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Evergy still committed to solar farm

But questions remain about project's future

By JOSIE HEIMSOTH
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After another legal setback, the electric utility Evergy says it is still committed to building a utility-scale solar farm on more than a thousand acres of farmland north of Lawrence.

But now, a new question about the Kansas Sky Energy Center has emerged: Will the Douglas County Commission have to hold a new public hearing and take a new vote before the project can begin construction?

A recent decision in Douglas County District Court has made the question relevant, but county officials are declining to provide information about what path the controversial project would have to travel to move forward.

Grant Township, alongside affected property owners and local associations, are suing Douglas County over its approval of the solar project, and at a hearing last week, the trial was delayed for a second time due to continued discovery disputes, as the Journal-World reported.

The trial was initially scheduled for April of this year before being postponed to late November. Now, a jury trial is not expected until next summer. The shifting timeline is significant because the project's permit is set to expire months before the trial begins — and the county already granted its one and only extension.

The recent developments have raised questions about whether Kansas Sky Energy Center can keep its conditional use permit — which allows a property to be used in a way not otherwise permitted under its zoning — after it expires, whether developers would have to submit a new application and whether the project will ultimately be built.

Evergy provided limited responses to the Journal-World's questions about the project's future, including whether the company has explored options to preserve the conditional use permit, or CUP, and how the approaching expiration could affect the project.

See SOLAR, A11

Horse racing could produce new winners in rural Kansas

And that's great, but No. 6 can take a hike



Chad Lawhorn
OPINION



CHAD LAWHORN/Journal-World Photos

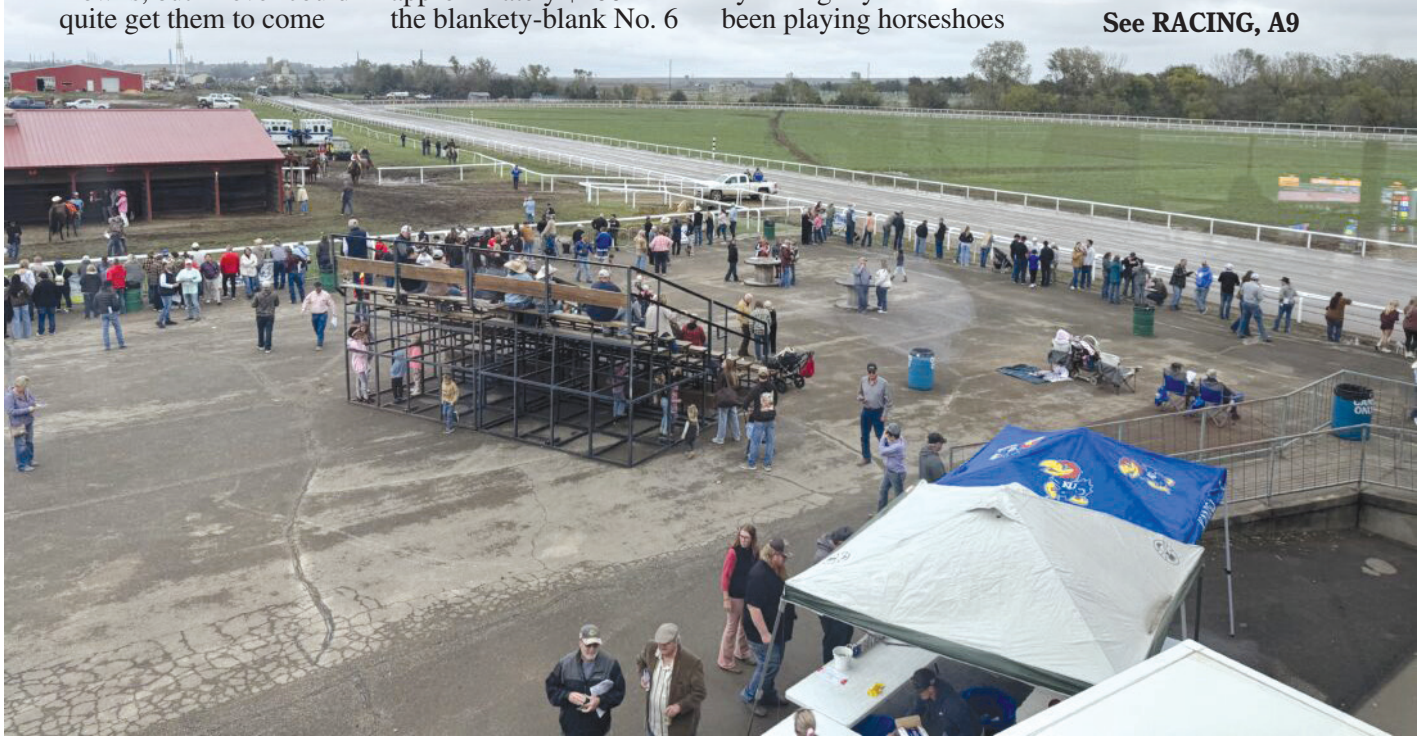
ABOVE: Race horses are pictured at Kansas' Eureka Downs on Nov. 1. BELOW: Kansas' Eureka Down horse racing track is seen.

