

MINUTES

RILEY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD/ BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

Monday, April 10, 2023
7:30 pm

Courthouse Plaza East
Commission Meeting Room
115 North 4th Street

Members Present: John Wienck, Chair
Joel Gelroth, Vice-Chair
Diane Hoobler
Rita Cassida

Members Absent: Nathan Larson

Staff Present: Amanda Webb – Director, Bob Isaac – Planner and Lisa Daily -
Administrative Assistant

Others Present: Patrick O’Neal, Isaa O’Neal, Karen Hartner Suther, Becky Lind, Richard Knorp, Raleigh Eggers, David M. McCullers, Barbara Van Slyke, Paul E. Barkley, Maureen Olewnik, Aaron Spreer, Dianna Fay, Cindy Quinlan, Walter Schumm, Brian Austin, Katherine Spencer, Austin Cisneros, Kaylee Fritch, Tom Taphorn, Greg McKinley, Kelly Yarbrough, Marcia Rozell, Clinton Parsons, Wayne Sloan, Gayla Snyder, Gerry Snyder, Ryan Wilson, Dan Sullins, Ron Klataske, Mary Tully, Abel Trevino, Jan Olewnik, Lorn Clement, Chris Carey, John Markhen, Emma Leuthold, Michael Leuthold, John Slocombe, Bonnie Slocombe, Martha Seaton, Cheryl Strecker, Charles Schwartz, Jessic Sievers, Jeff Taylor, Janice Slezinger, David Atchison, John M. Blair, Ruth Huey, Joyce Swallow, Brent Tulley, Wilbur Erichsen, Sandra Erichsen, Jared Parsons, Jessica Keck, Ruth Parker, Warren Slocombe, Jade Lassiter, Mark Leuthold, Chad Parker, Chanae Parker, Dick Seaton, Ryan Klataske, Karen Hummel, Nancy Calhoun, Myron Calhoun, Ryan & Michelle Erichsen, Lorine Farley, John Farley, Deborah Mangelsdorf, Valerie Wright, Ken Goodyear, Evan Parson, Vicky Mansel, Mark Miller, Donald Classen, Clinton Parsons, Zach Sloan, Lewis Family, Alice Boyle, Robert Rosenberg, Kevin& Christian Watkins, Ashton Pickering, Sarah Inskeep, Laura Heyd-Jimenez, Felix Jimenez, Rebecca Wallace, Lukas Hugunin, MaKenna Eilert and Hailey Eilert

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

CONSENT AGENDA

The minutes of the March 13, 2023 meeting were presented. Diane Hoobler moved to approve, and Rita Cassida seconded. Carried 4-0.

The Report of Fees for the month of March (\$3,721,99) were presented. Joe Gelroth moved to approve, and Diane Hoobler seconded. Carried 4-0.

Rita Cassida moved to adjourn the joint meeting of the Riley County Planning Board/Board of Zoning Appeals and, due to the lack of agenda items for the Board of Zoning Appeals, moved to reconvene as the Riley County Planning Board. Joe Gelroth seconded. Carried 4-0.

RILEY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

McCullers – Replat

Chairman Wienck opened the public hearing at the request of the David and Susan McCullers, petitioners, and owners, to replat Lot 1 and Lot 8 of Sky View Ranches (subdivision) into a single lot, in Manhattan Township, Section 34, Township 10 South, Range 8 East, in Riley County, Kansas.

Bob Isaac presented the request stating the subject property was platted as Lots 1 and 8 of Sky View Ranches, in May of 1976 but were never developed. He stated the applicant wishes to combine the two lots into a single lot to center the construction of a residence on the subject property. Mr. Isaac said although there are no utility easements that need vacating, there is a request to vacate the existing building envelope shown on the plat, as building setback requirements are governed by the zoning district and not shown on plats.

Mr. Isaac stated the driveway that serves the property to the north of the subject site is along the east line of existing Lot 8. He said the travel easement that was in place for the driveway was vacated in 1980. Mr. Isaac said efforts are underway between the applicant and the neighbor to get the travel easement put back into place.

Staff recommended that the Planning Board approve the Final Plat of Sky View Ranches, Unit 3, as it has been determined to meet the minimum requirements of the Land Development Regulations for Riley County, Kansas, and the Sanitary Code.

Chairman Wienck asked why the travel easement was vacated when the driveway goes to a house.

