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Jesslin Lamont, speaking, reads part of a proclamation for National 4-H Week at Monday's Seward County Commission meeting. Listening are fellow 4-H youth Brandon Yorio and Anissa Vazquez and K-State agents Kathy Bloom and Kylee Harrison. L&T photo/Robert Pierce

By ROBERT PIERCE

- Leader & Times

A unanimous vote from the Seward County Commission Monday gave support to the latest phase of a project to keep a local species off the Endangered Species list.

After a lengthy discussion at its Sept. 16 meeting, the board had decided to bring an item back to Monday's meeting to pay a small fee to support Phase III of the development plan.



With the vote, \$298 will be paid to Stillwater Technical Solutions from the county's commissioners professional services budget.

Monday's discussion was considerably briefer than the previous meeting, with commissioner C.J. Wettstein immediately making a motion following chairman Ada Linenbroker's reading of the item from the agenda.

Wettstein said the item had been "beat to death," and he made the motion to approve the \$298 to be paid to Stillwater Technical Solutions in support of Phase 3 of the Lesser Prairie Chicken Kansas Natural Resource Coalition.

Commissioner Doug LaFeniere agreed that the time had come for a vote on the item.

"I'm tired of being the Wile E. Coyote on this," he said jokingly. "Pick your battles, and \$298 isn't one of them."

A public hearing is scheduled to take place Nov. 7 and 8 in Garden City entitled "Defining Species Conservation Success: Tribal, State and Local Stewardship vs. Federal Courtroom Battles and Sue-and-Settle Practices." Wettstein said he will be attending the hearing.

"I'm really interested to see what this hearing ends up doing and the questions that he has asked them to look at and answer, if that really does slow down the process or shut down the process of putting the lesser prairie chicken on the endangered species," he said.

Wettstein said what will happen should the LPC be listed as an endangered species is still up in the air at this point.

“You really don’t know how it’ll affect you until it happens,” he said. “It may not affect you, but it could.”

In April, Seward County commissioners joined a block of counties in the state that had signed or passed a resolution against the listing of the species by U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

Part of what county officials did at that time was agree to pay a portion of a monthly total of nearly \$18,000 for three months to be split between the counties involved.

As of Monday, the county has paid a total of \$2,389, which includes an initial investment of \$702 to have its comments included in the list with the rest of the Kansas counties to be sent to USFW.

County administrator April Warden said Sept. 18 that the \$298 voted on Monday was necessary for Seward County to be included in the current phase of the project.

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