

# THE TELESCOPE



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## Catastrophic Failure

### Belleville Power Plant Loses Engine #7, Largest Generator

By Fred Arnold  
Telescope Publisher

The news Monday was sobering.

Belleville city council members knew that they had lost the use of one of the power plant's four operational engines. But until plant Supervisor John McChesney took the podium, they didn't realize just how bad the news was.

McChesney confirmed that engine #7 suffered an internal breakdown that likely would cost between \$500,000 and \$750,000 (minimum) to get back on line.

"It's bad," he said "With #7 out, there isn't enough margin (with the engines left) to fulfill our obligations with NPPD. The margins are just too slim."

Even with the recent purchase of another engine (engine #9) by the City, which should be running in June, the municipality still won't be able to comfortably maintain margins.

McChesney said he is recommending the City move ahead, as quickly as possible, with the purchase of engine #10.

"Things are going to be pretty tight if we have to carry the town (and generate for NPPD). I'm pretty worried. We have to be thinking forward to the future by adding #10 and maybe even #11," McChesney added.

#### Design Flaw

Engine #7 is the largest engine in the Belleville plant and is responsible for produc-

ing 33% of the load for NPPD as well as local use, when needed.

But according to Steve Payne of Integrated Diesel Specialists, the engine has a very big problem.

"There is a design flaw in it," Payne said, "That's the engine that took the Enterprise down."

The engine, which was installed in 1970, has been rebuilt before by Payne. For possibly the same problem. Payne said City officials were aware 30 years ago that the engine was on borrowed time.

"There is a design weakness in that engine. We did our best 30 years ago and nursed it along," he said.

Since the first rebuild, the unit has run only a short estimated 3,700 hours. Payne added.

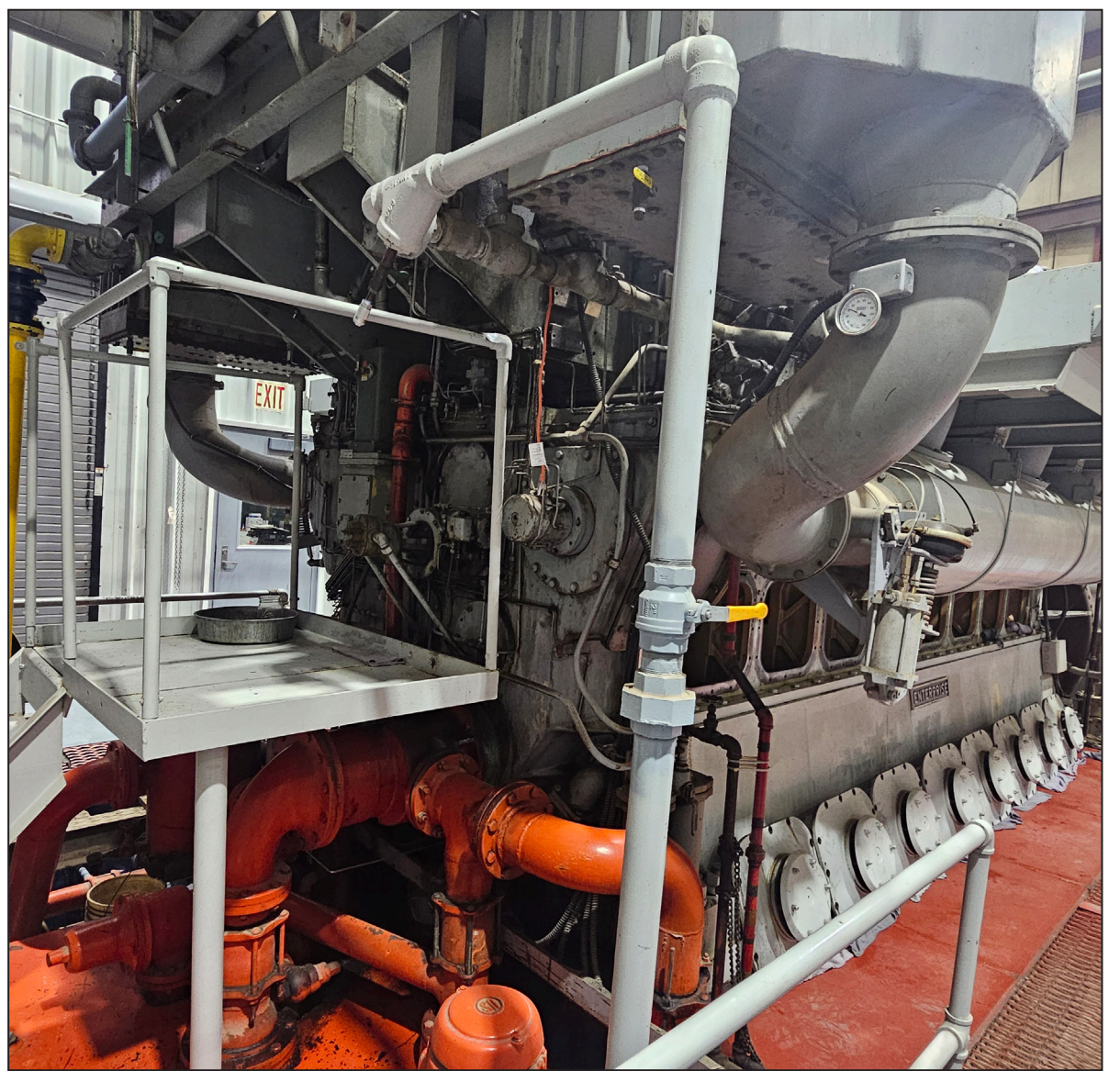
"We all knew it was on borrowed time then," he added.

