

County hears concerns about proposed wind project

**(KNZA)--Concerns were voiced about a proposed wind farm and a new commissioner was sworn in at Monday's Brown County Commission meeting.**

**Richard Lehmkuhl was sworn in by District Judge Jim Patton as the new 1st District Commissioner following his election in November and took his seat on the commission.**

**A large group of residents were on hand at the meeting to voice their concerns about plans by Chicago-based Invenergy to construct the Pony Express Wind Farm in northwestern Brown County and northeastern Nemaha County. It would consist of 200 to 300 wind turbines, generating 800 megawatts of power.**

**One of those concerned residents, Ben Swinger of Morrill, was on the meeting agenda. Swinger said he has purchased a tract of land northwest of Hamlin where he plans to build a home.**

**Swinger says he wants to see the county establish setback requirements to protect non-participating landowners. "I'm all for landowners in our area making extra income off of their land. I'm not totally opposed to a business seeing an opportunity to make money in our area, and developing that opportunity. But, for the health of the citizens of Brown County, you must establish adequate setbacks for non-participating houses, businesses, schools, and towns."**

**In addition, Swinger said he believes the county should set noise limits for the turbines and a cap on their height. Also he says the county needs to address the wear and tear on roads and bridges, the effect on property values and who is responsible for the removal of turbines if the project is abandoned.**

**County Attorney Kevin Hill said Invenergy will have to sign a conditional use permit agreement with the county before the project begins. Hill says it will address setbacks, roads and payment in lieu of taxes.**

**He says negotiations are expected to begin on the conditional use permit this summer, with construction not taking place until the end of the year at the earliest.**

**Commissioner Keith Olsen says the county has not signed any agreements with Invenergy. He says a representative of company is to attend the Commission's January 28 meeting to discuss the proposed project.**

**The Commission will also be interviewing two engineering firms at the meeting.**

**The Commission plans to hire a engineering firm to assist the county in negotiations with Invenergy.**

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