

LCEDC Annual Meeting Features County and Wind

The annual meeting of Lincoln County Economic Development was held Thursday, April 9, 2009. Those attending the meeting viewed displays from communities around the county and heard a report on the state of economic development in the county. Patricia Vice, Executive Director, briefed the crowd on the status of the Regional Learning Center; the business resource center; the SECTRS workforce development grant; marketing efforts, and the work on a nine state tour which will feature Lincoln County. Sponsors of the event were Pronghorn Ace, Adams County Economic Development, and Ports to Plains Trade Corridor.

Guest speaker at the event was Craig Mataczynski, CEO and President of Renewable Energy Systems of Americas. Mataczynski spoke about the Cedar Point Wind Project and the state of wind development in the current economy. According to Mataczynski, renewable energy is profitable and the right thing to do for the environment. When asked about the current status of the Cedar Point Wind Project, he said "if we had to start construction tomorrow we would be able to".

The Cedar Point Project, under a pending Excel Energy contract, will produce 250 Megawatts of electricity connecting to a 40 mile transmission line. The \$500 million project, which is funded, will have 147 machines, most of which will be located in Lincoln County. The wind farm will generate approximately \$1 million per year in tax revenue for Lincoln County.

The project is projected to start construction in May of 2010. The turbine components will be manufactured by Vestas in their Colorado plants. Those plants, located in Windsor, Brighton, and Pueblo, are scheduled to be in production this fall. Components will be trucked from the plants to the construction site. Because of the extreme size and weight of the equipment, RES will work with the County and CDOT to make sure road around the project are safe. RES has provided the funds in other projects for road improvements.

RES is committed to buying materials locally as well as hiring as many local workers as possible. The construction will employ approximately 200 people with a peak of possibly 500 workers during the ten to twelve month construction phase. Although many of the workers will be from the local area, those who come into the site will need motels and camp sites for lodging. The construction office may be a trailer or a location in Limon.

When asked how one applies for jobs or knows what contractors are needed, Mataczynski responded that the company will run advertisements and will work with LCEDC in advertising and getting job interviews conducted. At this point RES is not ready to do any of the employment activities. When operating, the Cedar Point project will employ twelve to fifteen people with very competitive wages.

RES will know in four months if the power bid with Excel was awarded. Mataczynski was confident in RES's bid as the economy has allowed for better pricing of materials which means a better bid package. With all easements and agreements in place, the feeling is that this will be a very successful project.

At the conclusion of the meeting an election was held for the LCEDC Board of Directors. Incumbent Randy Younger was re-elected with two new members, Scott Vratil and Rich Metcalf, being elected to the Board. The other nine members of the Board were not up for re-election.