

Bluestem's Hammond Retires After 47 Years



Dale Hammond (left) receives a meter lamp from manager Ken Maginley at the retirement celebration on Nov. 2.

After 47 years of service, Dale Hammond retired from Bluestem Electric's Clay Center office last month.

Hammond began his career with C&W Electric Cooperative on January 2, 1960, after spending six months with the Kansas Army National Guard. He worked 28 years as a lineman for C&W. In June 1988, he began work in member services, devoting most of his time with the wiring department. Hammond continued in this position after C&W and PR&W consolidated in 1999 to form Bluestem.

Hammond stated that he was thankful for the many years of steady employment, being able to work with good fellow employees and all of the good times for himself and his family.

Decision Not Impartial, Not in Accordance with Law

Sunflower is seeking a reversal of the decision made by Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Roderick Bremby on Oct. 18. Setting aside the KDHE professional staff's recommendation to issue the permit, Bremby said he made his decision based on his concerns that carbon dioxide from the plants "presents a substantial endangerment to the health of persons or to the environment".

"I believe it would be irresponsible to ignore emerging information about the contribution of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to climate change and the potential harm to our environment and health if we do nothing," Bremby said in his statement denying the air permit.

Currently, neither the Environmental Protection Agency nor Kansas statutes consider carbon dioxide a pollutant.

The air permit denial stalls Sunflower's plans to build two 700-megawatt power plants next to an existing 360-megawatt plant outside Holcomb in Finney County. The project also includes a bioenergy center that will capture 40 percent of the carbon dioxide emissions from the coal plant and use it to grow algae that produces oil for biodiesel, starch for ethanol production, and protein for cattle feeding.

On Nov. 1, Sunflower filed petitions for reconsideration and requests for an administrative hearing with the KDHE regarding the agency's denial of an air

quality permit necessary to construct the new power plants.

"We have filed administrative appeals with KDHE calling on the Secretary to reconsider his decision," Sunflower's president and CEO Earl Watkins stated.

The six-member Electric Generation Review Panel, formed by the Kansas state legislature to investigate Sunflower's Holcomb air permit process before Bremby made his decision, held its second day of hearings on Nov. 6. Watkins gave testimony to the panel, emphasizing the absence of published regulations classifying carbon dioxide as a pollutant in Kansas.

"Until politics apparently entered the equation, KDHE maintained a policy based upon sound science and appropriate and fair rulemaking...", Watkins said in his testimony. "The most alarming prospect of the Secretary's decision centers on the issue of regulatory uncertainty. In order for free society to function, it is imperative that society operate under the rule of law and not administrative edicts."

Other conferees, including ethanol developers, noted that the uncertain regulatory environment created by the KDHE action would force them to locate in other states and would make access to capital markets problematic.

Prior to testifying before the panel, Watkins explained the expansion project and the KDHE action on WIBW radio.

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