

How can we sustain communities across Nebraska?

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America use more energy to produce what other countries produce with less energy. All this results in a competition for resources and India and China are our biggest competitors right now.”

On the plus side, however, Nebraska has the fifth lowest electric rates in the United States. To invest in their customer, they want energy efficiency. “If you’ll use it fine - that’s what we want. But inefficiency... We sell a quarter of energy out of state which lowers Nebraska’s rates.”

Podolak said to build new energy plants the costs would run approximately:
Coal - 3,400 - 3,600 KW
Wind - 2,000 - 2,300 KW
Nuclear - 5,900 - 6,400 KW

But let’s look at China and their coal burning issues. Not pretty. NPPD wants to be 10 percent renewable by 2020. Currently they’re at three percent. And because they’re not eligible for the wind tax credit, they are looking at other ways to bring wind energy to us more efficiently and less cost prohibitive.

Nebraska is the third to sixth windiest state in the nation, but to build the transmission lines needed it would cost \$1 million per mile.

Currently they have four areas scheduled for wind power: Crofton Hills in 2010, Lareado Ridge in 2010; Broken Bow, 2011, and Flat Water, yet to be determined.

Podolak said there are energy auditors in our area who have the tools to check out our houses as well as businesses and make recommendations at no cost! There are also rebates for heat pumps should a furnace need to be replaced. Another program that will begin shortly through the Nebraska Energy Office is *Cash for Appliances*.

Other areas to look at include Energy Star appliances, new windows, having your cooling system looked at, adding more attic insulation, upgrade lighting, irrigation wells, right down to the new twisty fluorescent light bulbs - Chad said they really do save energy.

All of which tied in nicely with what Paul Bartlett of USDA had to say. There is money out there to help businesses as well as homeowners get energy efficient! There are grants to help grain dryers go from diesel to electric. “We’re taking applications continually. Don’t begin a project or sign anything yet...” Until you visit with a USDA agent. The closest one in our area is Mary Gambill in Ainsworth at (402) 387-2242, ext. 4.

If you’ve lived out here any length of time, you find you love your independence, wide open spaces, your neighbors, and good clean living. Should something catastrophic occur, neighbors are there with food and a helping hand. We’ve seen it before. Everyone pitches in for the good of all. But Jim Crandall, the Community Food Systems and Cooperatives Outreach Program Coordinator said there are only 10 days’ worth of food in large cities. And for us, less than that. Food travels from 1,300 to 1,500 miles before it reaches our plates and that includes our beef.

Crandall talked about community gardens and cooperative or subscription food plans. While most of these occur near larger cities like Lincoln, Omaha, and Kearney, there is nothing the matter with thinking about it for our area.

Locally grown food is perceived safer, more nutritious, and sustains the local farmer. With U.S residents spending less than 10 percent of their household income on food, that translates into more than \$3.2 million annually on food in Valentine.

“Is it worth community leaders to help facilitate local food systems?” Crandall asks. “We all have institutions in town; schools and nursing homes.”

Imagine growing our own food, supplying it to those institutions as well as having people subscribe to fresh produce all summer long... food wouldn’t have to travel that far, you’d be independent from a garden, and in the event of a catastrophe, our food source would be deemed safer.

To help someone get started in community gardening or rural agriculture, Sandy Scofield, Director of the UNL Nebraska Rural Initiative, has a Web tool to help determine the profitability of specialty crops. It can be found at ww.lmcalc.unl.edu.

The Rural Initiative is a program devoted to stabilizing and enhancing the economy and quality of life in non-metropolitan areas through the use of University knowledge and research.

That can also mean trees. She said the forestry has lost 50 percent of their trees since 1970. Trees do keep a community viable if they’re healthy. Currently there is the ash borer and pine beetle who are killing those trees. “We have to think long term for healthy trees,” Scofield said.

She touched on many different

ways to keep the community viable including Red Carpet people...those who interact with customers first: gas station attendants, store clerks, waitresses, etc. How do they answer tourists when they ask, “What is there to do?”

If the response is, “Nothing,” or “I don’t know” what are the chances they’ll come back? But if they’re educated on some of the attractions, things to do, places to go, it will enhance that visitors trip and cause them to WANT to come back again and spend their vacation dollars here. Which is the object!!

Which brings us back to water and the abundant opportunities it has to offer here. Jim Goeke, a Hydrologist and Professor at the School of Natural Resources at UNL spoke next. His research focuses on the groundwater resources of central and southwestern Nebraska, ground water management under conditions of scarcity, and the age of the Nebraska Sandhills.

He said, “Ground and surface water are connected. Droughts are common. But we’re not running out of water in Nebraska.”

That statement is based on monitoring wells throughout the state. Anyone can monitor those wells at groundwaterwatch.usgs.gov.

Goeke said there is still a lot to understand about the relationship of water. “Our charge is to look and understand. We need to use water as efficiently as possible - don’t waste.”

And this brings us full circle. As a nation, we have to find ways to be creative in our usage, re-usage, recycling, and set up of community.

An exercise that was done with the participants had them identify some of the most important aspects for Valentine and Cherry County to remain viable. The number one rated item was for jobs that could support a family.

That is a big homework project that could begin in middle and high school. Cody-Kilgore Unified School is developing a curriculum for entrepreneurs along with having a “real” grocery store as a model to teach their students. This education is hands on and may or may not produce “fruit” for the student. What a non-threatening way to begin with an idea and watch it grow.

