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Enyart Asks if Solar Advisor has Conflict of Interest

BY BOB MORRIS
Managing Editor

Kingman County resident Dale Enyart asked the Kingman County commissioners at Monday's meeting about whether there might be a conflict of interest with Oleg Alba advising the county about proposed solar farm regulations.

The county's planning and zoning commission has worked with Alba to draw up regulations, which they approved in January to send to the county commissioners for review.

But Enyart submitted a letter of concern to County Attorney Matt Ricke about whether or not the county had complied with a requirement for a public hearing. Enyart visited with the county commissioners about that a week after the January planning and zoning meeting.

After that, the county commissioners approved an extension of the moratorium on solar farms, then a public hearing was scheduled for the March planning and zoning commission regarding the

proposed solar regulations.

At Monday's meeting, Enyart noted two leases for solar recorded with the Kingman County Register of Deeds on Feb. 5 and Feb. 10, 2025. At the time, he said, Alba was employed with NextEra Energy and the contracts for the solar farms were done by the same company that did the leases for the Kingman 1 and 2 wind farms.

Enyart wondered if Alba had inserted himself into the solar regulations because "he knew there were leases out there" and thus try to

control the regulations.

County Commissioner Jack Thimesch said that, when Alba was working for NextEra, he was the one who got issues corrected when contractors were using roads for wind farms that were not part of the road use agreement with the county.

Alba has since left NextEra and started his own consulting company to help counties with regulations for solar and wind farms. Thimesch noted that the county asked Alba to work with the planning and zoning commission about solar regula-

tions because of Alba's knowledge of the industry.

Thimesch referred to a couple of conversations he had with others about hiring Alba, in which one person said, "You know, I wouldn't go to have a dentist reset my ankle."

"You know, he said, what you did kind of makes sense — how well do you know him?" Thimesch continued. "We dealt with (Alba) for some years, yeah. And we didn't start off on very good grounds.

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USD 331 Board OKs KMHS Track Bid, Will Seek Financing Option

BY BOB MORRIS
Managing Editor

The USD 331 Board of Education Monday night accepted a bid to redo the track at Kingman Middle-High School and, in a separate motion, will send out a request for proposals for a lease-purchase agreement.

The school board voted 6-0 to accept a bid from Pearson Construction for \$728,770.83 to repair and replace the track. Board member George Ontiveros was absent.

As for financing, the board opted to go with seeking proposals for a lease-purchase agreement to pay for the costs, rather than taking all the money out of capital outlay.

The financing proposal requests terms for the district to put \$300,000 down and finance about \$500,000 in a five-year lease agreement, with no penalty if the district decides to pay off the loan early.

The main concern the district had with paying for the full cost at once out of capital outlay is because the district will have about \$1.85 million available in capital outlay after paying for committed projects.

But the school board did not want to pull a significant amount of money out of capital outlay and put itself in a situation in which it needed a lot of money to cover an emergency expenditure.

Prior to discussion about the high school track, USD 331 Assistant Superintendent Andy Albright reviewed capital outlay projects the district has already committed money toward. One is for roofing work at Norwich School at a cost of \$393,277 and another is resurfacing the floor of the older gym at KMHS for \$24,000, but for the latter, the district has received an insurance payment after water got into the gym and damaged the floor.

The district is also planning for technology purchases, such as Chromebook replacements, at a cost of \$115,600, and to buy a new scoreboard for KMHS and new shot clocks for the KMHS and Norwich gyms, at a cost of \$24,000.

There are also other projects the district has paid for that have been completed, plus some other projects the

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BOB MORRIS AND STEPHANIE JUMP / Leader-Courier

Sub State Champs: Norwich, Cunningham Boys Advance

TOP: The Norwich boy's basketball team players, coaches and managers pose with the Class 1A-I Sub State championship plaque after the Eagles beat Pleasanton 54-28 in last Friday's Sub State title game at Madison High School. BOTTOM: The Cunningham boy's basketball players, coaches and managers pose with the Class 1A-II Sub State championship plaque after the Wildcats defeated South Barber 47-37 last Friday at Caldwell High School. Both teams advanced to their respective State tournaments and played their first-round games on Tuesday. Norwich beat Rural Vista 49-35 at Friends University in Wichita while Cunningham beat Weskan 58-29 at the United Wireless Arena in Dodge City. In the semifinals, Norwich will play Thursday at Dodge City at 8 p.m. against St. John's-Tipton while Cunningham will play Thursday at Emporia at 6 p.m. against Axtell.

County Commission Approves Six More Months of Hometown Grants

BY BOB MORRIS
Managing Editor

The Kingman County commissioners Monday approved, on a split vote, to continue contracting with Hometown Grants for a six-month period.

County Commissioner Jack Thimesch made the motion to continue the contract which County Commissioner Jeff Young seconded. Coun-

ty Commission Chairwoman Julie Lyon voted against the motion, saying she had concerns about what the county has gotten in return, relative to what the county has spent.

Thimesch said he understood some of those concerns but he was in favor of letting Hometown Grants continue their work, given that certain grants have yet to be announced and others are still in the works.

In his motion, Thimesch said the county could re-evaluate after six months and decide whether or not to renew the contract.

The contract calls for the county to pay Hometown Grants \$8,000 per month.

During discussion, Christy Crews of Hometown Grants shared information about the work the firm has done, along with a survey from entities about the work the

company has provided.

Hometown Grants has already secured a grant for Cunningham for \$1.28 million for street improvements, with the city of Cunningham providing a match of \$280,000.

Grants are expected to be announced on March 26 for water meters, for which applications were submitted for Cunningham, Norwich and Zenda. One grant

sought for emergency sirens, though, was not likely to be applied for because the grant program in question wasn't funded.

The firm is verifying eligibility for a grant application for the fairgrounds horse barn, while waiting for grant applications to open for ambulance equipment and self contained breathing apparatuses for fire departments.

Crews reviewed the sur-

vey sent out to entities, with 67 percent of the 12 respondents saying they would like to see Hometown Grants continue to offer its services.

Survey feedback indicated that there has been great communication through the process and that Crews has worked with multiple departments across the county. Respondents indicated they

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