

Natural resources are high on secretary's list

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help water including working on a contract to lease water from the Almena Irrigation District, which will help the Norton Reservoir; to purchasing the Circle K Ranch and retire the water rights which will be bought with it and making the land a public hunting area; and to use land, which is expected to be donated to the state by the Menninger Foundation as a public park with water-front access to the Kansas River.

Norton Reservoir, he said, was built as a place for recreation and irrigation. Irrigators have the water rights to pull so much water out of the lake each year.

Gradually, said Mr. Hayden the lake started to go down. In many years the lake water was so low that it couldn't be used for irrigation and the recreational uses were lost.

During those early dry years, many irrigators put down wells.

The wet years of 1993 and 1995 refilled the lake.

After almost 30 years the lake was finally back to the level it had been in the 1960s, he said.

For about four or five years after that there was tremendous recreational and economic use opportunities at the lake.

Then the area entered into the drought. The lake is now about eight feet above dead pool. When it gets to dead pool no water will be able to be drawn off.

If those eight feet of water are drawn off the lake, said Mr. Hayden, there will be no recreational value. The boat docks won't be able to be used and the park will be further from the water.

What has happened, he said, is the area is over appropriated — that is there are more water rights out there than there is water available.

Mr. Hayden said they have to find a balance between what is taken out of the lake and the amount of water that is recharged. The long term solution is to retire enough water rights to irrigate 1,000 and 1,200 acres.

He said the state is proposing to lease the Almena Irrigation District water rights for \$120,000 a year for the next two years.

Mr. Hayden said the money is in the budget although if the agreement works like planned it will have to be approved by the legislature.

Hopefully, he said, this leads to the buying of water rights in other areas.

Mr. Hayden said the state would also like to purchase the Circle K Ranch and its water rights, which is owned by the City of Hays.

Mr. Hayden said there is a proposal to buy the land and then the state will retire the water rights. The land is along the Arkansas River, he said and will make a great place for public hunting.

The state hasn't done something like this since Cheyenne Bottoms, in Great Bend, he said.

Hays purchased the land hoping to run a pipeline to town for mu-

nicipal water.

However, the proposal never worked out. Mr. Hayden said his department is working to convince Hays and Russell to build a reverse osmosis system off of Wilson Reservoir. The water is close to both cities but it is too salty to use for municipal water.

The federal government, said Mr. Hayden, will reimburse the state on a purchase like this for public hunting up to 75 percent.

The last project Mr. Hayden talked about was a new state park his department is working on in Topeka. When the Menninger Foundation moved to Texas last year they left behind a 88-90 acre parcel next to Cedar Crest, the Governor's mansion and a frontage to the Kansas River.

Mr. Hayden said he asked for money in the budget to start the park, but that still needs to get approved.

"Even in these tight budget times," said Mr. Hayden, "we do have some exciting things happening."

He said he feels real optimistic about the future.

Gary Anderson from Oberlin, asked Mr. Hayden if the state has any vision for Sappa Park which used to be a lake just outside the city limits.

Mr. Hayden said he has thought about it a lot especially after the lake in Atwood was brought back to life. He said in Atwood they had to try two to three times to pass a bond and the money from that helped fix the lake. Today it is very low because of the drought and there is very little stream flow.

Lake Atwood and Sappa Lake suffered the same fate from silt and low water levels, he said.

Mr. Hayden said one option is a wet land. Even if the silt in the lake was removed, he said, there is very little likelihood of getting enough water in the creek to sustain anything.

Mr. Hayden told a story about Liberal where the city uses storm run off and sewer water and runs it through several wet lands and then has three lakes set up with the water that is used for recreation.

Another man asked if Oberlin would need the same kind of water rights to impound or pump water into the lake bed?

Mr. Hayden said it is the same process to get the water rights whether it is pumped or not. He said that is the other option for the city to start buying water rights.

John Mickey from Atwood asked how many acres are in the Almena Irrigation District? Mr. Hayden said around 4,000 to 4,500 acres.