Everything that goes around comes around — just not always in the correct order.

That was proven on Sunday by the blankety-blank No. 6. The horses indeed went all the way around the track at Eureka Downs, but I never could quite get them to come around in the right order. I lost a $1 trifecta bet that would have paid me approximately $100 if the blankety-blank No. 6 horse hadn't beaten the No. 7 for third by a neck.

I try to find comfort by telling myself if I had been playing horseshoes instead of horse racing, I would have at least won a point for that one.

See RACING, A9



Landlord convicted of preying on children

By KIM CALLAHAN
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A Douglas County jury has found a 74-year-old landlord guilty of multiple sex crimes against children who lived at his Lawrence properties.



Strand

Mark Duane Strand was convicted Thursday of five counts of aggravated indecent liberties with a child, three counts of rape, one count of attempted interference with judicial process and one count of intimidation of a witness or victim, according to the Douglas County District Attorney's Office. The two latter convictions relate to Strand's attempts to get the victims to recant and his offer of scholarship money for them if they declined to testify.

The sex-crime convictions relate to incidents going as far back as 2016. The three girls he abused were under the age of 14; the most serious charges involved a girl under age 10. They were living with their relative, who was a handyman and a tenant of Strand's. It was alleged that the handyman had paid rent by allowing Strand sexual access to the children.

The handyman was previously convicted of aggravated sexual battery and aggravated child endangerment and is currently serving a four-year prison sentence, as the Journal-World reported.

The three victims all testified at Strand's trial, which began Monday. Attorneys representing Strand - Kirk Redmond and Kyleigh Rupe - characterized the victims' claims as "stories" arising out of a chaotic family life,

See LANDLORD, A11

Safety, noise, location are top concerns as county considers battery energy storage rules

By JOSIE HEIMSOTH
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As Douglas County weighs rules for battery energy storage facilities, residents raised questions about fire hazards, toxic gases and risks to nearby communities.

The county held the drop-in event on Friday afternoon to gather feedback from the community about battery energy storage systems, or BESS, to figure out where they should be allowed in unincorporated Douglas County and at what point should it require a permit.

While BESSes can be installed in homes occupying residential solar systems, the county is interested in implementing regulations of the larger-scale facilities – whether they consist of rows of large, weatherproof shipping containers or metal enclosures packed with interconnected battery models.

A BESS is not currently defined in the county's zoning regulations, but it is addressed only as an accessory to a solar development.

See STORAGE, A11



JOSIE HEIMSOTH/Journal-World Photo

Community members attend the community battery energy storage event on Friday, Nov. 11, 2026.

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