# Wind Farm Funds Key To 2026 Budget, New Public Safety Building

## By Deb Hadachek Telescope News

County commissioners sweated through their regular meeting Monday, July 7, and not only because the air conditioner was shut off for two hours so they could fully hear the discussion.

County auditors provided the governing board their first look at the proposed 2026 budget, and spent two hours walking through the various funds.

Randy Hofmeier, CPA from Lindburg, Vogel, Pierce Faris Chtd, said the commission needs to find about \$500,000 to trim from the 2026 budget requests to remain under the Revenue Neutral Rate. The RNR is mandated by statute to prevent governing bodies from raising more money with fewer mills when the assessed valuation of a district increases. As presented, the budget would require five mills more in tax funding than the 2025 budget.

Republic County assessed valuation slightly decreased for the 2026 budget, but remains mostly steady at \$94 million.

Hofmeier said his budget figures estimated \$500,000 support from the \$750,000 annual donation Republic County receives from the High Banks Wind Farm. The commissioners allocated a similar amount to the 2025 budget from the wind farm revenues.

"Anything we consider will cut services, which we don't want to do," said Commissioner Doug Jackson. "We have some things we need to ponder. It's what it is. There are needs."

The 2026 budget provides for a six percent salary increase for employees, although that does not mean that increase will ultimately be granted.

"I'm proud of the county staff and department heads and what's being done," commented Commissioner Edwin Splichal. "This is And while attorneys suggested that the commissioners could decide whether to move forward without a public vote, commissioners immediately nixed that idea.

"It's very important that the taxpayers express their opinions yea or nay on this project because they're the ones that are going to have to pay for it," Splichal said. "One of the first things they will ask is "What's going to do to my taxes? How much are my taxes going to go up to pay for this project?

"We'll need numbers on that as we go forward," he said.

Commissioners are intent to put a question on the November ballot. The board tentatively discussed creating a video of the jail and 911 center that can be shown to fairgoers in the Commercial Building during the NCK Free Fair; an open house to allow the public to tour the courthouse and jail; and public meetings to discuss the project in Cuba, Munden, Courtland and Norway.

Goldberg and the bond attorneys plan to be present at the Monday, July 14 commission meeting to further discuss details of the project.

Commissioners said that a site where the Public Safety Center could be located has yet to be determined.

### **Cracks in Steps**

While commissioners didn't crack under the pressure during the first two discussions of the day, the same can't be said for the new courthouse steps poured last fall.

Terry Loos, representing Leifert Construction, said he and owner Ron Leifert are at a loss as to why cracks have appeared.

"We look and say "How in the world?" Loos said about an onsite visit to inspect the steps. "We believed we were thoughtful and process-oriented about this project."

Loos said there might



## **Possible New Hanger**

An aerial spraying company is hoping to partner with the City of Belleville on a new hanger at the local airport. The group, which runs service out of Belleville currently, is hoping the City will enter into a cost-sharing partnership to construct a new, larger, hanger on the present site.

With an estimated cost of \$300,000, it was proposed that the City invest \$100,000 toward the new structure and lease it out for 30 years. The City would retain ownership. The sprayer would hope to do aviation mechanics for hire out of the location. City council members took no action on the proposal.

-Telescope Photo by Fred Arnold

## Telescope To Publish Cookbook Of Local Recipes

Do you have a favorite recipe? Maybe a special dish made with a secret ingredient that only grandma knew how to prepare.

Maybe you'd like to share it with others.

The Belleville Telescope will be publishing and printing a cookbook with recipes made up entirely from local individuals, both current and past. Called "Recipes From The Crossroads," we are asking local cooks to share their favorite recipes that will be combined, categorized and printed for sale in book form. Of course, all credit will be given to the cook.

We are asking that you submit recipes for your favorite entree, main course, dessert or snack. Recipes can be dropped off at the paper or mailed to the Telescope at 1805 N Street Belleville KS 66935 or sent by email to: telescope.sarah@gmail.com, or stop by the office to pick up a free recipe card.

Deadline for submitting a recipe is Friday, Oct. 31. Cookbooks are anticipated to be ready in time for Christmas.



probably the best overall county-led departments since I've been here."

### Jail on Ballot

The agenda immediately segued into a phone conversation with a bond attorney and Larry Goldberg Architects about the funding mechanism for a proposed \$15 million public safety center that would include a jail and new offices for the sheriff, emergency management and 911 dispatch.

Bond attorneys proposed using \$400,000 of the wind farm donation annually toward payments until 2031 to keep payments lower until the wind farm begins to pay property taxes.

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be ways to fill the cracks, but that would harm the overall look of the steps. He said the steps contain adequate rebar.

"If you have cracks, you have to have movement somewhere," he said.

Loos said Leifert is committed to "do the right thing" in regards to repairs, but "we're not totally sure what that is."

The \$575,000 project to repair the steps was funded in part by \$250,000 federal appropriation from the Rural Community Facilities Act and \$324,000 of the annual donation from NextEra Energy to Republic County.

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