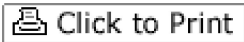




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May 07, 2010

## \$250,000 for Yucca exhibits approved on consent agenda

By MARK WAITE  
PVT

TONOPAH -- County commissioners approved almost \$520,000 worth of funding on the consent agenda Tuesday, in which a variety of items may be OK'd with one motion.

Two six-figure contracts were approved without any discussion: \$251,000 for consultants Mike Voegele and Robert McCracken to incorporate exhibits on Yucca Mountain at the Pahrump Valley Museum and a \$100,000 economic development contract with BEC Environmental.

A month ago, commissioners approved spending \$293,705 not in the budget for a 10-acre, multi-purpose, emergency responder training facility on county-owned land at 2871 E. Mesquite Ave. without any discussion.

None of those items were discussed in public before.

The actions are legal although the Nevada Open Meetings Law, chapter 241.010 of the Nevada Revised Statutes, says: "The Legislature finds and declares that all public bodies exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of the law that their actions be taken openly and that their deliberations be conducted openly."

Nye County acquired Yucca Mountain exhibits valued at \$350,000 from the U.S. Department of Energy in August 2009. They are housed at the Yucca Mountain Information Center on Postal Road, but the lease for the building will expire in August.

Voegele's existing \$200,000 nuclear oversight contract will increase to \$300,000. McCracken is receiving a fifth change order worth \$60,000, increasing his original contract to prepare oral histories of Nye County to \$257,397.

The consultants will oversee plans to incorporate interactive videos and a theater to show the history of Yucca Mountain. Besides the \$160,000 contract amendments, \$91,000 will go for modifications to the museum.

"I heard through the grapevine it was going to be moved," Commissioner Butch Borasky said, explaining how he heard of the Yucca Mountain exhibits. "I've asked before when they put these things over \$100,000 on there (the consent agenda) to pull them off."

Borasky said he reviews agendas with county staff on Friday before the commission meeting to get his questions

answered.

He offered to remove all the consent items, period.

The \$100,000 contract with BEC Environmental for renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainability projects in Nye County was already approved on the consent agenda when BEC Environmental Principal Planner Eileen Christensen delivered a report on economic development activities later under the regular agenda. The contract is funded out of a renewable energy grant.

BEC is working on lease-option agreements with renewable energy companies at Tonopah Airport. In a written report to commissioners, company officials said they were working with two other unnamed developers, who expect to break ground by December.

A summary provided to County Manager Rick Osborne said BEC maintains relationships with more than 20 renewable energy companies. BEC coordinates meetings among companies, county officials and government agencies to help projects move forward.

Commissioner Joni Eastley was full of praise as soon as Christensen came to the microphone.

"You guys rock. This was an outstanding, outstanding report. You guys are doing outreach, you're doing follow-up, you're anticipating opportunities, and all of that came in really clear in this report," she said.

Eastley said she attended a renewable energy workshop last week with BEC Environmental officials in Beatty, dedicated to discussing transmission issues for renewable energy projects. Delegates attended from as far away as Washington, D.C., she said.

Christensen, in a brief oral report to commissioners, said Nye County was denied an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant. Instead, an attempt is being made by various counties working together to obtain grants through the State Energy Office, she said.

Christensen said BEC Environmental applied for a recreation trails grant for the Calvada Eye. She met with the Clark County Regional Transportation Commission Monday about establishing a multi-modal, multi-purpose, utility corridor from the proposed Ivanpah Airport through Sandy Valley to Pahrump.

While Pahrump has decided against participating in the Eastern Mojave Broadband Project proposed by Inyo Networks, the county can move forward with the project for the rest of the county, Christensen said.

BEC Environmental performs daily reviews of grants and maintains information on 56 projects for which the county requested funding, the company said in a letter by Vice President Richard Nelson. BEC said it has been responsible for assisting the county in obtaining more than \$1.2 million in grants and leveraged funding.

"The money we have spent to keep Eileen and her staff working has paid off like a slot machine," Commissioner Lorinda Wichman said.

BEC has 66 properties targeted for development, ranging from the old Nye County courthouse in Belmont to an industrial park at the abandoned Beatty Bullfrog Mine to a fairgrounds/rodeo project and community college in Pahrump.

Other items approved on the consent agenda included a \$53,000 change order with JNJ Engineering Inc. to install 1,900 feet of eight-inch sewer main and six manholes in Gabbs. The change order increases the contract to repair the Gabbs sewer collection system to \$215,071. It's funded out of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, also known as the economic stimulus package.

Commissioners approved spending \$13,495 to buy and install fiber optic cable and other items from Engle Technical Services for the new county administration building in the Calvada Eye.

A \$23,000 contract with Ryan Lee for monitoring water levels, tracer testing, overseeing the drilling test wells and other tasks under the Nuclear Waste Repository Project Office was approved on the consent agenda without competition.

Geophysical Logging Services was awarded a \$30,000 contract to collect data from boreholes, a project funded by a Pahrump groundwater evaluation grant.

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