

Meter reading the main topic at the city council meeting

Meter reading was discussed when the Bird City City Council met on Jan. 9.

Frank Serrano, councilman, asked DeAnza Ambrosier, city clerk, to report on her cross-training (city clerk and meter reader). Ms. Ambrosier reported that she enjoyed reading the water meters. She said she used the handheld and the touch-probe and has established that one cord does work fine.

Mr. Serrano suggested that she permanently take over the meter reading responsibilities so that she can read the meters, upload the readings, and create the water bills as part of her duties. Ms. Ambrosier said she would if the council thought it would be a good idea.

Kevin Berens, city attorney, warned the council that it is not a good idea for one employee to have complete control of a specific area that includes city funds. He said in any financial area, a check and balance system should be incorporated.

Hal Sager, councilman, asked Ms. Ambrosier why she has been requiring the maintenance employees to read meters on a certain day each month. She said she doesn't require a specific day each month, but she explained that meters should be read as close to the same day each month as possible in order to obtain the most accurate readings. They are usually read around the 27th day of each month so Ms. Ambrosier requested that they read the meters within the last seven days of the month.

Wade Carmichael, councilman, said he thought giving Brad Schneider, city superintendent, and Russell Jackson, employee, a few days leeway shouldn't hurt anything. Ms. Ambrosier said she does offer leeway...they all agree on a reading date during the Monday morning meetings with the mayor.

She said she didn't even realize there was an issue until now.

Mr. Schneider said that they shouldn't have to go out in a snowstorm to read meters and he should be able to pick the day to read the meters in case they have something else they're doing. Ms. Ambrosier said she's never insisted they read meters in a snowstorm. She said she generally suggests a day and if it's supposed to be cold, raining or snowing, Mr. Schneider will suggest a different day.

Ms. Ambrosier reiterated that Brad or Russell had never given her the impression they had an issue with reading the meters.

Aviation grant
Rod Young, Bressler-Young Aviation, updated the council on the status of the Airfield Maintenance Equipment Grant sponsored by the city. He said George Laliberte flew into Bird City to inspect the equipment purchased and to meet Mr. Young and Ms. Ambrosier. Mr. Laliberte reported that everything looked good and the grant funds will be released.

Mr. Young said he appreciated the city working with him and he will be happy to reimburse the city for any costs associated with sponsoring the grant for the airport.

Water meter at Thresher showgrounds

Rod Klepper, Thresher Association treasurer, said he and the city clerk have been going over previous water bills and reported usage. He said he is hoping the council will be able to work something out with the association for overpaying for water because of a residential water meter being on the same line as the show ground's meter. He said he wasn't concerned about receiving money but perhaps a credit. He invited the council to attend the next Thresher Association Board meeting on Jan. 29. Councilman Sager said he was willing to attend the meeting.

Goals

Councilman Dennis Wright reported he had asked the employees to write down goals they would like to accomplish during 2012. He thought since it is a new year, it'd be a good idea to look forward.

He shared some of the goals submitted by Mr. Schneider which include painting the swimming pool, concrete apron, culvert, and asphalt repair, remodel the office in the City shop.

Mr. Carmichael reminded them that the city used to hold goal-setting meetings. Mr. Sager suggested, and other members agreed, to meet for a goal-setting workshop at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 26, at city hall.

Mr. Wright said the council should start thinking about what the city will need as far as summer help this year. Mr. Schneider said he could really use the extra help.

Mr. Sager said the park is a big job and there is a lot of painting to be done that a summer employee could do. Councilmen Shannon Ambrosier and Mr. Wright suggested hiring someone specifically to take over mowing duties which would free up Brad and Russell for the other projects.

Mr. Schneider expressed concern that a summer helper may tear up the city's equipment if allowed to use it. He said he could find a lot of other work for a summer employee.

Mr. Wright responded that because Mr. Schneider is the city's maintenance supervisor and gets paid a lot more than a summer helper would be paid, the temporary employee should be the one doing the mowing while Mr. Schneider focuses on the projects that require more skill and knowledge. There was no further discussion.

