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Firm plans wind farm in county

By Jan Katz Ackerman

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A Spanish firm hopes to plant 72 wind turbines southeast of Colby as the proposed Solomon Forks Wind Farm gets underway in eastern Thomas County, providing landowners with a windfall of lease payments and creating as many as 15 jobs.

"Nothing is for sure until the shovel is in the ground," Peter Kennon of Acciona, an international wind-energy development company, told county commissioners Friday, "but this project is going forward and a number of landowners are eager to partici-

Kennon said the generating facility will cost about \$250 million dollars, have 72 turbines and generate 108 megawatts of electricity. Acciona plans to work with Sunflower Electric Power Corp. of Hays to move electricity produced at the farm.

"We are working with Sunflower at the Mingo substation to connect," Kennon said. "We are confident things will be resolved."

Mingo is 9 miles east of Colby on Interstate 70.

Kennon said Acciona, with corporate headquarters in Madrid, Spain, is a "world leader" in renewable energy, focusing on wind power, solar and bioenergy tech-

While locations for the proposed wind farm are not set in stone, he said, the firm expects to put the turbines in a pattern running about



side of Colby within the near future similar to the one above. The

nine miles from just west of K-25 a long time," said Commissioner south of Colby to just south of the "Nine Mile" intersection of U.S. 24 and U.S. 83 east of town.

Workers should break ground this fall and construction will last about nine months, Kennon said. Acciona will be the owner and op-

"We've been looking for this for

Ken Christiansen. "It's private enterprise at its best," added Commissioner Paul

Kennon said as project developer, he is working with landowners to make sure they are comfortable with having the firm on their

Solomon Forks Wind Farm is hoping to plant wind turbines out- addition of 72 wind turbines would also create 15 new jobs and provide landowners with lease payments.

> He said Acciona has installed vironment are protected. research towers throughout the proposed project site to analyze how the wind flows through the area. Environmental scientists and survey crews are studying bird migration and hazardous material issues, and working with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

"We are looking at the history of the area to see what has been there the past 100, 200 and 300 years," he said.

Craig Hills is one landowner hoping to put his land into the project.

to make sure wildlife and the en- the last 10 years," Hills said. "We cal noise."

can't raise crops, but we can sell wind."

Kennon said the 72 turbines will most likely be set three rows deep, with four to six turbines per mile running side by side, in a pattern one to three miles from front

to back. "They will face south, but the turbines can rotate north," he

With a turbine life span of 20 to 25 years, Kennon said, landowners are being asked to enter into agreements that will run 25 years. He said the leases can then be extended to 30 to 40 years, or be perpetually renewable.

"We will ask the general contractor to hire as many local people as possible," Kennon said.

"We'll have between 200 and 250 people on site each day, and when done, we'll have 10 to 15 full-time people to support the wind farm.'

Steele said he understands that service roads to the towers, as well as concrete bases used to anchor turbines, can be added to the tax roles. He asked Kennon whether property taxes would increase for landowners having turbines on their ground.

"We understand taxes may be applicable, but Acciona pays the taxes," Kennon replied.

Sowers asked Kennon how much noise the turbines will make.

"Unless you are right below one," he said, "the wind makes more noise than the blades. Our "Look at the weather we've had turbines make very little mechani-

Taxpayers could pay more on emergency radio equipment

By Jan Katz Ackerman

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Upcoming changes in federal law will mean taxpayers will have to foot the bill for new emergency radios, Thomas County commissioners heard Friday, because the government wants to squeeze more channels out of the crowded airwaves.

Jason Moses, former Thomas County undersheriff, who now works for the state adjutant general's office, overseeing law enforcement and emergency management communication systems throughout the state, talked about about the move from broadrequire the county to buy new radios.

'The radio spectrum is like a picket fence," Moses said. "The Federal Communication Commission wants to cut the spectrum. Say you have Steele and Byron Sowers the law creating a fee on 12 pickets in your fence now; you'll soon have 24 (pickets) in the same space."

Moses told the commissioners they need to gear up for radio frequency changes that could soon outdate the county's equipment. He recommended they contact vendors and make sure any new equipment the county buys will meet standards set by the federal government when changes are made

"See if the equipment is reprogrammable," Moses said. Christiansen asked Moses if he knows of any other changes coming down the pike.

"In 2017, the FCC is looking at cutting the specbeen determined.

cies will be as good as they are now after the annual subscription fee of \$10,743.

said. "A study of the coverage area can be done, but you may have to add repeaters."

able to buy radio equipment that works on broad-Free Press Reporter band frequencies.

> Road and Bridge Supervisor Clair Schrock said the last radio purchased for his department was one that will work on narrowband, and it cost \$250.

"So it will take between \$5,000 and \$6,000 to change over your department?" Christiansen

Steele asked Moses about buying radios that also allows for text messaging.

'You can," Moses said, "but it's two-fold. The technology is available, but there's a safety issue with that, such as text messaging and driving.

"I recommend you look at technology for the band to narrowband radio frequencies, which may next 10 years out. The younger generation is looking for jobs that are high-tech."

Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan told Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul phone users to pay for the Enhanced 911 systems will end in 2010 if state legislators do not renew

"On the expenditure report," McMahan said, "you will see No. 4 as revenue. That amount will be cut in half or be zero in 2010, it depends on where you live. Also, this amount varies every month depending on cellular phones bought, those in use and cancellations within Thomas County."

