

Jobs, milk produced by Bird City Dairy

By Karen Krien

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Bird City's new dairy is up and running.

Cows began arriving Tuesday, Sept. 18, and the milking started that Thursday evening, at the dairy, two miles east of Bird City, which expect to produce about 8,000 to 9,000 gallons of milk a day.

The operation is one of two owned by Tom and Judy McCarty and their sons, Clay, Ken and Mike, and Mike will be managing the Bird City operation. The McCarty family also owns a dairy west of Rexford.

The dairy brings around 20 jobs to the county, McCarty said, and farmers will be selling the operation about 6,000 tons of alfalfa each year. It has increased Bird City's population and helped fill classrooms at the Cheylin Schools. However, the entire county is expected to benefit from the new industry.

The dairy has close to 2,000 cows, McCarty said, and eventually will have 3,200.

The huge 920-square-foot "free stall" building can hold up to 2,000 cattle, he said, with two holding pens to house the others.

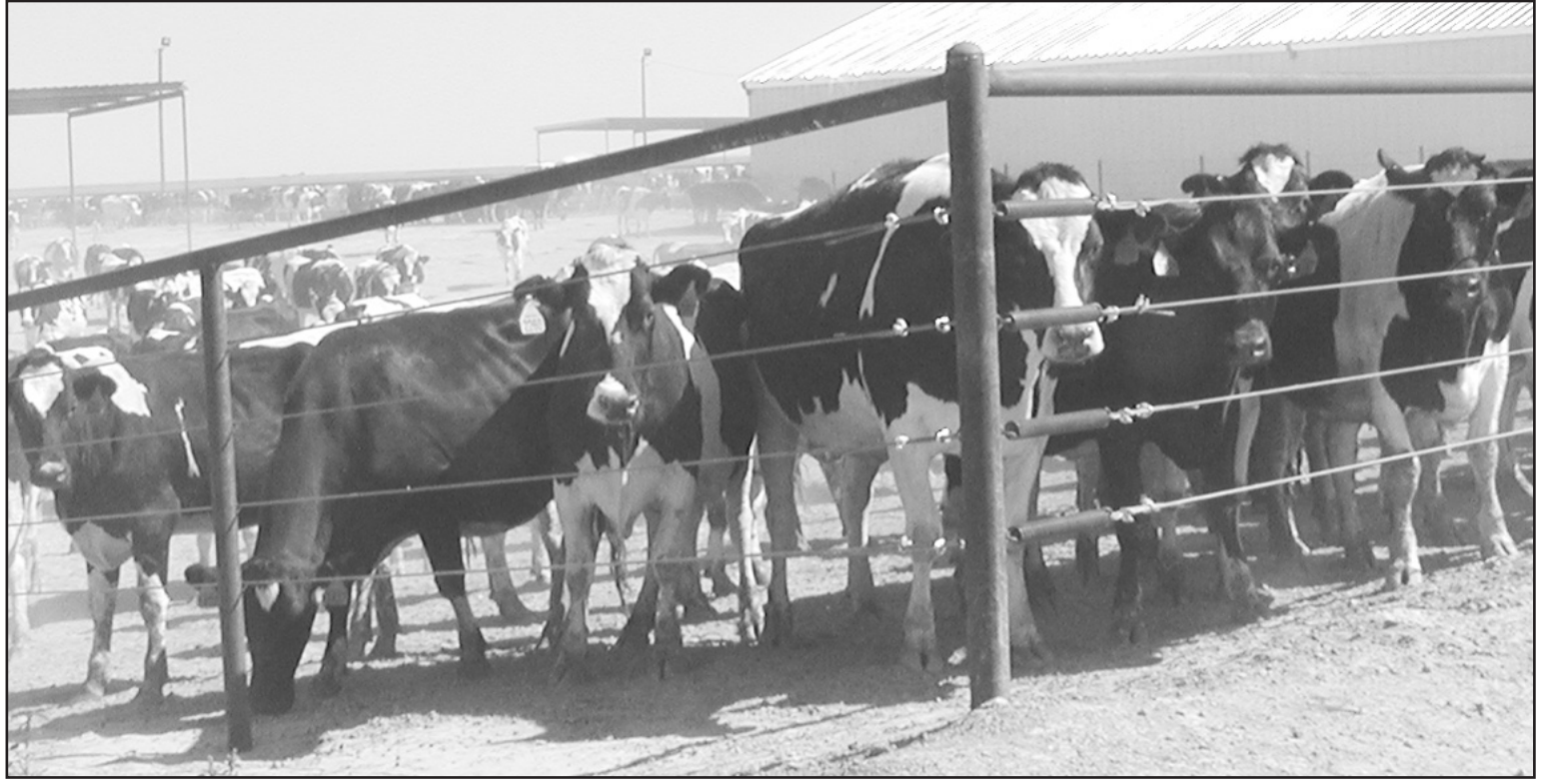
The operation will turn over

about one-third of the herd each year because of health issues, milk production and reproduction, McCarty said, but they have their own heifer replacement program.