When asked by council members what Payne thought it would cost to repair the unit, Payne said his best guess was \$700,000. "Maybe a million," he added.

Payne added that another unit, #10, could be added for less than repairing the current one and could be located in the same position at the plant.

In the meantime Belleville is down to units #5, #6 and #8. And that worries McChesney. Units #5 and #8 can be boosted somewhat to supply a little more power, but the superintendent said it wouldn't be enough.

Continued on page 10A



#### Lose Generation Capacity

The loss of engine #7 at The Belleville Power Plant has left local officials scrambling for a solution to offset the loss of 33% of the facility's generation.

-Telescope Photo by Fred Arnold

## Cuba Establishes Endowment Fund

By Deb Hadachek  
Telescope News

The City of Cuba has established a Cuba Community Endowment within the Republic County Community Foundation to help fund future improvements in the city.

Mayor James Banahan presented a proposal to Republic County Commissioners Monday to request to contribute \$75,000 a year for five years from the High Banks Wind donation to help build the endowment.

"We know that most of the wind towers are situated in our part of the county and would like to see some of those funds come back to Cuba," he told commissioners.

The proposal presented by Banahan to commissioners notes that the windmills generate significant revenue for the county, yet much of the infrastructure and community development efforts in eastern Republic County have been spearheaded locally, with minimal financial support from the county.

Banahan noted that Cuba recently received a \$334,000 grant to help upgrade the city's water system.

"We've put a half million or more into our water system," he said. "We're set up for growth in Cuba and would like to see some help before the wind farm goes into the tax rolls."

Molly Williams, director of the Republic County Commu-

nity Foundation, visited with commissioners several weeks ago about the idea to use wind farm monies to establish endowments for all Republic County communities.

#### Wind Fund Uses

In 2025, \$500,000 of the \$749,000 annual donation from NextEra Energy went into the general fund budget to reduce the mill levy for all county property owners.

Republic County Commissioners have never made a formal policy on how the annual donation from NextEra Energy will be spent. In general, the previous board of commissioners said they wanted the donation to benefit the greatest number of citizens across the county.

Other uses for wind farm monies in 2023 and 2024 included:

\*\$100,000 each to Republic County/USD 109 and Pike Valley USD/426 for capital projects.

\*\$100,000 each to Rural Water Districts #1 and #2 for capital improvement.

\*\$324,000 transfer to the General Fund to cover wage increases to county employees.

\*\$142,000 to improvements at the NCK Free Fairgrounds.

\*\$200,000 to establish a Republic County Housing Fund to make grants to qualifying individuals who build new homes.

\*\$15,000 to the High Banks Hall of Fame for capital improvement projects.

\*\$60,000 to the Republic

County Appraiser for a project to digitize historic property records.

In all, the county has received \$2.24 million from the NextEra donation over the last three years, and spent \$1.8 million.

The company made a special one time donation at the beginning of the project to bolster emergency services across the county.

\$100,000 was divided between four volunteer fire departments within the footprint of the farm, and another \$103,000 used to purchase rescue equipment and rescue gear and improve fire department radios for fire departments across the county.

#### Increase Jail Costs

Republic County Sheriff Dave Cox presented a resolution to commissioners that raises the price from housing inmates at the jail from \$30 a day to \$40. That fee is billed to the City of Belleville or other counties when Republic County holds inmates arrested for their cases.

"It hasn't been raised since 1993," Cox said. "We don't want to go crazy, but we feel like an increase of \$10 a day is reasonable."

Cox said he knows some area jails charge \$80 to \$100 a day. Republic County Commissioner Edwin Spichal said when juveniles are sent to the detention center in Junction City, the county is billed \$150 a day.

## Board OK's 138K For Track Resurfacing

By Katy Duryea  
Telescope News

Republic County High School and other schools who utilize the athletic complex will compete on a newly resurfaced track next Fall.

On Monday, the USD #109 Board of Education voted 7-0 to approve a bid from United Sport Systems of Wichita for \$138,000. 2016 was the last time the track was resurfaced, the work then completed by the same company.

"United will clean up all of the loose materials and fill in the cracks as needed and add a quarter inch black rubber on top of the current surface," Superintendent Tami Knedler said. "This will add another whole layer. Then they'll apply high intensity spray and paint it."

The board surveyed deteriorating sections of the track on Monday. Andy Horner, maintenance and transportation director for RCHS, showed members several lanes with large cracks in parts of the track.

"United will guarantee their work for two years," Horner said. "What work they do, they say if anything happens to it in two years, they'll come back and fix it without a problem. They're confident that it will be just like what they did the last time, because they'll do the same process as they did in 2016."

Horner said preventing the track from cracking again in the future will be a very large financial price tag for the district.

"At that point, we'll need to tear the whole track down, go under the base and start all over," he said. "That's what's going to make it last longer, without getting those cracks. That's what's going to keep it, lasting more than two or three years."

Knedler said installing a new track will also bring with it a whole host of other questions that the board will have to address in the future.

"There's a lot of layers to it," Knedler added. "A new track would mean re-assessing other facilities like the concession stand, restrooms, and making it ADA accessible. I want us to really think about all the decisions that would accompany building something new."

Also on the agenda: The board voted unanimously to approve \$38,000 for a bid from Von Lintel Refinishing, of Hays, to redesign and update the RCHS gymnasium floor.

Discussion was presented to the board from High School Principal Lindsay Cravens regarding a proposal to add an additional music teacher to the RCHS staff. The board approved the request. The district will be advertising for the new position soon.



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