Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 14 April 2017 04:40









Project is near Allison Road

The McKinley County Board of Commissioners postponed a decision on a tax abatement request regarding a solar farm that'll be built near Allison Road on the city's west end.

Mayor Jackie McKinney and Gallup Electric Director Richard Matzke addressed the county commission, informing the panel that as of July 1 of this year that solar power from the project will be cheaper than the power the city currently purchases from Continental Divide Electric Cooperative.

The decision to postpone was 3-0 with Commissioner Genevieve Jackson motioning to ask for more information as to how clients in the rural parts on the Navajo Nation in McKinley County would benefit from the project. Commissioners Bill Lee and Carol Bowman-Muskett followed Jackson's lead.

"We've come a long way in the past three to four years," McKinney told commissioners. "I'm simply asking that you support this."

In providing some background on the matter, City Attorney George Kozeliski said the area is located near Allison and is classified as a flood plain.

"It can pretty much be used for something only like this," Kozeliski said. Kozeliski said Mangan Renewable, Inc., which has locations across the United States, was the top responder to a Request For Proposals on the matter. That request went out on Dec. 13, and garnered six respondents.

Mangan will construct and operate the solar facility. "This company won the award and will construct the farm," Kozeliski said.

Matzke, who addressed the panel shortly after McKinney, said the entire project follows a timeline. He said the proper eyes and ears at the city would be tuned in to what comes out of the next McKinley County Board of Commissioners meeting in the first week of May.

“We will be at the next commission meeting,” Matzke said. “That meeting remains part of the process.”

Kozeliski said there were six entities that responded to the initial RFP. He said the RFP asked that 10 percent of an annual electric load be built. “Under our contract with CDEC we can purchase up to 10 percent from city generation facilities,” Kozeliski said.

The cost to the city for having the farm is “nothing,” Kozeliski said. McKinney said the same thing to commissioners. “The company building the farm was asking for the tax abatement,” Kozeliski said. “We were there to say we supported it, but it’s between the company and the county.”

Matzke noted that the timeline of the contractor might be hampered with the extended date to go before the Board of Commissioners. A Mangan representative attended the commission meeting, but left immediately after the meeting and without taking questions from the media.

Officials from Gallup Solar spoke briefly to commissioners and asked for consideration of the tax abatement. Kozeliski stated that the city has no connection to Gallup Solar.

“Our contract is with Mangan,” Kozeliski reiterated. “We simply purchase power from them once the solar farm is in operation.”

Also at the McKinley County Board of Commissioners meeting:

The Gallup High School Bengal Dance Team was recognized with plaques and certificates. The team participated in the Dance Team Union National Championship in Orlando in February. “We are very proud of our Gallup High Dance Team,” Commissioner Bill Lee said. The Gallup High School Dance Team is coached by Kristy Tiley. The Gallup High Dance Team hasn’t been to a national competition in nearly 10 years, Gallup High officials have said.

The Board of Commissioners approved a request to change the lead agency on the Carbon Coal Road engineering faction from the state Department of Transportation back to McKinley County. The matter relates to a multi-million dollar trans-loading rail facility to be built near Carbon Coal and spearheaded by the Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation.

By Bernie Dotson
Sun Correspondent