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Tuesday
April 20, 2004

Norton, Kansas
Home of Mary Schoen

Briefly

Food distribution to be this week

The Norton County Senior Citizens will be distributing government surplus food at four locations this week.

On Wednesday from 9-11 a.m., food will be available at both the Lenora and Almena Senior Centers. Distribution will take place from 2-5 p.m. at the Norton Senior Center that day also. On Saturday, from 2:30-3:30 p.m., food will be distributed at the library in Clayton.

Food available includes apple juice, apricot halves, raisins, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, vanilla pudding and bran flakes.

For more information, call Ramona Pabian, 877-5352.

Safe driving course planned

First Security Bank, Norton, is sponsoring an American Association of Retired Persons "55 Alive" safe driving class from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday and Friday at the Norton County Hospital.

After completion of the eight-hour course, a certificate will be issued entitling the holder to a discount on their vehicle insurance. This is a classroom project using workbooks, lectures, videos and group discussion. No actual driving is required.

There is a \$10 fee. To register contact Anise Gill 877-5170 or Rhonda Reusink at First Security, 877-3313.

Weather

Forecast:

Tonight — Partly cloudy and breezy with lows in the upper 30s. Northwest winds 15 to 25 mph decreasing to around 5 mph after midnight.

Wednesday — Partly cloudy then mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of thunderstorms in the afternoon. Highs around 70. Southwest winds around 5 mph.

Wednesday Night — Mostly cloudy with thunderstorms likely. Lows in the lower 40s. Southeast winds 5 to 10 mph. Chance of thunderstorms 70 percent.

Thursday — Mostly cloudy with thunderstorms likely. Cooler with highs in the lower 50s. East winds 5 to 15 mph. Chance of thunderstorms 70 percent.

Howell report:

Friday High 84, Low 44
Saturday High 90, Low 66
Sunday High 88, Low 40
Monday High 69, Low 50, .02 Precip.
Week ago High 51, Low 25
Month ago High 82, Low 40
Year ago High 54, Low 39
April precipitation !.64
Year-to-date Precipitation 4.31
(Readings taken at the Paul and Pat Howell farm 10 Miles North and 1/3 Mile East of Norton)

Prayer

Dear God, help me with my faith today. Strengthen my resolve to trust your presence in all the times of my life. Amen



"My Friends and I" from Houston performed at the Norton East Campus Sunday, with music and humor, featured Norton native Neva Rae McCreary Schoof (center). Her friends were Judy Hillegeist, left, and Jane White. — Telegram photo by Carol Erlenbusch

Commissions worry about cost of digging

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

Now that it looks like Norton County will get a new landfill, commissioners and department heads are starting to look at how to get it dug and ready for trash.

On Monday Road and Bridge Supervisor Tom Brannan and Solid Waste Supervisor Curt Archibald brought blue prints to the weekly commission meeting and discussed digging.

Mr. Brannan said that the original estimates, done about two years ago, called for a cost of 50 cents per cubic yard of dirt to dig a landfill pit. However, he said, he has talked to some contractors and the cost today is between \$1 and \$1.20 to move dirt without estimating any other equipment, such as a blade to cut the slope as the dozer digs.

The county is planning to move about 40,000 cubic feet of dirt, he said, which is between one-third and one-half of a "cell," or full-size trash pit. The Norton landfill will have six cells.

Mr. Archibald said that the 40,000-foot pit should last three to five years with good compaction.

Mr. Brannan told the commissioners that if his people do the work it will take at least three people a month to dig.

The commissioners asked Mr. Brannan to figure how much it would cost the county to do the work, as opposed to the cost of having a contractor do it. The county would probably have to buy some equipment to do the work, they noted so that has to be figured into the costs.

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Airport rebuilding bids come in under estimate

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

It looks like Werner Construction of Hastings, Neb., will get to rebuild the Norton Airport apron and taxi way.

The company said they could do the project for less than their competitors during the bid opening on Monday at the Norton County Commission meeting.

Although nine packets were sent out only two contractors bid on the project. The base airport project includes the apron and taxi way.

The additive items, which will be pulled if the construction costs go over the amount that the government is willing to pay, include approaches off the runway.

Werner bid \$184,860 for the base project and \$43,064 for the additive. The company said it would take 65 days to complete the work.

The other bidder, Wrench Construction of Beloit., bid \$188,643 for the base project and \$51,115 for the additive with 100 days to complete the work.

The engineer's estimate for the project was \$239,071 for the base and \$40,323 for the addition.