Have you got any special plans for Cedar Bluff Reservoir, asked Bill Duncan from Oberlin.

Mr. Hayden said the state bought the water rights in the Cedar Bluff Reservoir when it was empty. Now it is full and in great shape. The state has been investing in the area putting in five new cabins, new showers and a new office.

Program gives learning boost

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is one of 12 counties served by the center in northwest Kansas.

Norton Head Start operates a bus service for children whose parents can not provide transportation for them. Students will be picked up at day care if their parents cannot get off work to take them or if the family does not have any form of transportation.

Children who attend Head Start participate in stimulating educational activities. They also receive free medical and dental care, have

healthy meals and snacks and enjoy playing indoors and outdoors in a safe setting. Services are offered to meet the special needs of children with disabilities.

Norton Head Start meets from noon until 3:20 p.m., weekdays at the Norton United Methodist Church starting their day with lunch. For additional information you can check out their website at www.nortonhs@nkes.org or call Keva Scheib, Head Start director in Oakley at (785) 672-3125, ext. 144.

School board reviews projects

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replace the floor, then the district would just treat for termites

• Re-crown and re-sod Travis Field, add soaker irrigation, \$65,000.

Junior High Principal Larry Mills said this is not dire yet, but in two or three years it will be.

• Install underground sprinkler in front of Eisenhower Elemen-

tary, \$1,000.

Mr. Hillman said the sprinkler system would be in the grass from the building to the parking lot. He said they have an underground sprinkler from the parking lot to the street and that it works very well.

The board will take action on the possible projects at the Feb. 9 meeting.

Travelers should expect road work

Roadwork is what people traveling west of Norton can expect in the near future.

For the past several months, different companies have been preparing for the construction along U.S. 36, moving telephone and power lines. Most recently, Prairie Land Electric has been moving their power lines along the north side of the highway further north.

Line Superintendent Earl Hansen said they have two ways of moving the lines. The first is to put up a new pole, switch the line from the old pole to the new one, and then take down the old one, or sometimes they have to put up new lines altogether. It depends on how far the new line is from the old one, he said.

Kansas Department of Transportation Public Involvement Liaison Tom Hein said construction along U.S. 36 will be from West Avenue in Norton to the west junction of U.S. 36 and U.S. 383, or as

it is more often called, the six mile corner.

He said they plan on making each driving lane 12 feet wide and the shoulder 10 feet with the shoulder being part asphalt and part turf. The new road will be built on the same alignment as the old. A pilot car will be used to get traffic from one end of the construction area to the other during daylight hours and stoplights will be put up at the two bridges, so one lane will always be open.

Mr. Hein said they plan to award the contract on Feb. 16, so he doesn't know who will be doing the roadwork or how much it is going to cost.

He said most of the work will be done in the summer and fall, but may carry over into the winter and possibly the spring. He said they are hoping the road and bridge work will be finished in the fall with just some shoulder work to be done in the winter.

A crew from Prairie Land Electric switches the power lines from old poles to new ones just west of Norton on U.S. 36 in preparation for upcoming construction.

— Telegram photos by Veronica Monier



Economic development high priority to Chamber

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include all the cities.

When the last Chamber director left economic development sort of fell apart, Mr. Miller observed. He said that he was under the impression that when Ms. Reed took over the Chamber she was not to deal with economic development.

Ms. Reed said that she does do economic development but its mostly just to send people to the county or to whomever she thinks could best help them.

In other business, the commissioners:

• Decided to pay bills on Monday, Jan. 26, since the commissioners will be in Topeka attending the Supreme Court hearing on their lawsuit over food animal confinement. rules on Thursday, Jan. 29, making it difficult for them to get back by the end of the month.

• Talked to Noxious Weed Supervisor Reggie Beckman about spraying this spring. They told him that he would get a \$1,500 raise this year. Half will be paid now and one-half after the weeds get sprayed.

