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County to submit two bill requests

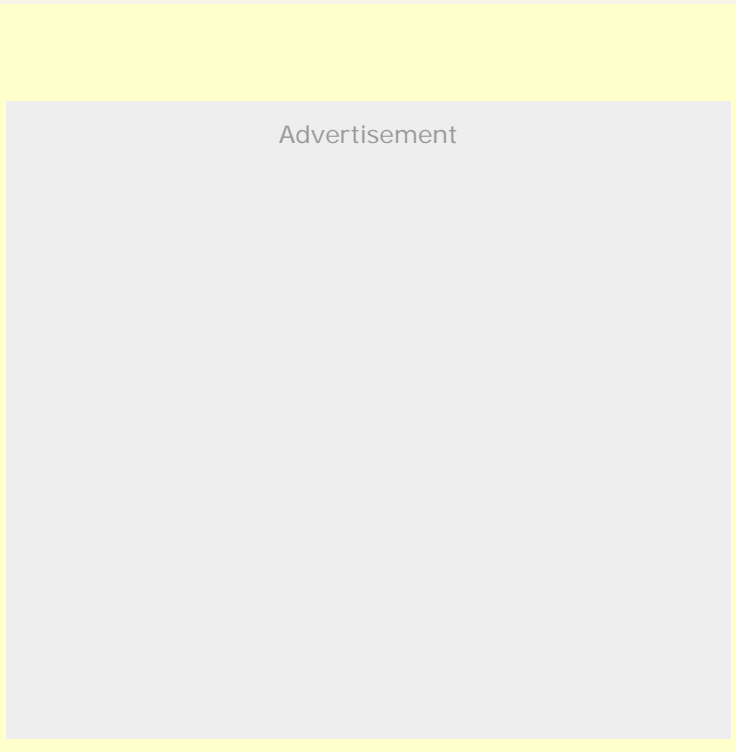
By MARK WAITE
PVT

Nye County will be able to submit two bill draft requests for the upcoming session of the Nevada Legislature, which meets in February.

The pair will involve the apportionment of oil lease royalties from Railroad Valley and the formation of a Nye County water district and topped the wish list of county commissioners' wish list when they met Tuesday.

State Sen. Mike McGinnis, R-Fallon, has agreed to sponsor a request to hike Nye County's sales taxes by a half-percent. But county lobbyist Laura Billman urged commissioners to approve that and another bill draft request to provide some flexibility to use impact fees from new construction to buy equipment as well as buildings -- a request from Commissioner Patricia Cox.

Billman said Nye County could stand to receive \$1.4 million in annual oil royalties paid by the federal government for the lease of land at Railroad Valley where there is an oil refinery. Half of the money presently goes to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and half to the state of Nevada Distributive School Account for education, she said.



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The capture of oil royalties has been a long standing county request since the term of District 36 Assemblyman Roy Neighbors, D-Tonopah, during the late 1990s.

The bill failed to pass during the last legislative session in 2005, as legislators thought it would cost them some financial appropriations, Billman said. She said the candidates for governor all agreed to support Nye County's request by not putting it in the budget to begin with, except for Henderson Mayor Jim Gibson, who hasn't been contacted yet.

One fourth of the money would go to the Nye County School District under the bill, while the rest could be used by the county for roads and public safety. Billman expressed some concern that there aren't adequate hazardous material facilities in Railroad Valley to handle an emergency at the refinery -- only six volunteers and a 1968 fire truck.

Regarding a Nye County water district, Billman told commissioners they could opt for a Chapter 318 General Improvement District without asking the legislature, but it would require a costly mailing to all residents in the district. Commissioner Joni Eastley said a water district approved by the legislature affords the county the most protection.

Nye County Assessor Sandy Musselman wanted a bill draft that would address abandonment of manufactured homes, Eastley said. But she may get relief from a state assessor's association bill draft.

Billman said there's nothing the county can do when manufactured homes are abandoned because they are considered personal property.

Cox said McGinnis suggested contacting the Nevada Association of Counties to sponsor a Nye County bill that would loosen up state restrictions on the use of impact fee revenues, which Cox called about the strictest in the nation. That bill could benefit the entire state, she said.

Cox said McGinnis wouldn't have a problem with the bill as long as the revenues don't go toward personnel.

While Commissioners Roberta "Midge" Carver and Eastley were opposed to putting the sales tax increase on the November ballot, the vote was unanimous in favor of submitting the four bill draft requests, including the sales tax.

"This is one of the times we're going to have to put the cart before the horse. We don't know what the voters are going to do in November," Eastley said of the sales tax question.

Nevada senators and assembly members each get to submit 10 bill draft requests each session, Billman said. But while Eastley wanted to see the bill drafts for approval, Billman said they are usually written by the Legislative

Counsel Bureau and submitted only a couple weeks before the legislature convenes, usually in early February.

Commissioner Candice Trummell inquired about getting a state budget request for money to install a stop light at Highway 160 and Homestead Road.

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