Norton City Administrator Rob Lawson attended the bid opening and discussed the bids and how much the city and county will have to put into the project, which is being mostly paid for, 90 percent, with state transportation (Continued on Page 5)



Northern Valley royalty were crowned during the prom banquet Saturday evening. Holding court are seniors Queen Mandi Redeker and King Ryan Shearer. — Telegram photo by Kristen Brands

Winds cause lots of damage

People, who are used to the wind's constant blowing, had to take note Sunday as wind speeds picked up, causing damage across northwest Kansas.

Gusts that started Saturday evening didn't really pick up until Sunday morning, starting in eastern Colorado and then moving into Kansas, said a spokesperson for the National Weather Service in Goodland.

The Goodland office had reports coming in all day with the highest clocking in around the 55 to 60 mile per hour range, he said. A person in Lenora reported 55 mile per hours gusts, while winds in Bird City shrilled up to 61 miles per hour and in Hoxie up to 60.

They received no reports from Norton, however, he said.

As for damage, the winds cause a 7 3/4 inch tree branch to come down in Atwood, as well as minor house damage and several felled trees in Goodland. Powerlines were ripped down in Oberlin and traffic suffered from a 17-car pile up along I-70 near the Kansas/Colorado border, causing several injuries and a fatality.

In Norton, tree branches were torn (Continued on Page 5)

Digging landfill expensive

Commissioners look for cheapest method to build

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"We have to figure out over the life of this landfill (how much it will cost)," Commission Chairman Leroy Lang said. "We have 12 of these pits to dig."

"You have to dig two holes in 10 years," Commission John Miller said, figuring that each one will last about five years. "And, sometime in the lifespan of that second pit, you have to start digging a third one."

"If we started digging a full 100,000 yard cell, it would take 600 hours," Mr. Brannan said.

There is a public comment period through May 17 for anyone who doesn't want the landfill. After that the state has another 60 days to accept or deny Norton's application.

The address to send in complaints was in last Tuesday's *Norton Telegram*.

Mr. Miller reminded Mr. Brannan that once the county has most of its roads covered with asphalt millings, a project which should be completed within the next few months, workers should be free to do other things, such as digging the pit.

He suggested finding out what it will cost the county and also put the project out for bids. Then the county can see whether it would be better to have someone else do the project or do it with road and bridge employees.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Told Mr. Brannan that the county wants to save the detour around the viaduct on U.S. 36 at the east end of Norton, once the bridge is finished. Commissioner Dean Kruse said the county wants to keep the detour for future economic development.

- Asked Mr. Brannan to check on road signs to see if any were lost in the wind last week.

- Held a 15-minute closed session to discuss non-elected personnel with Steve Zodrow with Mapes and Miller, accountants.

- Talked to Acting Ambulance Director Andy Nielsen about interviewing candidates for a third full-time emergency medical technician job.

- Heard that the ambulance service is planning to celebrate Emergency Medical Services week on Wednesday, May 19, with a barbecue, car seat checks, children's games and a car extrication demonstration at the ambulance building.

- Set a public hearing for Monday, May 3, to allow Natoma Corp. to expand. Gail Boller, president and owner of Natoma, said that the company has its financing and is ready to start dirt work.

Deer causes accident

On April 8 the Norton County Sheriff's Department responded to an accident involving a deer on County Road R1.

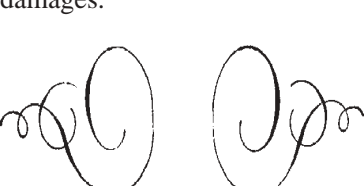
A 1986 Ford Ranger driven by Melinda Anderson, 31, of Alma, was northbound on the county road when a deer jumped from the west ditch and struck the Ranger.

Over \$500 in damages was reported. No injuries were reported.

Officers from the Sheriff's Department covered a second deer accident occurring on K-383 on April 11.

Marylyn Barnett, 23, Kearney, was driving her 1999 Mazda four-door east on K-383 when she was unable to avoid a deer.

No injuries were reported, and the Mazda sustained over \$500 in damages.



Pauline Poage and Sharon Smith of Heritage Quilters, arranged some mini-quilts at The Sewing Box in downtown Norton. The quilts, along with other items, will be auctioned off at 2:30 p.m., Sunday.

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

Mini quilts go on block

Needles have been flying as members of the Heritage Quilters have been preparing for their 6th annual mini-quilt auction.