Mr. Beckman said that he has stockpiled chemicals as prices are going up and is ready to start spraying roads and pastures. He said that he has some requests to spray thistle in pastures. The commissioners agreed to cost share spraying of private property.

Mr. Miller suggested that the county set up a booth at the annual Norton County home and ag show to show farmers and ranchers what the weed department is doing.

• Gave *Norton Telegram* reporter Brandon Gay a copy of the commissioners public statement on animal confinement. Mr. Gay is doing an article for the paper on

the county's lawsuit on the subject. The issue will be heard by the Kansas Supreme Court at 9 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 29, in Topeka. The commissioners suggested Mr. Gay talk to County Attorney Doug Sebelius.

• Visited with County Health Nurse Gina Frack on memorandums of understanding between Norton County and seven other counties on the sharings of staff, supplies and equipment in case of an emergency. The other counties are Phillips, Rooks, Graham, Decatur, Rawlins, Thomas and Cheyenne. Mrs. Frack said that the memorandums are being checked by the various county attorneys.

The commissioners agreed to hire a firm to take care of any problems with the government privacy regulations in relation to their health insurance for employees

including the dental and possible pharmacy programs. Mrs. Frack said that she had flu vaccine for those 6 months up to 3 years old.

• Was presented with a list equipment used by the road and bridge department along with the cost of fuel and repairs by department head Tom Brannan.

Mr. Brannan said that his crews were burning brush and dead tree piles around the county after it snowed.

The county still has between 30,000 and 45,000 tons of millings left to put on roads, Mr. Brannon told the commissioners.

• Went into a 15 minute closed session to discuss the acquisition of real estate.

• Discussed progress on the Mitigation 20/20 program, a state-mandated emergency response study, with Alvin Mapes, who is working to get the project handled.

Area group attends state conference in Hays

Members of the Norton County Family and Community Education attended the annual state conference in Hays on Oct. 21-22.

"Visit our Past...Reach for Our Future" was the theme with 200 attending.

Heloise, renowned household hint newspaper columnist, was the keynote speaker.

Attending the meeting from the Norton area were Dolores Fitzmaurice, Phyllis Harting, Alberta Metheny, Francis Burd, Darlene Day, Ruth Lofgreen and Jean Zachow.

Participants toured the Hays

area and attended sessions on the history of hats, 1800s home remedies, quilt labeling, holiday breads, Civil War soldiers, slips and starts, organ grinders, and group programs and projects.

Information about the group is available from Cedoris McMullen, chairman, at 418 S. Second, Norton, or (785) 877-2847 or at the Extension Office at the county courthouse.

For further information about the National Association for Family and Community Education call (877) 712-4477 or visit the website at www.nafce.org.

Water level continues to decline, proposal may help

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below 2288," Nelson said. The level of 2290 feet (and above) has been the agreed point at which the district is allowed to start irrigating for its irrigators.

"I think this is an agreement that is good for everyone involved," Nelson reported. "Subject to the irrigators approval, and the state getting the money it will be set into motion."

The Almena Irrigation District will hold its annual meeting with the irrigators on March 2.

Karl Kohfeld, acting as a liaison between the two negotiating parties, urged the ultimate goal to be a buy-out by Wildlife and Parks, but realized how time consuming the process will be with the state agencies involved.

"I have the utmost confidence that Secretary of Kansas Depart-

ment of Wildlife and Parks Mike Hayden will get this to happen," Kohfeld said. "It is very important to save these last eight feet of water, but obviously the Irrigation District needs to be compensated for those eight feet."

Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commissioner Doug Sebelius agrees that the proposal will be very beneficial to both interested parties. "This is a time when we definitely need to be moving toward a much different attitude when considering water as a natural resource," Sebelius said. "Agriculture is such a big user, in terms of water-as it has to be-but we now need to push toward an attitude of sustainability."

And sustainability is hopefully something this agreement will do in terms of water for the Keith Sebelius Reservoir.

Have a story idea? Call 877-3361 and let us know ... we'd love to hear about it!