The applicant, David McCullers, stated he and his wife currently live in Oklahoma. He said as far as the easement, the gentleman that owns the land to the north, Mr. Orbison, also owned Lot 1 and Lot 8, so they believed the easement was no longer needed. He stated they have filed the paperwork to legally put the easement back into place.

There were no proponents or opponents.

Diane Hoobler moved to close the public hearing. Rita Cassida seconded. Carried 4-0.

Joe Gelroth moved to approve the request replat Lot 1 and Lot 8 of Sky View Ranches (subdivision) into a single lot, for reasons stated in the staff report.

Diane Hoobler seconded. Carried 4-0.

Mr. Isaac announced that the Board of County Commissioners would hear the request on April 20, 2023, at 10:30 am, in the County Commission Chambers.

Kansas Evergy Kansas Central, Inc. - Special Use Authorization

Diane Hoobler moved to remove from the table a public hearing to consider the request of Evergy Kansas Central, Inc., petitioner, and David & Donna Cederberg, owners, for a Special Use Authorization to establish and operate an electrical substation in Ashland Township, Section 12, Township 11 South, Range 7 East, in Riley County, Kansas.

Rita Cassida seconded. Carried 4-0.

Bob Isaac presented the request stating Evergy has requested approval for a Special Use Authorization to establish and operate an electrical substation. He explained this is a recommendation by the Riley County Planning Board to the Board of County Commissioners similar to a rezoning.

Mr. Isaac stated the Konza Substation is proposed to be located immediately west of the intersection of Konza Prairie Lane and McDowell Creek Road, on the north side of McDowell Creek Road. He said according to the applicant, the proposed Konza Substation will increase the reliability, serviceability, and load of Evergy's electrical system in the City of Manhattan, Riley County, and surrounding areas. Mr. Isaac explained the new substation will contain equipment that function as switches and breakers that will allow personnel to perform maintenance on the transmission lines and substation equipment without subjecting customers to unnecessary outages.

Mr. Isaac listed the following conditions for this special use:

1. The entrance and access road to the substation shall consist of and be maintained with all-weather surfacing.
2. No portion of the site shall be used for storage of equipment, vehicles, materials or supplies, except during construction.
3. All outdoor light fixtures shall be shielded with cutoff fixtures and directed downward to prevent off-site glare.
4. All areas outside of the fenced/walled area shall be graded and seeded (grass); and
5. A Reclamation Plan shall be submitted to and approved by the Riley County Planning Board.

He said there are things for the Board to consider:

1. The views and site lines to or from an important cultural or historical site (Ashland Cemetery) could be adversely affected by the physical presence of a new substation, which could have long term impacts.

2. The overall aesthetic impact of a new substation is highly dependent on the size and location of the facility. Smaller distribution substations may or may not be able to be camouflaged easily with berms, fencing, or landscaping and can appear quite industrial in nature. In rural settings, local property owners may object to the facilities' strong visual impact, with the physical appearance of the transformers, switches and high fences of new substations detract from the rural character. Because of the height of some substations equipment and clearing necessary around the transmission facilities, it can be difficult to reduce the visual impact of transmission substations.
3. Although electrical substations have an undeniable industrial look to them, the reality is that they are needed and cannot be expected to be located only in Industrial Districts or areas designated for industrial uses. There must be a balance between rural character and the aesthetics of essential services that do not necessarily conform to what is considered rural or naturally occurring. With that said, it's encouraged to not only locate such facilities in a safe and convenient location, but to consider adjustments to the site selection that could help minimize real or perceived impacts of viewsheds and surrounding cultural amenities.
4. The proposed switching station is necessary as part of an essential facility tied into the overall critical infrastructure and will benefit the community as a whole.

Mr. Isaac referenced Section 1.8 – Exemptions, of the Land Development Regulations exempts public service wires and poles, but not the substation itself. He stated we have no control of the poles themselves. Staff recommended that the Planning Board forward a recommendation of approval of the request to the Board of Commissioners of Riley County based on the following findings:

- The proposed substation site was selected based on the location of the existing 115 kV transmission line that will be connected to the substation to accommodate future load.
- The new substation will contain equipment that function as switches and breakers that will allow personnel to perform maintenance on the transmission lines and substation equipment without subjecting customers to unnecessary outages.
- The proposed substation will not pollute air, land or water, or produce dust, fumes, odors, smoke or vibration.
- It has been determined that the request meets the requirements of the Riley County Land Development Regulations and the Riley County Sanitary Code.

