

Tribe Continues Effort to Gain Support for Water

(KNZA)--Brown County Commissioners say they want to do more research before deciding if they will sign a letter of support for the Kickapoo Tribe's efforts to secure federal legislation approving a water settlement agreement between the tribe and the state of Kansas. Greg Bebermeyer reports

Kickapoo Tribal Chairman Lester Randall met with the Commission Monday to request the letter of support. He made a similar request last month, but was turned down by the Commission.

The agreement between the tribe and state was approved last September but still must be ratified by Congress.

The agreement quantifies the tribe's water rights in the Delaware River Watershed.

The Commission last month turned down the Tribe's request, citing concerns brought to them by landowners pertaining to the Tribe's effort to revive a water reservoir project. However, Randall says the agreement doesn't have anything to do with the proposed Plum Creek Reservoir project, saying the water rights and that effort are two separate issues.

County Attorney Kevin Hill agreed with Randall's assessment. "What they're asking for in the letter is just a letter of support to to the Congressional leaders in our area to support what the state has already agreed to."

Following discussion, the Commission tabled the request for a letter of support until next week. Commissioner Keith Olsen will contact Kansas Water Office Director Tracy Streeter to see if he can attend the next meeting to discuss the matter.

Meanwhile, Randall appeared before the Hiawatha City Commission Monday evening to seek a letter of support from the city.

While Mayor Steffen Shamburg was receptive to the idea, he said he wanted City Attorney Don Cashman to review a sample letter submitted by Randall to make sure there are no legal issues. The matter will be put back on the Commission's agenda in two weeks.

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