At the same meeting, Sheriff Mike Baughn asked the commissioners for permission to buy upgrades for the Information Technologies Public Safety software. Rather than buying the software at a cost trum in half again," Moses said, "but that has not of \$44,145, Baughn asked the commissioners to sign off on a subscription. That costs a one-time fee Sowers wanted to know whether radio frequen- of \$10,290, plus \$25 shipping and handling, and an

Baughn said he plans to take the \$10,290 and "There is a potential for a loss of range," Moses \$25 shipping and handling out of federal forfeiture money, and the \$10,743. out of local forfeiture money, money seized in criminal cases. The com-Moses said after 2010, the county will not be missioner unanimously approved the request.

Wrap-up

Speech closes convention

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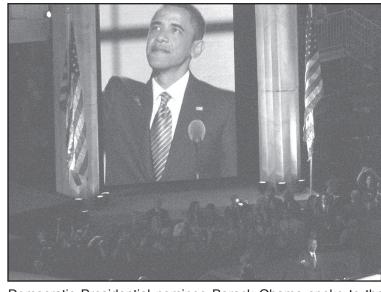
Thursday was a perfect sunny day with just enough breeze to keep the heat down as more than 80,000 gathered at Invesco Field at Mile High to witness the historic moment when Sen. Barack Obama accepted the nomination for president at the Democratic National Convention.

Obama's acceptance speech was a high point the four-day convention had been pointing to, and he did not disappoint the crowd who cheered, waved flags, stomped their feet and celebrated as he spoke about changing the country.

"With profound gratitude and great humility, I accept your nomination for the presidency of the United States," Obama said in opening his speech.

The gates of Invesco had opened at 1 p.m., and the crowd had to snake its way through the security checkpoints to be in their seats by 7 p.m. when the gates were closed about an hour before Obama was to speak. In the setting sun, the lines of people could be seen getting shorter as the last stragglers rushed to get into their seats.

Yonder Mountain String Band entertained the crowd before Speaker Nancy Pelosi gaveled opened the final day of the con-Speakers in the first hours in-



Democratic Presidential nominee Barack Obama spoke to the crowd at Invesco Field at Mile High on Thursday.

cluded Colorado Gov. Bill Rit- he said to a wild cheer from the ter, and Colorado Congressional members Ed Perlmutter, John Salazar and Diana DeGette.

The afternoon included a salute to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who had made his famous "I have a dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington 45 years ago on Aug. 28. Among those speaking were the Rev. Bernice King, Dr. King's daughter, and Martin Luther King, III, his old-

As darkness fell over the stadium, the speakers picked up pace as former vice president Al Gore talked about how important close elections could be.

"I know something about that,"

Susan Eisenhower, granddaughter of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, said she is crossing party lines as an American because of the moral and financial failings of the current leadership.

"Our nation's discourse has turned into a petty squabble," she said. "Impulsive action has replaced measured response. I believe Barack Obama has the temperament to lead the country."

The speech lasted about 43 minutes. When he finished, he was joined on stage by his wife Michelle and daughters Sasha and Malia and by vice president nominee Joe Biden and his wife Jill.

Red Cross offers classes

Thomas County Red Cross is offering a first-aid and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation class from 6 to 10 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 9. For costs, location, and registration, call Sherry White, manager, (785) 462-

Book review Sept. 16

A book review of "Last Rights" by Stephen P. Kiernan, will be given by Hospice Services at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 16, at the Hospice Services Office, 515 W. Fourth, Colby. The book review is presented by Barbara (Scheo-

pner) Stoecklein, officials said. "Last Rights offers a

hopeful, profound vision for patients, doctors and families: a way to honor the dying during their greatest vulnerability, a chance for families to reconnect, and opportunity for the medical system to treat patients with ultimate respect, a time to give comfort and compassion to those we most love," Stoecklein said. For questions, call 462-6710

Treasurer to close Tuesday

The Thomas County Treasurer's office will be closed Tuesday to attend motor vehicle training, said Donita Applebury. For questions, call 460-4520.

Blood drive Thursday

A blood drive will be held from noon to 6 p.m. Thursday at the Colby Community Building. The drive is sponsored by the Thomas County Red

Two dogs found

Colby Animal Clinic has two dogs waiting for their owners to retrieve them, clinic officials said. One is a Jack Russell terrier and the other is a mixed breed, which was found close to Levant. No other details were available on the Jack Russell. To identify, call 460-8621 or visit the clinic, 810 E. Fourth St. If the owners cannot be found, the dogs will be available for adoption.

Fruit ready for pickup

The CYO fruit will be ready for pick up Thursday and Friday at the 4-H Building on the Thomas County fairgrounds. "CYO is asking everyone who ordered fruit to pick it up on Thursday at the 4-H

building from 5 to 9 p.m," said Megan Augustine, one of the coordinators. For questions call her at 443-2599.

Yearbooks are available

The Colby Middle School yearbooks have arrived, said Linda Haas, yearbook advisor, and can be pickup at the office. Extra copies are available. For questions, call Haas at 460-5200.

1958 class plans reunion The Colby High School Class of 1958 is holding

its 50th class reunion Thursday through Sunday, Oct. 2-5, in Branson, Mo., said Sandy Harper, one of the organizers. "If you were in the class, we would like to hear from you," she said. For questions, call 462-3759 or Norma Higerd, 462-7806.

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