Electricity cost at wells
Mr. Ambrosier asked why the cost of electricity for Well 6 was so much higher than previous years. The clerk submitted a year-end energy report for Wells 6 and 7 which showed Well 6 costing approximately \$6,000 more in 2011 than in 2009 and 2010.

Mr. Schneider said he had shut down Well 7 about a month and a half ago, but he thinks it could be a problem with the electricity meter and will contact Gene Dodd, Midwest Energy, to test the meter.

Mr. Serrano read a letter from Midwest Energy informing the council that, due to such an increase in energy demand, the billing rate for Well 6 will be changed from "General Service Small" to "General Service Medium".

In other business

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- Councilman Ambrosier asked Mr. Schneider about the warrant for items purchased at Owens Implement and Supply in Benkelman. Mr. Schneider said he had to travel to Benkelman because the items were not available locally.

- Mr. Schneider said he and Mr. Jackson will be remodeling the office in the city's maintenance shop. They will be putting up sheetrock, redoing some texturing, baseboards and painting the walls and floor.

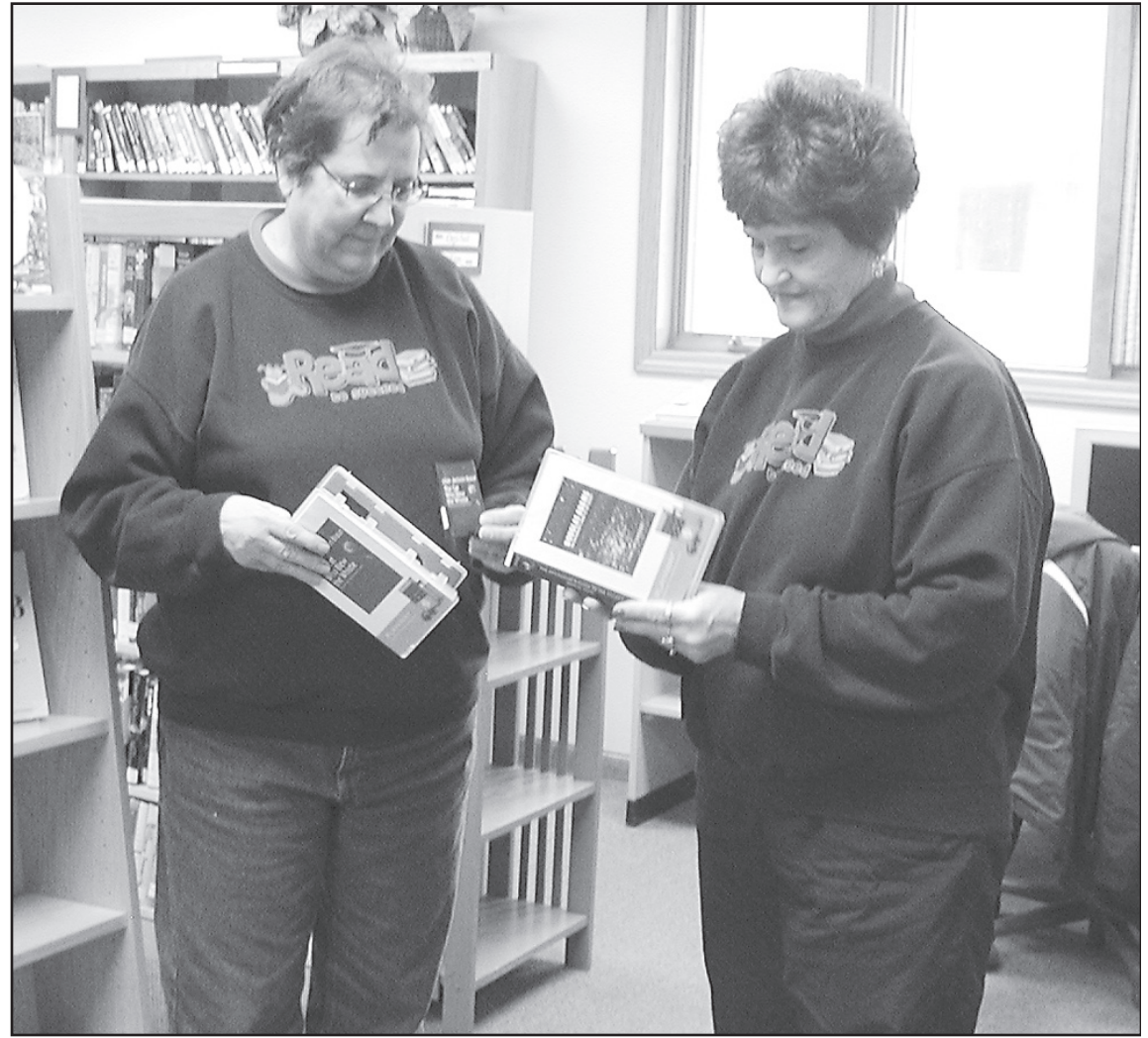
- Mr. Carmichael asked the clerk if she had a copy of the contract between the city and Ardis Boersma. The clerk said she will make sure he receives a copy.