"As we move forward, having our own replacement program gives more control and less risk for disease," he said, adding that knowing the genetics of the cattle can help improve the herd.

The milking parlor, equipped to handle 60 cows at a time, will run 24 hours a day. Two 6,400-gallon stainless steel tanks will hold milk. A special-needs building north of the main buildings is where the McCartys will take care of their own veterinary work, plus there is a commodity barn to store corn and feed, a shop for equipment repairs and a scale.

The way the operation is set up, the owners said, there should be little odor. McCarty said the liquid manure will be managed in a three-stage gravity separation system, starting with a sand separation area. From there, the waste water flows into a series of settling basins where the solids are retained. Finally, the liquid will flow into a 53-million-gallon lagoon storage area.



More than 2,000 milk cows arrived last month at the Bird City Dairy. The dairy expects to expand to about 3,400 cows, which will produce about 8,000 to 9,000

gallons of milk a day. The dairy, which is owned and operated by the McCarty family, adds about 20 jobs to the county. Photo by Karen Krien/St. Francis Herald

McCarty and his wife, Amy, have moved to Bird City. They have two boys, Logan, 2, and Colton, 4.

McCarty said he and his brothers

are fourth-generation dairy farmers. They came to Rexford from Pennsylvania seven years ago. He said the country and milking busi-

ness there are much the same as it is in Cheyenne County, except for the increasing urban development back east.

"Cheyenne County is a great area with good people," McCarty said. "We are excited to be here."

Oberlin City Council looks into proposal by Sunflower Wind

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

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A proposal from Sunflower Wind, which has been on the city's table for seven weeks, almost died at the meeting on Thursday Sept. 20, for lack of a motion, but was kept alive as all of the members agreed to go into negotiations with the company.

In early August, Sunflower Wind, a Goodland based company, asked the City of Oberlin to cancel their current contracts with Sunflower Electric and WAPA to purchase power from them at 5.6 cents per kilowatt.

After the council agreed that they wouldn't and couldn't cancel their current contracts which meant getting rid of the federal power at 3 cents a kilowatt, Sunflower Wind sent in a First Right of Refusal.

The agreement would give Sunflower Wind the first chance to bid and the chance to meet or beat any other offers when the city's contract

with Sunflower Electric is up in four years.

For several meetings the council talked about the offer, but didn't agree to it.

Instead the city offered Sunflower Wind a letter of intent, basically stating the company is welcome to bid to offer the city power.

Brice Barton, with Sunflower Wind, told the council that the company wants to spend money here. They want to invest in Decatur County putting up a 20-turbine wind farm. He said he wanted to see a vote at the Thursday meeting about the agreement on the table, stating the letter of intent was just one page that really didn't mean anything.

He said he is willing to work on the wording of the letter to make it into a contract.

Mayor Joe Stanley called for any action, which there was none and the discussion continued for just under two hours until the council came to an agreement.

The council discussed whether signing the Right of First Refusal would make this an uncompetitive project.

Councilman Ray Ward said he thought this was a good opportunity, but wasn't ready to tie the hands of future councils. He said he would like to see Sunflower Wind bid in the next process, adding that competition is good for every business.

Mayor Stanley said the council needed to wrap this up, either make a decision or the decision would die.

Negotiation, said Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener, has been going through my mind for some time.

Sunflower Wind's lawyer, said Barton, is more than happy to go into negotiations to get the ball rolling. He suggested that the city hire Herz to help with that.

Herz said if it is for a Right of First Refusal he couldn't be counted out.

"I don't want my name associ-

ated with a Right of First Refusal," he said.

Herz said he doesn't know how the city can show the people that they are looking for the best option and agree to that.

There was no motion made. It sounds like the city can't get past the Right of First Refusal, so why negotiate, said Mayor Stanley. If it dies tonight, said Barton, he said doesn't know where they go from here.