Mini-quilts of every color, style and size are on display at The Sewing Box in downtown Norton and at The Town and Country Kitchen Restaurant, East U.S. 36.

The quilts will be on display through Friday.

The auction, slated to be held Sunday at the Norton American Legion Building, will feature over 50 small quilts/wall hangings/table runners.

Viewing will begin at 1:30 with the auction, by Don McMullen, getting underway at 2:30. Door prizes will be given away.

Proceeds from the auction are used to help pay for school quilts for Northern Valley and Norton; Christmas stockings for foster children; and for trunk shows and workshops.

Admission of \$2 includes a program and a dessert.

County opens bids for airport

(Continued from Page 1)

money. Steve Berland, who works for BG Consulting, the engineers for the project, opened the bids and checked the calculations. He told the commissioners that he would check out Werner, which he thought would probably win the bid, and recommend signing the contracts.

It will take a few weeks to get all the necessary bonds and paperwork done, he said. He will get the information to both the Norton City Council and the county commission as soon as possible so that work had get started.

Others attending the meeting were airport board members Ivan Kingham, Larry Nelson and Delvis Miller, a representative from Whitney Construction, a subcontractor, and a representative from Werner.

High winds cause damage

(Continued from Page 1)

down and roofs were damaged, including at *The Norton Telegram*.

The high winds also caused problems for several fire departments, which were fighting a large fire in Densmore Sunday. It took the firemen from around 1 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. to put it out.

Logan Fire Chief Sonny Ruff said the terrain was terrible and everybody had all they could handle just containing each part of the blaze.

Health insurance high on commission agenda

By VERONICA MONIER

The Norton County commissioners are checking all of their options on health insurance.

Karol Roadhouse, account executive for Group Benefit Specialists of Wichita, met with the commissioners Monday afternoon and said she thought before they made a decision on which group to use to help negotiate insurance benefits, they should hear what her company could provide.

She said Group Benefit Specialists has a range of services, including evaluating the county's insurance plan, preparation of and distribution of bids, implementation of insurance plan, on-going consultation and renewal negotiations.

Ms. Roadhouse said she would always be up front and honest with the county about what is going on.

"I'm here to work for you" she said. "It's in my best interest to tell you the truth about what's going on."

Commissioner John Miller asked how many insurance carriers she had available to her.

Ms. Roadhouse said Group Benefits Services has about 60 providers on its list, but all insurance companies of Kansas were available to her. But, she said, not all of the companies are right for counties and municipalities.

"This is a long process," she said. "It takes a while to find the right plan."

Commissioner Leroy Lang asked if she had ever represented any counties.

She said she hasn't represented any counties, but had handled municipalities and school districts. But, she said, her partners might have counties as clients; they work heavily in Geary County.

Commissioner Miller said whoever the county goes with, this can't be looked at as a one-year commitment, but rather a three-year commitment.

"The big thing is convincing the employees that any new policy is worth it," he said. "The transition period is the hardest."

"We're looking at the long term here," she said. "I like working with employees and committees. The thing they have to understand that the cost is determined by their usage of the policy."

"It's my job to let you know the differences between insurance companies and to let the employees know what those differences are and to work with them so they understand the policy."

Commissioner Leroy Lang asked about pooling with other groups or municipalities.

To combine with other groups, Ms. Roadhouse said, you have to have five groups and generate over a \$1 million in premiums, and you really need to work with groups that are more than 25 employees.

"We need to know all of this," said Commissioner Kruse. "When our employees come and ask us why we didn't do something the

way someone else did, we need to know what they did and what's going on with it."

Commissioner Lang asked how much she would be able to save the county.

"That's hard to say," she said. "But I will guarantee that if you think I have cost you money, then we don't need to work together."

Commissioner Miller said they have one other individual they have to interview and then will have to decide which company to use.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Met with Jay Holste about the municipal tennis courts. Mr. Holste gave an update on the money he's raised so far. He said the only thing he still needed to raise money for was to have the net poles put in, which would cost about another \$5000 if it is professionally done and will include the nets to go on the poles and the cranks to tighten them with.

He said he still had about \$8,000 left to raise and anything the

county could add would be great.

Mr. Holste said they are going to have a fund-raiser on May 2 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the tennis courts.

After asking several questions about the condition of the courts and how long the repairs would last, the commissioners decided to donate \$1,000 to the project.

- Received quarterly reports for the Northwest Kansas Juvenile Services from Peggy Pratt. She also gave a report on general operations and said they had money for 2005.

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