

State Board Has Annual Meeting At Private Resort

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — A public authority created by the Legislature to finance health and education facilities held its annual meeting last month at an exclusive resort.

Dougherty and Company, a Minneapolis-based financing company, allowed the authority to be its guest for the meeting.

The company has a membership.

The Sutton Bay golf and hunting club is in Sully County overlooking the Missouri River west of Agar.

A sign at the entrance reads, "Private Club" and "Members Only."

A reporter who drove to the meeting, however, wasn't turned away when he parked or when he went inside the lodge.

The meeting cost \$5,858 to hold there on the afternoon of Sept. 28, according to Don Templeton.

He is executive director for the South Dakota Health and Educational Facilities Authority.

Templeton said the authority paid the costs despite being the company's guest.

The meeting lasted approximately one hour. Some members stayed the night.

The authority's board normally meets by teleconference but gathers once a year in person, Templeton said.

The governor appoints the board members.

The authority's purpose is to reduce costs of bond issues for public bodies and non-profit organizations such as hospitals, health centers, universities and technical institutes.

Templeton said the authority collects administrative fees on bond issues to cover its expenses for staff and operations.

The bill for the Sutton Bay event fell in the middle range for annual meetings held in the past six years:

- The 2014 annual meeting in Rapid City at Westhills Village cost \$6,370.40. The amount included \$4,194 for an airplane flight to Rapid City for members. Six members attended;

- The 2013 annual meeting in Sioux Falls at the Minnehaha Country Club cost \$2,940.16.

- Three board members attended the Sioux Falls meeting. Two participated by phone;

- The 2012 meeting at The Lodge hotel and casino in Deadwood cost \$7,124.38.

- The amount included \$4,206 for an airplane flight to the Deadwood area for members.

- Three of the seven board members attended the Deadwood meeting and three participated by phone;

- The 2011 event at Custer State Park cost \$3,687.53. Five members attended; and

- The 2010 meeting in Rapid City cost \$2,483.40. Six members attended.

Avon

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Press & Dakotan. However, the four Prevailing Winds officers on hand indicated they weren't necessarily surprised at the low turnout. They spoke of the previous meetings already held in the area.

The Prevailing Winds project, if constructed, would generate more than \$100 million in economic benefits, according to company officials. The project would use less than 80 acres of land and would produce economic benefits for local landowners, local communities and the state, the promoters said.

The Prevailing Winds project looks to generate up to 200 megawatts of power, Nick Sershen said. The promoters are looking at a site 300-350 feet above the Coteau Creek, south of the current Beethoven wind farm purchased by North-Western Energy. The site lies in the Tripp-Avon area.

The site provides excellent wind readings, he said.

"If you're in an area where there is a lot of wind, it's where you should put the wind turbines," he said. "Here in South Dakota, this is one of those great locations."

Nick Sershen spoke to the audience about the risks of investing and the possible rate of return. The project can accept only South Dakota investors.

The project stands to generate a great deal of interest from companies looking for stable, dependable long-term energy sources, Nick Sershen said.

"In 2014, half of all power purchase agreements were by companies," he said. "They want to hedge their power costs. With projects like this, they know their power costs for the next 25 years."

Nick Sershen described the five-year data showing the dependable wind supply of the proposed site. The wind power meets the demand for green, renewable and sustainable energy, he said.

"Wind is the cheapest power source. The fuel is free," he said.

The project joined the Southwest Power Pool this month and will enter a transmission study next week, he said.

A PROJECT PROFILE

A company hand-out provided a profile of the project.

The turbine manufacturer and model has not been chosen, but the manufacturer of the wind turbines will likely be GE or Vestas. Both projects would purchase station power for the turbines, substation, operations and maintenance building from two local rural electric cooperatives in a portion of their service territories where customers are decreasing and cost to main the system continues to increase.

Wind energy projects 100 megawatts or greater are permitted by the South Dakota PUC, and projects less than 100 megawatts

are permitted at the county level.

Prevailing Winds will apply for a wind energy facility permit with the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission (PUC), company organizers said. The process will include public hearings and public input meetings. In addition, the county may want to apply for party status, and the county can also comment during comment periods.

The project partners include Mnioka Construction and Value Added Service, which hold experience in wind energy projects, the Sersshens said.

ANSWERING CONCERNS

The Sersshens responded to criticisms and concerns involving the proposed project. They said the project is totally separate from the neighboring Beethoven project and will undergo PUC hearings and other scrutiny.

In response to an audience comment, they said average monthly consumer energy bills look to go down with NorthWestern Energy's purchase of the Beethoven project. The impact to a residential customer using 750 kilowatt-hours (kwh) per month is a bill reduction of \$5.75, they said.

They also addressed environmental and noise concerns, using a noise meter for comparison of decibel levels.

The Prevailing Winds organizers said they would fall under a new Bon Homme County wind energy ordinance, if enacted by the County Commission later this

month.

"We're comfortable as it's written," Steve Sersshen said.

He also responded to concerns that the new wind project could be purchased by foreign investors.

"As far as possible foreign ownership or the number of times (Beethoven) was sold, why is it important?" he asked. "If (opponents) would sit down and explain why foreign investment is such a bad thing, I could deal with it."

Foreign investment already plays an important part of the American economy, including agriculture, he said.

"If you have a Honda distribution center a couple of miles from town, it would benefit the economy," he said. "You would think it's a great deal because it brings new dollars into town."

If Prevailing Winds doesn't move forward with wind energy, other companies, other states and other nations will seize the opportunity, Steve Sersshen said.