Staff recommended that the Planning Board forward a recommendation of approval of the request to the Board of Commissioners of Riley County based on the conditions mentioned previously.

Jessica Keck stated she works for Evergy at 818 S Kansas Ave, Topeka, KS. She stated that Mr. Isaac did a good job explaining why Evergy needs the substation and what they are planning to do. She explained Evergy has a planning group that looks at low growth in the area and reliability. The group said we needed a site for a substation to increase the reliability to possibly help with low growth in the future. She stated when they started looking at this site, they

noticed the Konza Prairie, which is to the south. She said the big criteria for this project were to stay north of the Konza Prairie, because they currently have a line going through it. Ms. Keck stated had they gone east, west or south they would have to take a line off the existing transmission line, probably through the Konza Prairie. She stated they needed to stay in this area due to the proximity to other substations and the other line. She said they went north on purpose to help avoid impacts to the Konza Prairie and they realized the cemetery is right there.

Ms. Keck stated they visited numerous landowners, and they have to find one willing to sell. She said besides all the environmental factors, topographically, they prefer a flat site, if possible. She said the site can't be in a floodplain and there is a lot of floodplain to the north. She stated this is already an agricultural field so they wouldn't be taking any native prairie. She said Evergy did a historic survey on the subject site and did their due diligence for wildlife and parks. She said this particular landowner was willing to sell, and it met the criteria.

Ms. Keck explained this is a switching station, not a huge substation. She said it is 300 feet by 300 feet or roughly two to two and half acres. She stated it will not have transformers or any equipment that hums, nor will there be any big, tall equipment. She said there will be poles that go into it.

Ms. Keck mentioned that after the application was submitted to the County, they were notified some people were concerned. She explained that Evergy met with the Ashland Township representatives in March to see if there were some other options. She said they were not provided with any other sites to look at, so they decided to proceed with the original site.

Diane Hoobler asked if Evergy considered going further north over the river.

Jessica Keck replied that they did but believes it is too far away or too close to the other substations.

Diane Hoobler mentioned the substation on Stagg Hill and asked if the switching station could be built there.

Aaron Spreer, engineer with Evergy, said the substation on Stagg Hill is the main feed into Ogden, Bluestem Electric metering point and portions of Ashland Township. He said for configuring substations, this will complete a loop and provide backup reliability. If the switching station were to be built in the same place and there was a weather event that would take out power lines, there would be no back up feed. He explained you want the substations in different geographical locations.

Diane Hoobler asked if they looked at a property further north and further away from the highway.

Jessica Keck replied they are limited by the floodplain.

Joe Gelroth asked if the landowner would be willing to move the site further north on their property.

Jessica Keck replied the landowner offered them the current location only.

Joe Gelroth asked if was possible if the landowner was willing.

Jessica Keck said she couldn't answer that question at that time.

Rita Cassida asked if there would be a building located within the switching station.

Aaron Speer affirmed and stated they refer to them as a doghouse which is very small.

Rita Cassida asked if Evergy uses any decorative wall materials to disguise those buildings.

Aaron Speer said they purchased the buildings from a vendor, and they come standardized. He said they don't typically do that, but if were requested, they could review it.

Rita Cassida asked if there would be any landscaping around the substation.

Jessica Keck replied the project calls for chain link fencing and barb wire with no landscaping. She did say if it was requested, they could review it.

Chairman Wienck asked if there are plans in the future to enlarge the substation.

Jessica Keck said at this time there are no plans to enlarge but you don't know what will happen in twenty to thirty years from now. She said if they do plan to expand, they would have to come back before the Board for approval.

Chairman Wienck asked if there were any proponents within 1000 feet. There were none.

Chairman Wienck asked if there were opponents within 1000 feet.

Lorn Clement stated he is the Ashland Township Trustee and lives at 3881 S. 20th Street, which is not located within 1000 feet of the request and is presenting for the Township. He said he is a member of the Rural Economic Advisor Board for the Riley County Commissioners and was a board member of the Riley County Planning Board for over 20 years. He stated he is a lawyer, a landscape architect and has lived the Ashland Bottoms since 1991.

