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City Approves SWKO Agreement in Special Meeting

The Liberal City Commission met Monday at 5:30 p.m. for a special meeting regarding an agreement with Southwest Kansas Online which would allow them to keep their equipment on the city water tower.

The city sent SWKO a letter last month informing them they had thirty days to meet and work out an agreement or have their power shut off. SWKO had some communication with the city but did not respond in writing and on Thursday, had their power shut off. The city quickly scheduled a special meeting for Monday to resolve the matter.

The city worked out an agreement with SWKO that requires them to pay $14,400 a year which equals $1,200 a month plus $25 a month for electricity. The agreement had to be approved by the commission before power could be restored to SWKO.

Before the vote, Commissioner Larry Koochel had issues with SWKO claiming they told customers that it was the city's fault for their service being cut over the weekend. Co-owner of SWKO Chris Jewell addressed the commission and claimed that he never told anyone that and that he was ready to just resolve the matter. Mayor Joe Denoyer asked if there was a motion to approve the agreement, and Commissioner Dave Harrison made a motion with Commissioner Tim Long giving a second. After the second and while the vote took place Commissioner Koochel quickly got up, put on his jacket and walked out. City Clerk Debbie Giske asked Koochel while he walked out if his vote is a 'no' but Koochel didn't respond.

Koochel wouldn't talk to members of the media who also tried to ask him questions while he walked out. With Koochel no longer there and Commissioner Bob Carlile being absent there was no longer a quorum which means a meeting cannot occur. However, Attorney Kerry McQueen said the motion was made and seconded and voted on before Koochel had completely left so the vote to approve the agreement with Southwest Kansas Online did still occur while there was a quorum and so the motion passed 3-0. The commission couldn't vote to close the meeting though without a quorum so Mayor Denoyer had to make a declaration to end the meeting. SWKO had their power restored shortly after the meeting.

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