

Holt County Commission Discussing Enterprise Zone, Wind Farm

(KTNC) - Holt County Commissioners are continuing to take steps as they consider whether to create an Enhanced Enterprise Zone in the county. They are considering the move as a way to spur economic development in the county.

During a special session last Friday, commissioners voted to enter into a contract with attorney Scott Ross of Maryville to look at what it would take to form an Enhanced Enterprise Zone.

After discussing the time frame and requirements for forming an Enhanced Enterprise Zone, commissioners voted to table the matter until January.

Talk of the enterprise zone comes as a company is again showing interest in locating a wind farm in the county. Commissioners met recently with representatives of Element Power to discuss the potential development of a wind farm in Holt County.

Element Power representative Scott Koziar gave commissioners an overview of the project. It includes a potential capital investment of \$400 million for 85 to 115 towers. He expects \$25 million in payments to landowners in lease areas; \$15 million to \$20 million in payroll over the life of the project; 10-to-12 fulltime permanent jobs after construction and 200-to-300 construction jobs over 18-months.

The facility would produce 200 megawatts of electricity, making it the largest in the state of Missouri. Koziar said he's working to complete the project before federal tax credits expire in December 2015.

And while a wind farm developer could take advantage of tax abatement associated with an Enhanced Enterprise Zone, Holt County Clerk Kathy Kunkel says discussion of the enterprise zone predates the county's knowledge of any potential wind farm development. She says commissioners began considering the enterprise zone in August when they were approached about it by representatives of the Golden Triangle plant in Craig.

Holt County commissioners will take up the Enhanced Enterprise Zone again in January, after completing the annual budget. Kunkel estimates setting up an enterprise zone will take six to eight months.