Mr. Clement asked that board members focus on the Comprehensive Plan, Vision 2025; the number one and foremost goal of the plan is preservation of agricultural lands and the rural character. It is also the first criteria of the Land Development Regulations when considering this kind of request. He said in the staff report is one, two, three items in the land development regulations and in my view this proposal fails on all three counts. He said compatibility with the land use plan, preservation of agricultural land, general welfare and safety and economic value is not being diminished.

Mr. Clement asked why is it in the U.S. we name our suburban streets and land development projects for things we destroy in the process of building them? He said that is the price of progress and that is what you heard tonight from the staff report. Mr. Clement then referred to a map he provided to the board members indicating the existing transmission lines are in red and yellow lines are proposed. He said the map was provided to him by a friend in Kansas City who is an architect for the federal government. He said the line is going to go west from the proposed site to along S. 33rd Street. He said there are a lot of neighbors on S. 33rd Street who want to know what is going on with a high voltage line going over their house. He discussed the height and size of monopoles that carry the high voltage lines. He stated those poles will stick

out like a sore thumb. He mentioned several property owners that have recently built new homes and have spent a lot of money will be looking at those power lines in the foreground not the background. He asked the board members to review the packet he provided and to not take it lightly.

Raleigh Eggers, 2900 W. 32nd Avenue, said he has lived in the area for over 50 years. He said years ago there was a proposal that everyone was opposed to; they all got together and solved it. He said he looks at this project and the impacts; it appears visually that substation would be a cancer and will spread. He said if this allowed, it would visually be a mess.

Ron Klataske, 4490 McDowell Creek Road, stated there are many reasons why putting this substation along McDowell Creek Road is inappropriate. He said Ashland community remains largely agricultural with traditional farmsteads, a community building, church, and cemetery. The "Scenic River Road" designation for McDowell Creek Road from Intrastate 70 is reflective of that fact.

Mr. Klataske stated the pastoral landscape has not been industrialized. He stated he purchased his land 34 years and built a home five years ago. He said he and his wife donated a conservation easement for a 40-acre parcel of native grassland to Kansas Land Trust in 1995 and an additional 40 acres through the USDA Grassland Reserve Program. Mr. Klataske said hikers and youth groups that look westward from the Konza trail have a view of this native prairie land.

Mr. Klataske said tragically, this same view extends to include the site of Evergy's proposed substation. He said they can see small memorial lights from the cemetery at night. For the thousands of visitors, the entrance and exit from the Konza will be transformed from a view of natural and pastoral features to that of an industrial structure seemingly out of place.

Mr. Klataske stated as an adjacent landowner and homeowner in the Ashland Community, he requested that the Riley County Planning Board deny the request.

Jared Parsons, 3721 S. 33rd Street, stated he has lived in the community since 1987 and is raising his family there. He said you must respect the rights of the private landowner, but actions do affect others. He said he has friends that are buried in the cemetery and eventually that will be his final resting place. He said he is concerned about the high-power line which appears to be going over his house and the effect on property value. Mr. Parsons said his wife asked him to share, preserving the scenic byway to Manhattan adds value to Manhattan as well as the residents of Ashland township.

Ryan Klataske, 813 Juniper Drive, stated his family's land is located off McDowell Creek Road. He said I am here to urge you to oppose construction of the electrical switching station in Ashland Bottoms at the entrance to the Konza Prairie. He said the Konza Prairie and the scenic views from its hiking trail are a source of civic pride and identity. He mentioned a sign on I-70 that describes the road through the valley as the Scenic River Road to Manhattan. Mr. Klataske said if the proposed station is built, it will become a visible part of these images at a detriment to the scenic value of the community.

Mr. Klataske said he and his wife have considered restoring an old barn on the property and offering nature-based tourism opportunities, but the proposed switching station would make this plan unfeasible by diminishing the surrounding scenic rural character. He stated we need more opportunities for both visitors and local people to get outdoors and experience the prairie and we need to protect the places we have, and this starts with opposing the switching station. He said we need to protect the viewshed from this trail. Because this proposed switching station would dramatically impact the scenic value and character of Ashland Bottoms, it diminishes the benefit from similar forms of nature-based tourism and land use. He requested the Board to deny the request.

