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NextEra Energy, which has developed wind farms in the area, has announced it is ready to develop a solar farm southeast of Enid. (Photo provided)

NEXTERA

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wanted to respond to all concerns and to be as transparent as possible. Project manager Christopher Banks addressed some of the concerns about the batteries and solar panels.

“We do extensive testing on batteries and use the most recent technology,” Banks said. “We actually work with local fire departments and have guidelines in place, help with training, follow local fire codes and coordinate with local fire departments.”

Banks said the batteries act as a backup to send reserves to the grid. A paper distributed at the meeting listed numerous concerns, with some not accurate.

One concern was the solar panels were made in China. Banks said they were moving China out of their sources because many more locations were now making the panels. Among them is the Enel Solar Manufacturing site in Oklahoma City established through Oklahoma State Development.

Use of water was a concern of the citizens protesting the solar farm. It stated 300,000 gallons of water is used per acre. Banks said water use was minimal.

In regards to concerns of toxicity, Banks said modern solar panels are made with materials you find in our everyday electronics. “Panels are made from copper, aluminum, silicon and are glass encased,” he said.

The sun radiates energy on the panels that goes to the transformer and then goes to the grid. He said the most circulated urban legend is the energy generated in Northwest Oklahoma goes to the Tennessee Valley Authority.

“Our energy goes to the Western Farmers Electric Cooperative and their customer base,” Banks said. The cooperative’s address is listed as Anadarko, Okla.

Although 5,200 acres is listed on the project, Banks said the footprint is 2,000 acres. Ediger pointed out the if some farmers sold sections of their land and others didn’t, they could easily have panels next to their fields, regardless.

The petition urged county and city leaders not to approve the NextEra project. Only land with leases from the owners will be involved, a company spokesman said in February.

Enid City Manager Jerald Gilbert said this issue may be out of the hands of the city. “Our legal council is looking into this and it will work its way through the system,” he said. Still, concerns remain.

Although Banks said battery fires are extremely rare, they are happening.

The Los Angeles Times wrote in a recent article that, “Battery storage is a key piece of California’s clean energy transition. But there’s a problem with fires.”

Lithium-ion batteries can explode or catch fire due to a phenomenon called thermal runaway. Thermal runaway is a chain reaction that occurs when the battery experiences a rapid increase in temperature, leading to the release of energy and potentially causing a catastrophic failure.

Lithium-ion batteries can overheat from being damaged or punctured, being overcharged, being exposed to high temperatures or direct sunlight.

The public debate — and fear around these installations — currently is becoming more widespread, with outright protests occurring in the U.S. and other parts of the world during 2023, reports Nature Magazine.

However, it hasn’t slowed down the building of these battery centers. California is progressive in its energy needs but has strong regulations.

The Times also reported, legislation requires battery storage facilities in the state of California to put in place emergency response and emergency plans, in addition to existing requirements for maintenance and operation to meet standards set by the regulatory California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

Banks said NextEra has researchers always studying ways to make these batteries as safe as possible. “A part of our annual training is in thermal vent and a detailed response plan,” he said.

Some researchers are saying solar farm installations could change the reflectiveness of the land enough to unsettle coastal air circulation. The resulting changes in local weather patterns and rainfall potentially could produce enough water to meet the annual needs of five million people.

The debate will continue. “There is a hazard study done on the Nature website and the CDC analysis of the hydrogen flouride gasses emitted in potential thermal runaway or lightning strike are definitely eye opening,” Ediger said.

“I for sure would not want those huge lithium-ion storage units anywhere near my residence, let alone Pioneer High School and south of Enid where the prevailing winds would carry them directly over the city.”

Trunk R Treat



AMBUCS are ready to give out candy at the annual Trunk R Treat at Oakwood Bowl. Hundreds of kids lined up to go through the parking lot for candy. (Suzie Byrd / Enid News & Eagle)

CANDY CANE CASH

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Cash for the drawing is put up by the Chamber, News & Eagle, Security National Bank, the city of Enid and the Enid Regional Development Alliance.

The drawing event will be inside the Expo Center in northern Enid, with merchants displaying products and services around the outside of the coliseum floor. Christmas music and a Storybook Santa sponsored by Communications Federal Credit Union will add to the festive atmosphere.

Participating merchants are featured in a full-page advertisement elsewhere in today’s newspaper, and they will be displayed in the newspaper daily through Dec. 11. Participating merchants are: 4J’s Tire Service, 310 E. Harvard; Big Country Meat Market, 606 W. Willow; The BoHo Tee pee, 114 N. Independence; Bolenbaugh Insurance Agency, 1024 W. Maple; Boot Barn, 610 S. Cleveland; Brown’s Shoe Fit, Sunset Plaza; Brass Poodle, 1212 N. Van Buren; Carpet Plus, 4212 N. Van Buren Bypass; CC Coins, 813 W. Maine;

Cozy Corner Knits, 2106 W. Willow; Dudes Men’s Store, 610 S. Cleveland; Enid Axe, 104 N. Independence; Enid Super Lube, 1131 W. Willow; Evans Drug, 1106 W. Willow; Evans Express, 110 N. Oakwood; Gala Mattress, 910 W. Maine;

Garfield Furniture, Maine and Grand, downtown; Golden Chick, 202 N. Van Buren and 5610 W. Garriott;

Hometeam Nutrition, 2117 W. Garriott; Infinite Distinctions, 1006 Cline; Jimmy Johns, 2312 W. Garriott; Jumbo Foods, 2311 W. Willow, 1716 S. Van Buren and 221 S. 30th; Kentucky Fried Chicken, 3904 W. Garriott; Kuykendall Hearing Aid Center, 3201 N Van Buren, Suite 200; Main Street Enid, 217 N. Washington;

Manopolis, 218 W. Randolph; Midwest Music, 2013 W. Garriott; Mills Family Creations, 108 W. Randolph; Park Avenue Thrift, 507 S. Grand; Pearson’s Natural Foods, 131 W. Garriott; PDR Plus, 215 N. 4th; Pheasant Run Golf and Entertainment, 1702 Club House Drive; Pioneer Construction, 213 E. Elm; Price Cutter, 917 E. Broadway; Return Engagement; 123 N. Grand;

Snow’s Furniture, 4922 W. Garriott; Soul Sisters Energy & Nutrition 2126 N. Van Buren; T&C Meats, 2510 W. Chestnut; The Commons, 301 N. Oakwood Road; The Square Nutrition, 124 N. Independence; Thistle Creek Mercantile, 610 S. Cleveland; Turquoise Boutique, 101 N. Grand; Walker’s Western Store, 128 W. Randolph; and Wind Woman, windwom-ancreationsok.etsy.com.

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Enid News & Eagle

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