centennial Building at 10th and Main.

"We are ... want to extend this invitation in advance so you will have the necessary time to make a decision and arrangements," said Donna Price, director of the visitors' bureau.

"Part of the deal is they are concerned about the difference between a private organization and the public organization," House said. "We need a separate Chamber board, but to be in the same build-

ing is the goal of a lot of people."

Price said the whole main floor at 10th and Main is basically open. The council's existing officer is next to ReNewable Energy Resources and the Goodland Energy offices, which have been expanding.

"I am in the front, but the whole back office, conference room and kitchen are open," Price said. "I would have to talk to (owner) Larry Minner about bringing in other offices, but I am sure he is interested in having more renters."

Kirk said she would look into it, and Thompson said Minner could call her.

"We hired Tiffani to run economic development," Council member Steve West of Western State Bank said. "That is what we should do. I don't believe she should run the Chamber, too."

"I am not sure we are asking her to run the Chamber," Reed said. "Not sure that is what we need. We could hire someone on a part-time basis. That is one of the ideas."

"It is our Chamber and our county and our community," said Ken Clouse, Chamber vice-president and president of Northwest Kansas Technical College. "It is troubling

we are starting to build a fence. Maybe I am picking up on semantics when we talk about ourselves — we and they — their funds and our funds."

House said it troubles him there is a feeling of conflict.

"I don't sense that," he said. "We want to work together. I think we can go ahead and visit."

Clouse said he was not sure how to describe the Chamber's situation.

"We hear 'we need a Chamber of Commerce,' but not sure we can continue because we do not have the resources to do any of those things," he said. "I guess what we are trying to convey is that the Chamber cannot continue in this community like we have for the last 12 months."

"We have talked about closing the door and shutting it down. We won't thrive unless something spectacular happens. We won't have a Chamber."

"It would be good to work together, share offices and equipment and other stuff. We are not going to be an equal player. We can't step up with the money, and I am not willing to go out and solicit more members. I am getting tired."

Brian Linin, chamber president from Frontier Equity Exchange,

said the Chamber board was unanimous on the need for a change.

"It is not just Ken," he said. "I hear three to five times a week 'we need a Chamber. Thank you for keeping this going and for all your hard work.' it feels good, but it is easy for those people to say."

"It is not easy to come here or go to a business with a Chamber that is struggling."

"It is time to decide do we really need a Chamber. The bottom line is to look at our community and de-

cide how we can do the most with what we have."

Kirk asked what kind of budget the Chamber has.

Linin said they have collected about \$27,000 in dues and have worked on a budget.

"We can do the shared office expenses and hire a part-time person," he said. "We will not have more than what we have now, and if we can't accomplish something the members will not come back."

Wheat dying in heat

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and economics specialist for Sherman, Cheyenne and Wallace counties with Kansas State University Research and Extension. "If the crop in this area gets rain, it could still increase both kernel numbers and kernel weight."

A lot of wheat in western Kansas is short with small heads, she said. The wheat has been plagued by drought stress, freeze stress and disease, Falk said, adding that the

freeze damage is scattered and can be severe in some areas.

Wheat streak mosaic and other plant diseases have really taken hold, she said.

Wheat streak mosaic is caused by a virus transmitted by the wheat curl mite. The mite lives in volunteer wheat and other grasses until winter wheat comes up in the fall, she said, so it is important to get rid of those before planting time.

"The wheat that is still green has hope," she said.



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