



Feature Story: The local Benton family ...page 4

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Does St. Patrick's Day have any meaning for us?

By Fritz Springmeier
The Jacksonian

St. Patrick's Day will arrive on March 17, like it does every year. But what does this holiday have to do with America and Kansas? This article will explore that question.

America's population and Kansas's population have a good proportion of their people with Irish blood. By 1910, it is calculated that 4.7 million Irish had come to America, and today approximately 10% of Americans and 11.3 %



of Kansas have an Irish heritage. If you are an Irish American you can request dual citizenship with Ireland. There are ten times as many Irish Americans as Irish in Ireland.

Celebrating St. Patrick's Day goes back to the beginnings of America. The Spanish colony of Florida had an Irish vicar and other Irish residents and so the first St. Patrick's Day parade in FL dates back to 1601, which

is before Jamestown was even settled! In the English colonies, the first St. Patrick's Day celebration was in 1737 in Boston. In 1762, before the American Revolution, New York City began their St. Patrick's Day parade, which became the largest and oldest traditional St. Patrick's Day parade. Many large cities have followed the example of New York City. Banquets, parades and wearing green seem



to be the popular ways of celebrating the day.

Towns in Kansas have celebrated St. Patrick's Day, but nothing like big cities like New York. Chicago dyes the Chicago River green. The date has

been a traditional date for planting potatoes. When a group of Irish American Jews got together on a March 17 a few years ago when the day was also Purim, they had green bagels, and green matzo balls!

The contribution of the Irish to America is incalculable, but it is in line with 10% of Americans having Irish blood. They have made up many of our police. They have made up our best generals. They were the main labor force that built the Erie Canal. They are interwoven into the pioneer blood of SW Kansas and Gray Co. This author's pioneer ancestry to Haskell Co. had Irish blood.

Tradition holds that St. Patrick used the shamrock (the 3-leaf clover) to explain the triune Godhead. This author wants to bestow upon the reader an old blessing: "May the three leaves of the shamrock bring faith to guide your way, hope to light your darkest hour, and love to fill each day." Have a blessed St. Patrick's Day.

County Commissioners Meeting

The Gray County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Friday, February 13, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. with Mark Busch, Glenn Oyler, Troy Buller and Ashley Rogers, County Clerk attending. Gary Schadeegg and Mike Giardine were also present.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

Warrants were presented and allowed as follows: Accounts Payable #66555- #66640 and Payroll by direct deposit. Payments by funds were:

Payroll \$90,476.51
County General 54,137.13

Road & Bridge 61,181.13
Landfill 37,800.51
Noxious Weed 1,959.16
County Health 180.33
Special Health 124.21
Ambulance 15,502.73
Ambulance Special Equip North 490.92
PSAP 911E 3,304.32
Ambulance Special Equip South 482.93
Appraiser 607.64
Election 2,366.00
Payroll Holding 88,397.32
Employee Benefit 33.50
Rural Fire District 2,887.32

Sonja Channell, SFTCC entered the meeting at 9:53 a.m. She presented the FY27 Juvenile and Adult budgets and grant applications for approval. Troy

moved to approve and sign the FY27 Juvenile budget and grant application. Glenn seconded the motion. The motion carried. Troy then made a motion to approve and sign the FY27 Adult budget and grant application. Mark seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Jeff Sharp, Colby Ellis, Judge Lewis, Angie Bowlin and Nathan from Nextech entered the meeting at 10:00 a.m. Jeff discussed purchasing electronic door locks for the third floor. He has 9 doors he would like to change to electronic. It would eliminate the need for all of the keys and also trying to get keys back when an

employee terminates.

Judge Lewis said District Court would also like to purchase electronic locks for the second floor. It would be great for security and the old locks on the doors are starting to not work properly.

Nathan said they can outright buy the systems or pay for them monthly on a 60-month contract. If they go the contract route Nextech will own the equipment and take care of it.

Jeff said the sheriff's office has sold a vehicle and will be getting \$11,300.00 that they can apply as an initial payment. Their monthly cost would then be \$182.16 for 60 months. District Courts monthly cost will be \$394.80 for a total of \$576.96 monthly for both

departments.

Troy made a motion to approve the electronic locks for both departments with the Sheriff's office making the \$11,300.00 initial payment. Mark seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Judge Lewis then discussed wireless mics in the courtroom that need replaced. They would be getting a 180 mic that would mount to the bench for better coverage. They are also working on getting reimbursed for this expense. Mark made a motion to approve the expense of \$6,935.00 from

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NEWS ABOUT TOWN

Please Respect Our Deadline

In order to get the news & advertising in *The Jacksonian* on time, our deadline is 3:00 p.m. on Monday prior to publication. You may send news and advertising to jacksoniannews@outlook.com, call it in to 855-3902, or bring it by the office at 101 N. Main in Cimarron. Items brought in after the deadline will be added as time & space allow but may be held until the following week.