"What other industry can we bring to our area that does as much as wind energy does?" he asked.

Another investor meeting was scheduled Tuesday night in Menno.

Future area meetings are set for 7 p.m. today (Wednesday) the American Legion Hall in Wagner; 2 p.m. Thursday at the Pony Creek Steakhouse in Parkston; 2 p.m. Oct. 13 at Minerva's Conference Center in Yankton; and 7 p.m. Oct. 13 at the Holiday Inn in Vermillion.

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County

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said. "It's going to allow us to do those three bridges. Continual normal maintenance. We've heard (Highway Superintendent) Brian (Gustad) talk to us a month and a half ago approximately about how the roads are breaking up. They spent \$600,000 on just patching. It's going to allow us to just keep putting Band-Aids on the roads."

With \$3.4 million reported in savings at the end of last year, Woods said tapping into it would only be sustainable for a couple of years and would not be an option.

"That's taking into account we have no natural disasters," he said. "That's taking into account we don't have a massive winter that takes a lot of plowing to the roads."

He added a number of options are on the table.

"The money's not there, so we're going to have to go to the next step — whether that's abandoning, closing,

converting from asphalt to gravel," he said. "We're going to look at all options because the people have spoken, so we're going to listen."

Woods said he'd like to bring in the levy's main opponents to hear their ideas.

"We want to get people at the table," he said. "We want to find out what can we do to get money to take care of these roads and bridges. Bring in the people that were against the levy, talk to them and see what they want. Look at solutions. Make sure we educate the people. There's going to be a lot of things for us to do moving forward, because the core of the problem is still there — the roads are bad."

In other business Tuesday, the commission:

- Approved Article 27 for the Highway 52 corridor overlay.

- Heard a proposal from CivicPlus for a redesign of the county website.

- Approved a number of plats and variances.

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Harvest

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Pam said that the family knew this wasn't going to be an easy road, but the number of people who have stepped up to help have overwhelmed her.

"This doesn't surprise me at all, but it is all overwhelming," she said. "There are so many communities involved. Our daughter teaches kindergarten in Gayville-Volin, and the staff and the student body are involved with the benefit. They have helped us with yard work and things around the farm. Now that it is combine day, this is nothing that we wouldn't do for anybody else."

Doug has lived in the Wakonda area since he was only a year old. He went to school and graduated from the community.

"He doesn't have an enemy," Pam said. "This is very humbling for him, too. We have done it for others; it is just paying it forward. It gives us comfort, piece of mind and comfort financially that we are going to get the crops in and have the money to pay bills this year."

In addition to the crews who showed up Tuesday, Pam said the University of South Dakota community has also supported them.

Doug has worked at USD for 25 years, finishing as construction supervisor this past month and Pam is an accountant in the medical school.

"They have been awesome," she said. "They have a program where, when you run out of your annual leave and your sick

pay, people can donate their leave to you. Because of this program, I do not have to take work off without pay. I am able to do that because others have anonymously donated hours to me so I can still be here to take care of Doug."

Larson said it is hard for her dad not to be out in the fields with his friends, but he is grateful for all they are doing.

While Tuesday was harvest day, Peterson was quick to say that the support for the Ganschow's doesn't end here.

A benefit for the Ganschow's will be held this Saturday, Oct. 10 at the Wakonda Legion Hall.

"This is just what we do in Wakonda," he said. "To me, that benefit is more work than what we are doing here right now, there are a lot of man hours, or woman hours I should say, that are going into that."

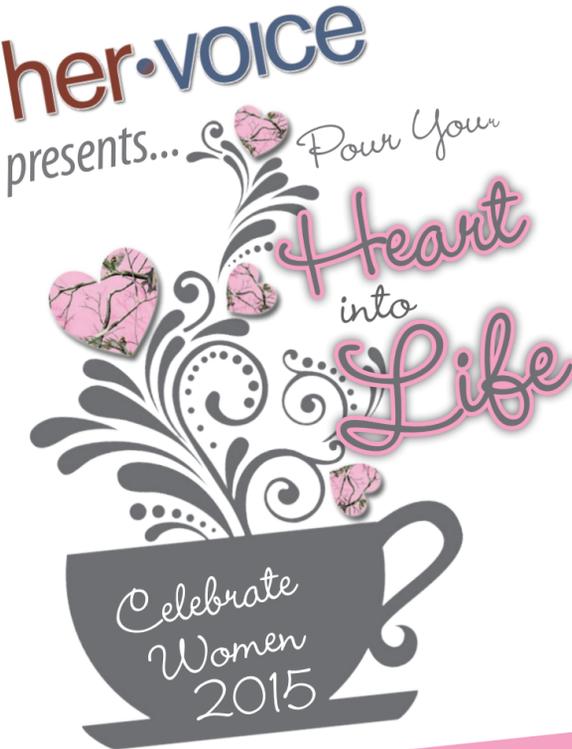
Larson said that her mom has done many benefits for others in the community, but had hoped she would not ever be on the receiving end of it.

"In the end all we can do is say thank you," she said.

A free will donation supper will start at 4:30 p.m. A silent auction starts at 4:30 p.m. and a live auction at 7 p.m.

Cash donations can be made out to the "Doug Ganschow Benefit" at First Premier Bank, PO Box 326, Wakonda, S.D., 57073.

For more information or to donate an item to the auction, contact: Donna Henriksen 661-3987, Pat Girard 267-2421 or Darby Ganschow at 661-2739.



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