

Holt County Nixes Enterprise Zone for Wind Farm

(KTNC) -- Any Enhanced Enterprise Zone in Holt County will not include a proposed wind farm.

Element Power is developing the Mill Creek Wind Farm in southern Holt County and had asked to be included in an Enhanced Enterprise Zone. After much discussion between elected officials and attorneys, though, Holt County Clerk Kathy Kunkel says commissioners have decided to not pursue an EEZ associated with tax abatements for the wind company.

She says County Assessor LaDonna Jones determined that the county would have to take 60-percent off the initial value of the wind farm when determining real estate taxes for the facility for obsolescence. Applying the Enhanced Enterprise Zone tax abatements of 50-percent over 10 years on top of that 60-percent obsolescence would mean placing only 20-percent of the wind farm's construction value on the tax rolls. Kunkel says commissioners felt that was more of a break than the county could afford to give.

Kunkel says Element Power has given the county no indication that they would pull out of the project because of the decision. Element Power has signed a 200-megawatt power purchase agreement with KCP&L. The project in Holt County would be the largest wind farm in the state of Missouri.

While a wind farm will not be included in an Enhanced Enterprise Zone, commissioners still plan to pursue a smaller EEZ in the future. Seven members have been chosen to serve on an EEZ board. Commissioners selected five members last month, county school districts selected South Holt R-1 Superintendent Bob Ottman to serve on the board, and other political subdivisions in the county selected Atchison-Holt Ambulance Director Gene Bradley to represent their interests on the board.

Kunkel says further steps need to be taken to form the enterprise zone, and those steps are not being taken at this time.

Kunkel says any Enhanced Enterprise Zone would not be countywide. She describes it as more of a "polka-dot" approach rather than a blanket approach. Companies that built in the EEZ would be able to apply for 50-percent abatement of real estate taxes over 10-years.