Paul Barkey, 4236 Grantham Drive, St. George, KS. He said he wanted to address the spiritual aspects of Ashland Bottoms and McDowell Creek Road, which is a scenic byway. He stated the switching station adjacent to the Ashland Bottoms Cemetery is troubling to him. He explained that he has been the pastor at Ashland Community Church for the last 25 years. He said each time they drive McDowell Creek Road, it is a spiritual experience due to the beauty of the valley.

Mr. Barkey stated cemeteries have a critical purpose in our culture and, in particular, the community. He said Ashland Cemetery is made up of 272 lots and the natural beauty is deeply moving. He asked what if the switching station was in place and we were looking for a place to establish a new cemetery, would we choose this location? He said I think not.

Maureen Olewnik, 5011 McDowell Creek Road, stated they have invested money and a lot of sweat equity maintaining and improving their home trying to keep it in the nature of the Flint Hills. She said when building their shop 15 years ago they decided to move it to the back of the property because McDowell Creek Road is the Scenic River Road to Manhattan. She stated they purchased and invested in this area because of the beauty, the community and the tallgrass prairie.

Mrs. Olewnik said in researching the impact of this power station and power lines, she found there was very little impact on value on many of the open spaces and industrial areas; however, the financial impact of something like this on property value where there are homes can be substantial. She said it could anywhere from 15% to 50% reduction in land value. She said their home is just outside the 1000-foot area but is in the direct site line of that substation. She said they will be seeing flashing lights if they are available there, any noise pollution coming off it, any health implications whether they are real or perceived will have an impact on that land value. There will be neighbors throughout the valley that will lose land value as well. She said the devaluation of those properties can't be taken lightly from the county perspective.

Mrs. Olewnik that there are so many reasons noted outlining why we should not allow the placement of the substation and power lines in this really important agricultural area which is a gateway to environmentally endangered portion of our area, the Konza Prairie. Impact on property values is another and very real, painful and potentially harmful well-being of the community and surrounding area including the entire county. She requested the Board deny the request.

Emma Leuthold, 2241 W. 40th Avenue, stated she believes in landowner rights but if the substation is allowed, numerous landowners will be affected by the power poles that it will take to run the line to Ogden. She stated the land is zoned for agricultural use and any change from that must be reasonable. We think it is unreasonable to convert high value crop ground to an electrical infrastructure. She asked the board to deny the request.

Patrick O'Neal, 3230 McDowell Creek Road, stated he is a local Ashland resident, project manager for Konza Prairie Biological Station and a member of the Ashland Township Board. He said Konza is a private public partnership between a nature conservancy, private conservation organization and the Division of Biology at Kansas State University. He said one avenue to fulfill our mission of the tallgrass prairie research, preservation and education was to allow public access to paths onsite which has developed into a nationally recognized trail system, which adds significant value Riley and Geary counties. He said we do believe this proposal diminishes the experience of those walking the Konza daily and does not comply with points three and six of Riley County Land Development Regulations on page three and four of the staff report.

Mr. O'Neal said as a township board member, he contacted Evergy immediately voicing his concerns after learning of this proposal. He was grateful when they agreed to delay their request in March and meet with the township to discuss the issue and explore alternatives and even explored locations on Konza, which might be preferred as the lesser of two evils. He said the meeting was enlightening and they quickly came to the understanding that this switching substation and the current proposal before you today is but one rung in a ladder ill-suited to our community. Mr. O'Neal said he appreciated their honesty at that meeting. He said the current switching station, while performing some limited functions as proposed, is to serve as an anchor point for yet another high voltage line run from this location west towards Ogden and impacting the entire Ashland community area in the process. He said the packet repeatedly mentions expansion. He said this is not a small project with no aspirations of becoming more but rather the foothold into a much larger plan to impose a burden on Konza, Ashland cemetery, Ashland community and the rural agricultural aesthetic we have worked diligently to preserve. He said they repeatedly encouraged Evergy to locate the line along K-18 and Stagg Hill which is already a disturbed corridor; however, as you have heard in their own comments, that was outside of their scope for the project.

Mr. O'Neal said their plans call for additional lines running to the same location in Ogden from Junction City, making the proposed line simply redundant, which is often a luxury not a necessity. Regardless of that conversation and plans discussed revealed several alternatives, other options exist to satisfy the needs of Evergy and their customers. He said the current proposal should not be viewed as an imperative, not as a small independent request. He stated it is a step in the wrong direction for our community and the many thousands coming to the rest of our region and beyond to value what our community has to offer.

