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Friday, November 9, 2007

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Marshall may get new deputy with funds from new property taxes

by Gary L Smith OF THE JOURNAL STAR

LACON - Marshall County officials are banking on a windfall from a new wind farm to help restore a deputy's position that was eliminated in budget cuts four years ago. The county's tentative budget for 2008 includes half a year's salary for the position, with the expectation that it will be filled in mid-year, County Board finance committee chairman Patrick Sloan said Thursday at a board meeting.

What will help make that move possible will be new property taxes expected after the Camp Grove Wind Farm starts operating, he said. Construction has been basically completed on the 100-turbine project, which straddles the Marshall-Stark County line, and operation is expected to begin before the end of the year, said county engineer George Meister.

That means the 1.5-megawatt turbines should start generating tax revenues the following year, Sloan said. While school districts in the two counties will get the largest share of those revenues, Marshall County will be in line for about \$80,000 a year, he estimated.

"That's why we're looking at bringing the deputy on in the middle of the year, because we would be receiving that," Sloan said.

Sheriff Rob Russell said after the meeting he had initially been concerned about hiring someone if the position might lose funding again at the end of the year, but board members had assured him that would not happen. He said a beginning deputy's base pay under the current union contract would be about \$33,000 a year.

"I'll probably look at trying to put someone on in April or May. That would be about the middle of the (fiscal) year," which begins in December, Russell said.

The board won't take final action on the approximately \$6.3 million budget until December, but members indicated support for restoring the deputy's slot.

"I think it's greatly needed. It will be a big asset to the county," said Vice Chairman Larry Guderjan.

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