Weather Forecast

Date	Hi	Low	Precp.
3/13.....	68.....	42.....	
3/14.....	74.....	40.....	
3/15.....	59.....	25.....	
3/16.....	53.....	19.....	
3/17.....	75.....	35.....	
3/18.....	82.....	48.....	
3/19.....	86.....	53.....	

Past Weather

Date	Hi	Low	Precp.
3/1.....	75.....	31.....	
3/2.....	47.....	22.....	
3/3.....	52.....	23.....	
3/4.....	44.....	35.....	
3/5.....	66.....	32.....	
3/6.....	61.....	54.....	
3/7.....	76.....	26.....	

Sunrises/sets

On 3/11 the sunrise was 7:56 a.m. and the sunset was 7:44 p.m.

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Next Era holds a public meeting

By Fritz Springmeier
The Jacksonian

NextEra on February 26 at 5:00 p.m. at the Gray Co. Rec Center hosted a public meeting about the B.E.S.S. (Battery Energy Storage System) that they want to install three miles north of Cimarron.

What happened at this meeting? This article is a report on that meeting.

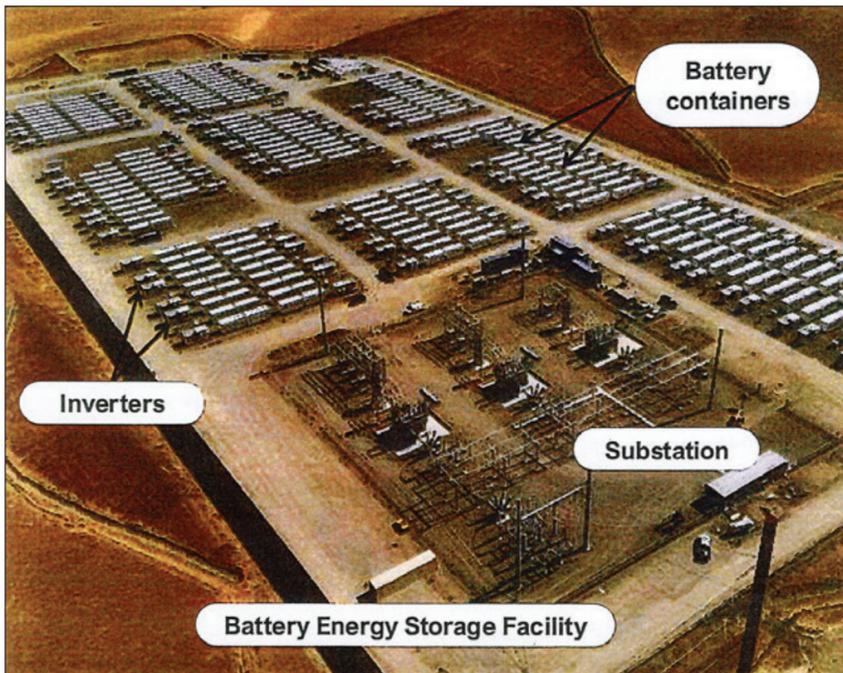
The meeting was well attended by the public. NextEra's team of spokespeople consisted of at least 13 people. The audience consisted of people pro and con for the project. Questions and discussion was so active that participants were still busy and engaged after the expected end of the meeting which had been expected to cease at 7:00 p.m. but went on easily for another hour.

Victory Electric had a rep present. Gray Co.'s fire chief Alex Hibbert

was present. NextEra's Senior Communication Strategist Laura Gies was also present. Her phone no. is (561) 906-3746.

The NextEra spokespeople said the life expectancy of the project was 30 years but might be extended. (Online sources state that the lifetime of a lithium-ion battery depends on multiple factors: original quality, storage conditions, depth of discharges, and number of charge cycles. This means the lifetime could be between 2 and 10 years. A fireman told the *Jacksonian* perhaps 8 years. This means a 30-year BESS will be having each battery replaced three or more times.)

There will be 170 containers, and each container will have 10,000 lithium batteries. The containers are very heavy so NextEra will be making road use agreements with the county. After



construction Next Era will restore the county road. They spoke as if the county road they would be using is K Rd.

County fire fighters were to be trained, and EMS personnel are welcome to attend. From what the author learned, this training will last four hours and might simply consist of watching videos. A NextEra technician

will always be on site. The only one permitted to open a container will be the Next Era technician. The firefighters will maintain a distance. Firefighters who don't have masks will be 100' to 200' away. The EPA says a 330' exclusion zone should exist if a fire breaks out. After the flames are gone, a NextEra technician will use a thermal camera

to find containers that need to cool down. The NextEra spokespeople said that there has never been a BESS fire in the U.S. that spread off-site. When asked about the Beijing disaster where identical batteries were in use which spread off-

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