Jessica Keck with Evergy stated the map that Lorn Clement provided was not from Evergy. She said prior to doing a transmission line, they would do a routing study, which takes two to three years. The routing study consists of open houses, public comment periods where the routes would go. She said on our transmission lines they try to work with the landowner as much as

they can to cause the least amount of impact. Ms. Keck said at this time the route has not been selected. She stated they always obtain the site first and then do the routing study afterwards. She said the comment about expansion is unknown at this time, but they would come back before the Board if it should happen. She explained, in reference to lighting, only during an emergency will lights be on and during construction for security. She said in response to the comments about noise; there will be no transformers, so there will be no noise.

Rita Cassida referred to the yellow line on the map that was provided by Lorn Clement. She asked if that turns out to be the route, can it be done without the switching station? She reiterated we have no control over the poles.

Aaron Speer with Evergy explained the switching substation needs to be in place for better operational use of the site. He said without the switching substation there is not ability to put breakers for protection for the additional transmission lines.

Joe Gelroth asked what the response from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks was.

Jessica Keck stated there were no objections from them.

Rita Cassida asked if Evergy had a photo of what a switching substation of this size would look like.

Aaron Speer stated switching stations are rare because there is need for future growth and substations go in still have that same switching potential, but there are also transfer on pieces of equipment to serve the area, whereas here we don't think that will be the case in the future.

Lorn Clement stated he would provide the source of the map at the next meeting and apologized for not having the information at this time but came from the Swallow family.

Alice Boyle, 403 N. 16th Street, stated she is a professor in the division of biology and has worked with the Konza Prairie for the last 10 years and supports the many reasons why this is a bad idea. She stated she wanted to bring up a new thing which is conservation of wildlife. We risk mortality on migrating birds by these power lines and habitat degradation. She said even though this is not on the Konza Prairie we all know tall structures have a very long shadow which leads to avoidance of that area and causes loss of birds. She said she knew about the Konza Prairie long before she moved here. The fact that this is even being considered next to Konza shows to me that people outside your habitat show much greater appreciation for these really threatened habitats. She stated our tall grass prairies are almost gone and we live in one of the last places where they exist.

Mark Leuthold, 2861 W. 32nd Avenue, asked if you need two acres for the switching substation then why are you purchasing 12-13 acres if there is no plan for expansion. He asked if we are changing the zoning, are we changing the zoning on the 2 acres or overall, 12-13 acres? If it is the entire acreage, do they have to come back before the board?

Bob Isaac explained the request is not a rezoning but a special use for the underlying zoning district. He explained the special use is for the entire 12 acres, but they will still have to come back before the Board prior to any kind of expansion.

Valerie Wright, 3048 Shane Creek Lane, stated she worked at the Konza Prairie for 15 years. She stated she worked very long and hard to help Manhattan with the Flint Hills Discovery Center. The community and Manhattan spent several years, a lot of money, time and getting people involved in the Flint Hills Discovery Center. She said in their discussions, they spent a lot of time talking about McDowell Creek Road and bringing visitors to Manhattan. She said it was one of the most important reasons why the Discovery Center is there. She said this will be a Manhattan problem if this request is approved. She said it will change everything we talked about for putting the Discovery Center in Manhattan.

MaKenna Eilert, 908 Overhill Road, stated she is a current K-State student and has lived in Manhattan her whole life. She asked the Board, “have the representatives of Evergy provided their findings adequately and made you feel comfortable in voting yes or have they placed more doubt in your mind like they have done mine?” She said there seems to be a lot of questions in the interruptions that seem can’t be resolved this evening and I recommend the Board deny the request.

Jon Mansel, 5186 S. 40th Street, stated that for years he has looked around our country at these power lines and this is the worst thing we have done. He said we all want electricity and I understand that but just look through your city; there are power lines and power poles all over. He said this is just an additional one in case something happens to the one they send to Ogden. He said so now we have all these power lines and so now you want to duplicate them in case something happens over here. My question is where are we headed?