Lohofener said she would still like to see if the city could negotiate something before totally writing the idea off.

Something between Right of First Refusal and a letter of intent, said Councilwoman Rhonda May.

The letter, said Ward, is the strongest the city can do.

Does anyone really know the economic development impact for the county when it is tax exempt? asked Commissioner Stan McEvoy. Only some of it is tax exempt, said Barton.

There will be workers here staying, eating at restaurants, and more.

But there isn't any property tax, said McEvoy.

No, not on the turbines, he said.

This has been beat for two hours, said Mayor Stanley, is there a motion?

The room was silent, with the whole thing almost dying. Instead Lohofener asked that the city pursue negotiations with Sunflower Wind and see if Herz is available to help.

The vote passed unanimously.

Consultant cautions Oberlin on wind deal

The Oberlin City Council talked with experts in the power field on Sept. 20, about the proposal from Sunflower Wind, a Goodland company.

The council asked questions, heard more about the Right of First Refusal proposal and decided to pursue negotiations with the wind company.

Joe Herz, of Burr Oak, the independent person the city hired to look at the contract, said he hadn't seen any changes from the original contract for the Right of First Refusal, but he strongly recommended the city not execute it. There are just too many loose ends and too many things, he said, that he sees as a business or a private matter that can't work.

Talking about the first contract offered to the city, Herz said he didn't know if it could be fixed. It isn't clear from the contract, he said, of what exactly the business arrangement is. He said he isn't sure of what Sunflower Wind can accomplish or how that fits into what the city needs.

If the city says yes to a power agreement with Sunflower Wind and then the company can't produce, said Herz, what if the city can't find a substitute supplier. Before even getting into a contract, he said, the city has a lot of due diligence to do.

He is talking about the first contract, said Brice Barton, with Sunflower Wind, which has been withdrawn. The agreement on the table is the Right of First Refusal. That states that if Sunflower Wind isn't up and running by a certain

date, he said, then everyone is out. The other contracts don't have to be terminated for this to happen.

Wapa power, said Herz, is an asset. It shouldn't be put to risk. It is a renewable that represents 60 to 70 percent of the power the city uses.

If this agreement puts to risk or causes problems for any power the city might be negotiating with in the next few years it isn't worth it, said Herz.

Bob Johnson, with Sunflower Electric, said the company is at a point that they think they have as much power as needed, but they are always looking toward the future. With wind farms, he said, they look at hourly production and see if it is a good deal. They don't want more

than 10 percent wind in the system at a time.

Johnson said the company is a co-op that tries to provide members with long-term, low cost power. He said they would never sign a Right of First Refusal.

Johnson said he didn't think the agreement was in the best interest of the city or his company. Johnson said all wind energy requires a subsidy to make it economical. The production tax credit makes it affordable.

Mayor Stanley asked why 5 megawatts at peak makes a difference to Sunflower Wind? Sunflower Wind, said Barton, came to support northwest Kansas. If the money is going to be put here, then the

company wants the city to support them too.

The other 95 percent of the power that the company doesn't sell to the city will be sold on the grid, said Barton.

There isn't any room on the grid, said Foreman Dan Castle. In order to sell power on the grid, said Mr. Johnson, the proposal has to be taken to a power pool and an application made.

The company also offered agreements to Sharon Springs and St. Francis. J.R. Landenberger, the city manager in St. Francis, said the council decided to pass on the proposal on the table. At that point Sunflower Wind pulled all of the proposal back.

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student of the week

Name: Devin Mangus
Parents: Danny and Charlene Mangus
Grade: Junior
Age: 17
We've nominated this student because: He is excellent at helping others in class and has the desire to go above and beyond on personal projects.
Student Comment: I will remember the great opportunities I was given at GHS. I will especially remember the staff, the community and the wonderful friends who pushed me through the years to achieve my goals.

Activities involved in at school: 4-H, Band, X-Pressos, Musical, Honor Jazz and Concert Band, Math Relays, FCCLA and golf.
My choice of movies, books, and games: My favorite movies include "Remember the Titans," "Glory Road" and the "Back to the Future" trilogy. I enjoy listening to classic rock and oldies. "Animal Farm" is my favorite book. My favorite game is Cranium played with friends and family.
After I leave Goodland High School I intend to: Attend Kansas State University and study a field in engineering or math.
And 10 years from now, I think I'll be: Enjoying the job that I love and be starting a family.
Favorite Quote: "Don't tell me the sky's the limit when there are footsteps on the moon." Anonymous.

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