- The matter of holding council meetings twice a month was once again discussed but it was decided that if an issue comes up before the regularly scheduled meeting, a special meeting would be called.

- City attorney Kevin Berens said he called a party to inquire about demolition material recycling but they haven't returned his call. The issue was tabled for the February meeting.

- The council approved to pay \$39,000 for the completion of two rehabilitation projects. Contractor, Randall Construction, will be paid \$36,635 for the two projects; North Central Regional Planning Commission, \$2,100 for three final inspections and three lead clearance tests, and city of Bird City, \$318 for reimbursement of costs associated with the grant.

Editor's note: The above article was taken from the unapproved minutes of the Jan. 9 Bird City City Council meeting.



CHECKING OUT the digital books were Pat Hammond and Linda Keith from NWK Library Systems. Times staff photo by Norma Martinez.

Library gets new books, DVDs

The past week was a good time to stay in out of the cold and the wind, and snuggle up with a good book or watch DVDs. Now is also a good time to check out the books, DVDs and CDs at the Bird City Library, as Pat Hammond and Linda Keith were there on the 18th with their van from the Northwest Kansas Library System. Both, Ms. Hammond and Ms. Keith are

in their 28th year of bringing the van to Bird City every two months and rotating from 600 - 700 books each time.

During the rotation process, they go through all the books on the shelves and weed out all the books that are over five years old. These books are then put in a give-away held at the Colby library and the 23 librarians go through them and select the books they wish to keep for their libraries. All the former books are then pulled and the shelves are

restocked with fresh collections of children's books, large print books, adult books for all ages, CDs and DVDs.

One of the newest items they provide is their Digital Playaway books for those who would rather listen to the book rather than read.

Pat and Linda both work together as a team and serve all 23 libraries in the northwest region of Kansas, as well Northwest Kansas Vocational College in Goodland and Colby Community College.

Former graduate receives honor award

Bird City has a high rate of college graduates, and many who are on the list of receiving high honors and awards.

One of the most recent honors was awarded to Donald Atkinson M.D., a surgical oncologist and vice chair of surgery at the West Penn Allegheny Health System, Pittsburgh, Pa. He recently received the Courage Award from the National Pancreas Foundation for his commitment to improved management of patients with neoplastic diseases of the pancreas. He also received the Dean's Special Award for Excellence in clinical teaching from Drexel University. In addition to practicing sur-

gical oncology and surgery department administration, he directs the Temple University and Drexel University student programs in surgery at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh.

Dr. Atkinson grew up in Bird City, graduated from Bird City High School in 1964 and after that the University of Kansas. He and his family presently live in Sewickley, Pa.



Atkinson

Producers reminded of program enrollment

Dennis Mote, acting county executive director for the Farm Service Agency, reminds producers that enrollment for the 2012 Direct and Counter-cyclical Program and the Average Crop Revenue Election program will begin on Jan. 23, and continue through June 1.

The 2008 farm bill states that no advanced payments will be

issued for 2012. The entire Direct and Counter-cyclical Program payment will be issued after Oct. 1. New contracts are required annually and all signatures must be obtained by the June 1 deadline.

Contact the Cheyenne County Farm Service Agency office and set up an appointment to begin the enrollment process.

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Fri., Jan. 27, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

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