Do you have an entrepreneurial idea? Need seed money? Want to find out if it would bear “fruit”? There are many different agencies state wide that can help you in that

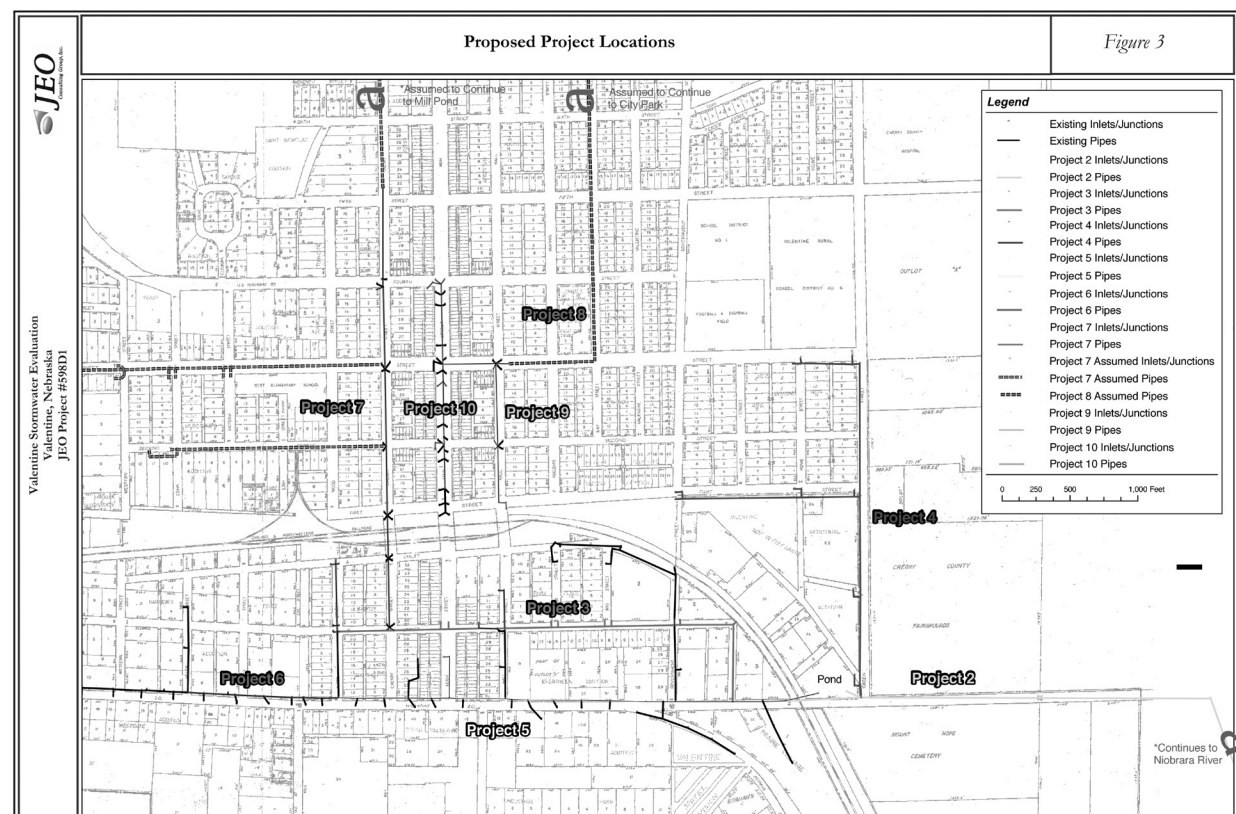
direction, as well as helping businesses and homeowners become more energy efficient. Give them a call.

USDA - (402) 387-2242, ext. 4, Mary Gambill for rural housing programs, business, community programs, and utility programs.

NPPD - For energy usage and audits, contact Bryce Landon in Chadron for commercial (308) 430-1309 and Steve Walker of North Platte\Gothenburg (308) 530-0922, out of North Platte, Gothenburg.

Valentine Cherry County Economic Development Board - contact Mike Burge at (402) 376-6842 for help with business ideas, plans, and expansion.

Let’s keep Valentine and Cherry County viable! Together we can do it!



JEO Consulting Group, Inc. created this map of Valentine to show the proposed phases of the reconstruction to the storm water system.

Valentine City Council hears sewer report

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ments at Hall and A Street with an estimated cost of \$1,079,600.

Project four are improvements along Green Street with an estimated cost of \$503,300.

Project five are improvements to Highway 20 Phase 1 Storm Sewer improvements with an estimated cost of \$686,000.

Project six are improvements to Highway 20 Phase two with an estimated cost of \$248,900.

There are still questions to be answered, such as the discharge from the Sale Barn as well as areas to be mapped out.

City Manager Shane Siewert said we’ll use this study to submit an application for a hazard mitigation grant after the Region 4 hazard mitigation is done.

The study was just the beginning of a long process of funding, grants, and application processes. Siewert said the actual construction portion of the sewer system wouldn’t begin until sometime in 2011, and that’s only if we’re approved for grant dollars.

LB 840 funds

The Council approved a \$25,000 grant of LB840 funds to purchase maintenance equipment for the Valentine Golf Club, LLC.

The golf club has to maintain two full time employees for the next five years and will own the equipment outright until then. Meanwhile, there will be a lien on the equipment to the City in the event something happens.

Ball field concessions

The Council voted to put the Ball-

field concession stand lease up for advertisement.

Police car
The Council voted to accept the bid of \$21,813 from Tinch Ford for a police cruiser and \$7,713.78 to Jones Auto to make it ready.

Pool rates

The Council opted to keep the pool rates the same as they were last year:

- Children three and under are admitted free, however the adult accompanying them will pay the daily admission rate of \$3.00 or have a pass.
- Family pass \$100.00
- Individual pass \$55.00
- Activity pass \$25.00
- Day care pass \$260.00

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.



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