

## Open house well attended for area nursing home

By Karen Krien

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The Cheyenne County Commissioners held a special meeting Sunday afternoon to discuss future plans of the Good Samaritan Village.

Present at the meeting besides the commissioners were Randy Fitzgerald, operational director for the Good Samaritan Society, Jeff Paulsen, Village administrator; Kevin Berens, Village advisory board member, and Terry Miller, county clerk.

At the last commissioners' meeting, they had asked that Mr. Fitzgerald meet with them as they had questions that needed to be answered before they felt they could continue with the lease.

Following the October 2010 fire which shut the nursing home down for almost five months, the Good Samaritan Society had agreed that they would open up the west wing for 22 residents, remodel the middle wing which had been mostly destroyed which included putting in three private rooms and some offices, and get the entire facility up and running. In the meantime, they paid wages when the nursing home was not operating, paid unemployment along with several other things, all adding up to \$800,000.

Now that the remodeling had been completed, it was time to talk about the future. Mr. Fitzgerald had informed the county commissioners that the Good Samaritan Society did not want to own the nursing home but were interested in leasing the facility. They would run the nursing home one year after the remodeling was done, then they would turn the facility, along with the apartments (not the home health facility) to the county for \$1.

The commissioners had earlier understood that Mr. Fitzgerald was not interested in selling the home to the commissioners unless they had a plan in place to build an assisted living facility.

At the Jan. 31 meeting, Andy Beikman, commissioner, said that, if this was the case, he did not think taking over the facility was a good idea. There is no way, he said, that the public could



**RANDY FITZGERALD commends the community and staff for their support after the October 2010 fire.**

be informed, and an election held to see if the public was interested in floating a bond and getting any plans or building started.

Mr. Fitzgerald said originally, that was what he had planned but, he said, he is not going to hold the county to that.

In good faith, he said, I think the county and the people will see the need for assisted living and go forward.

"I am thoroughly impressed with the county and people," Mr. Fitzgerald said. "There are some counties that would have closed their facility after the fire."

By not being pushed to come up with the money and build immediately, Mr. Beikman said he thought people would be in favor of building an assisted living. In fact, he said, there have been people with different ideas of what could be done.

Before signing a lease, the commissioners said they would like to see some pro forma so they know where the business is financially.

Seeing the figures, Dale Patton, commissioner, said, is in the best interest of the county.

Mr. Fitzgerald said Mr. Paulsen could meet with the commissioners once a month and show them the profit-and-loss figures. Mr. Paulsen said he would be glad to meet with them, adding that the nursing home, after the fire was losing money. But, he said, as the beds were filled, there was less of a deficit. With 35 beds, he expects there to be a profit. In fact, he said when they had 30 beds filled, there should be a profit, or at least breaking even.

There is a bill in the legislature that is indicating there will be some "cheap" money for building assisted living facilities. Those who have some plans made for assisted living may have a better chance for getting some of the money, Mr. Patton said.

A preliminary plan which had been drawn up for the Good Samaritan Society projected assisted living for 10 people and 12 more



**ACTIVITY DIRECTOR, Cathy Loop visits with Pat Brunow, former Good Samaritan employee, in her newly remodeled room.**

Times staff photos by Karen Krien

private skilled nursing beds. They would use the same kitchen, laundry and other services so to make money, the addition of the assisted living and private rooms is necessary.

In August, the taxpayers voted to raise 6 mills or approximately \$200,000 a year to help keep the Village doors open. The commissioners agreed that, if the money was not needed for expenses, then it would be put into a capital improvement fund. The money would be put toward building the assisted living.

Before an assisted living facility can be built, plans and preliminary drawings will be needed and there will need to be an election to float a bond. The St. Francis Community Foundation has money for a feasibility study.

### Lease discussed

The commissioners finally got down to discussing the lease. A draft had been sent to the commissioners several months ago. But the commissioners still had ques-

tions.

It was decided that the county and the Society would split the profit 50-50. The county, after buying the facility for \$1 in a year would be responsible for repairs and upkeep of the nursing home, the apartments and grounds as well as the contents of the nursing home. The Society would be responsible for employees, benefits, liability and unemployment, etc.

They talked about running a "tight" facility so money could be made. Mr. Fitzgerald said he operates all of his facilities, whether they are owned or leased, on a tight budget. In the area, Oberlin, Atwood and Goodland have Good Samaritan Society leased nursing homes.

Mr. Paulsen said that instead of going to the Society when there are major breakdowns or repairs, he would come to the county commissioners.

The commissioners will be preparing the county's budget in

June; the Society prepares their budget in the fall. However, they felt they could work together so the county would know how much money to budget next year.

The sooner the lease is prepared and signed, Mr. Fitzgerald said, the better. The staff is wanting to know where they stand. Before it can be signed, Mr. Fitzgerald will need to make sure his board has reviewed it.

Mr. Fitzgerald took the lease with him and said he would be talking to Kari Gilliland, county attorney, this week. The commissioners asked that he be available for a conference call at the March 15 meeting. He told them he is generally only three hours away and would be glad to meet in person with them if they wanted.

Mr. Patton suggested that the lease be in place by July 1.

The Society has been here for a long time and we have made a commitment to the people and the community, Mr. Fitzgerald said.



**DOING THE PAPER WORK — Dee Dorsch and Bonnie Burr fill out the grant application for the center.**

Times staff photo by Normas Martinez

## Representative and senator to visit area

People are urged to gather at Cuppa Joe Espresso in St. Francis from 3:30 to 4:40 p.m. on Saturday. Kansas State Senator Ralph Ostmeier along with Representative Ward Cassidy will be seeking your ideas on issues being addressed in the Kansas legislature.

Information will be presented from many of the issues being considered and

discussion will be held on anticipated issues and their impact on all of us. Everyone is urged to attend.

Earlier in the day, they will be at Phillipsburg from 8 to 9 a.m.; Norton, 9:45 to 10:45 a.m.; Oberlin, 11:30 to 1 p.m. and in Atwood, 12:45 to 2:45 p.m. In Atwood, they will be at Williams Brothers Grocery.

## Services will be held on Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday Service will be held at 7 p.m. on Feb. 22 at Immanuel United Methodist Church, 116 4th Street, Bird City.

Ash Wednesday inaugurates the season of Lent. In ancient days, people marked times of fasting, prayer, repentance, mourning and remorse by placing ashes on their foreheads.

During Lent, ancient Christians mourn-

ed their sins and repented of them; it was appropriate for them to show their sincerity by placing ashes on their foreheads. The custom has survived in the church today. Penitence and fasting are two distinctive practices of Lent.

Join us on Ash Wednesday, which marks the onset of a period of sober reflection, self-examination, and spiritual redirection.

## Senior citizens apply for grant

The Bird City Senior Citizens have applied for a \$5,000 federal grant to repair, insulate and paint the back room of the center.

This upgrade, in addition to the new insulated air ducts installed this fall should make the building energy efficient and lower the utilities.

Last week there were 24 in attendance for coffee and rolls

on Monday, and this week there were 23. There were 27 who registered at the birthday party on Monday at noon. With the increased attendance and improved facility, the center is an important part of the community.

Don't forget, coffee and rolls are available to everyone of all ages on Monday from 8:30 to 10 a.m.