Becky Lind, 3550 McDowell Creek Road, stated Evergy indicated the substations can’t be too close together and the issue of whether or if the Stagg Hill location will work or something that has been offered might work. She said she had a feeling it was more of an economical issue. She said this must be the shortest, cheapest route; Ms. Lind said she doesn’t care about that, that is their issue. She stated she cares about what happens to the environment out there, the Konza Prairie, the cemetery, the closest to our church and the community center. She said Evergy didn’t actually say whether or not that separate line from Stagg Hill would be a problem. She said she feels like there is a lot more work to be done by Evergy. She stated the request should be rejected.

Cindy Quinlan, 14295 Lower McDowell Creek Road, stated she has lived out there for 44 years. She stated she has done everything she can to protect the prairie. She stated her grandfather was Professor Quinlan at K-State. She explained that the visitor’s garden is named after him and taught her many, many years ago that, unfortunately, Kansans have the least amount of public land of any state in America. She stated she has volunteered at least 20 years at the Konza Prairie, and it’s never ceased to amaze her that people who come out here to visit from out-of-state, out of the entire County, it’s the first place they visit. She asked why you would do anything to spoil the entrance to that or the impression people get?

Jessica Keck said there was a question about the amount of acreage being purchased. She explained that they usually purchase more than what is actually needed because that is what the landowner wants to sell. She stated that they, as a company, are legally required to provide reliable affordable electricity. She said cost is a concern for everyone. She said they are legally

required to find the most cost-effective way to build what they need to build. She explained that if they move the substation further away from the transmission line, they have to bring a transmission into that substation. She explained that transmission lines cost (approx..) a million dollars a mile and is a substantial cost.

Ms. Keck said there were questions about Stagg Hill. She said she had received an email from a planner with Everygy that stated transmission lines cannot be extended from Stagg Hill west of the airport to a new substation site due to FFA restrictions that make it impossible to build transmission voltage lines within a certain radius of the airport; therefore, the lines must be constructed from the south so they can be routed outside of the airport restrictions.

Chairman Wienck asked about the height of the switch station.

Aaron Speer said the height of poles on the switching station would be 10 to 15 feet tall.

Joe Gelroth moved to close the public hearing. Diane Hoobler second. Carried 4-0.

Diane Hoobler said she has given this a lot of thought and discussed the comprehensive plan, Vision 2025. She referred to Chapter 5, the rural character goal is to promote development that is compatible with rural character in Riley County. She said there are rural design guidelines that state preserve the existing rural agricultural character of the county's landscape; preserve valuable farmland and productive agricultural areas; preserve wildlife and habitat; and protect ground and surface water quality.

Mrs. Hoobler said as a farmer, the land is sacred to her. She said this is just the wrong location for the substation with the cemetery being there and the fact that the Konza Prairie is there. She stated the importance of needing electricity but feels this just isn't the right place for the substation.

Rita Cassida stated she understands that electricity is a lifeline service. She said if there was a way to disguise the substation with landscape, except for the poles which we have no control over. She said there is a lot you can see from the top of hill. If there was a way to make it blend more, setback further from the road or make it less visible. She asked staff if the County had viewshed regulations.

Bob Isaac said there were brief discussions during Vision 2025 process, but it got complicated very quickly. Mr. Isaac said the County doesn't have viewshed regulations. He added that staff understands the Konza Prairie is a tourist attraction, but its main purpose is to function as a biological research station.

Joe Gelroth stated this is not the right location for the substation. He said it will be too close to the Scenic River Road.

Chairman Wienck stated he drove down McDowell Creek Road that evening. He agreed with comments that the proposed site is too close to McDowell Creek Road. He said if it could be further back on the property it would be preferable. He stated he has friends to the north in Marshall County who are dealing with wind turbines, transmission lines and their landscape has just completely changed. He said it's horrible. He said he would hope there would be a better location for the substation.

Diane Hoobler recommended denial of the request to establish and operate an electrical substation to the Board of County Commissioners for the following reasons:

1. Doesn't conform to Chapter 5 rural character of the comprehensive plan;
2. Not a suitable location;
3. Conflicts with the Konza Prairie;
4. Negative impacts on the viewsheds; and
5. Ashland Township Board is not supportive of the request.

Joe Gelroth seconded. Carried 3-1 with Rita Cassida abstaining.

Mr. Isaac announced that the Board of County Commissioners would hear the request on May 1, 2023, at 10:15 am, in the County Commission Chambers.

Rita Cassida moved to adjourn. Joe Gelroth seconded. Carried 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:51 p.m.