

City meeting: Sludge compactor needed, council told

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 Friday after Thanksgiving. There are problems with the lift station at the sewer plant, said Mr. Lawson, which will be addressed soon, and the city is going to have to purchase a sludge compactor. Right now, the city hauls out 100 gallons of wet sludge, which can be turned into six gallons of dry sludge with the compactor. Councilman Ron Briery wanted to know if rates would be increased again. Mr. Lawson said they will eventually go up, but not right now. Councilman Jeff Otter asked if the sewer plant is already set up for a compactor, or would there need

to be construction. Mr. Lawson said the building is already set up for it. Councilman Briery said he has been very unhappy with Miller and Associates and the work they have done. He wanted it known that he voted "no" for everything to do with that firm. "I'm unhappy with the whole situation," he said. Mr. Lawson continued his report with letting the council know that bidding for Phase II of the sewer plant will probably start in late winter, and construction will start in late spring of 2009. Mr. Lawson said the city's water is now in compliance and is in fact

exceeding state specifications. "I noticed there wasn't any film on my coffee these past few weeks," said Mayor David Corns. Councilwoman Kim Snyder reminded the council there is a Parks Committee meeting on Dec. 1 at 5:30 p.m. The meeting will be held to discuss changing the Norton Speedway track from a one-half mile to a three-eighths mile. Councilman Briery set a Finance Committee meeting for Dec. 15 at 5 p.m., and said he has had residents come to him with concerns over the Ag Valley elevator, which seems to be leaning over, about to fall. Mr. Lawson

said it will be taken down within the next few weeks. Councilman Briery said he has also received dog complaints. Someone in Norton owns four dogs, even though the city limit is two. Mr. Briery said he thought the owners took two dogs out of the house the last time the animal control officer checked on them, and has since brought them back. Mr. Lawson said he would talk to the animal control officer about the issue. Councilwoman Donna Foley said the city's trash truck is still out for repairs because harvest trucks are taking priority over everything else. Councilwoman Foley said yard

waste is still being picked up and will continue to be picked up until there is no longer a need for it, there are still a few free recycling cans available for the public, the drainage problem on Graves Street is being taken care of, and that she attended a meeting with Norton City/County Economic Development in which they discussed a documentary being filmed in the area about small town U.S.A. Councilman Kuhn said the city has received two reimbursement checks from the rendering plant, whose truck spilled rendering onto the highway, and set a Public Safety Committee meeting for Dec. 8 at 5:30 p.m. The city council approved a ce-

real malt beverage license for the Stonehouse Restaurant, owned by Siobhan and Lee Hanes in Norton. City Clerk Darla Ellis said the city has started budget billing on a trial basis to make sure there aren't any "bugs." She said the last 12 months of a property's utility bill is divided by 11 to cover increases in usage, and that people have already signed up for the service. "Our staff does an exceptional job," said Mayor Corns. "We're real lucky to have the people we do." The council paid bills and with no other business brought before the board, the meeting was adjourned.

Kansas ranks 42nd in 'Protecting Kids from Tobacco'

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Ten years after the November 1998 state tobacco settlement, Kansas ranks 42nd in the nation in funding programs to protect kids from tobacco, according to a national report released this week by a coalition of public health organizations. Kansas currently spends \$2 million a year on tobacco prevention programs, which is 6.2 percent of the \$32.1 million recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Other key findings for Kansas include: • The tobacco companies spend more than \$106 million a year on marketing in Kansas. This is more than 53 times what the state spends on tobacco prevention. • Kansas this year will collect \$180 million from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes, but will spend barely 1 percent of it on tobacco prevention. The annual report on states' funding of tobacco prevention programs, titled "A Decade of Broken Promises," was released by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, American Heart Association, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Lung Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "Kansas is one of the most disappointing states when it comes to funding programs to protect kids from tobacco," said Matthew L.

Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "On this 10th anniversary of the tobacco settlement, we call on Kansas leaders to raise the state cigarette tax and use some of the new revenue to increase funding for tobacco prevention. Tobacco prevention is a smart investment that reduces smoking, saves lives and saves money by reducing tobacco-related health care costs," he said. Kansas' current cigarette tax of 79 cents per pack is 33rd in the nation and well below the national average of \$1.19 per pack. Scientific studies have found that increasing cigarette prices is one of the most effective ways to prevent kids from smoking and encourage smokers to quit. On Nov. 23, 1998, 46 states settled their lawsuits against the nation's major tobacco companies to recover tobacco-related health care costs, joining four states (Mississippi, Texas, Florida and Minnesota) that had reached earlier settlements. These settlements require the tobacco companies to make annual payments to the states in perpetuity, with total payments estimated at \$246 billion over the first 25 years. The states also collect billions of dollars each year in tobacco taxes. The new report finds that most states have broken their promise to use a significant portion of their tobacco money to fund programs

to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit. According to the report, the states in the last 10 years have received \$203.5 billion in revenue from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes. But they have spent only 3.2 percent of this tobacco money — \$6.5 billion — on tobacco prevention and cessation programs. Other findings of the report include: • In the current year, no state is funding tobacco prevention at CDC-recommended levels, and only nine states fund their programs at even half of the CDC recommendation. • 41 states and the District of Columbia are funding tobacco prevention programs at less than half the CDC-recommended amount. These include 27 states that are providing less than a quarter of the recommended funding. • Total funding for state tobacco prevention programs this year, \$718.1 million, amounts to less than three percent of the \$24.6 billion the states will collect from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes. It would take just 15 percent of this tobacco revenue to fund tobacco prevention programs in every state at CDC-recommended levels. The report warns that the nation faces two immediate challenges in the fight against tobacco use: complacency and looming state

budget shortfalls. First, while the nation has made significant progress over the past decade in reducing smoking, progress has slowed and further progress is at risk without aggressive efforts at all levels of government. Second, the states are expected to face budget shortfalls in the coming year as a result of the weak economy. The last time the states faced significant budget shortfalls, they cut funding for tobacco prevention programs by 28 percent between 2002 and 2005. The

cutbacks are a major reason why smoking declines subsequently stalled, and states should not make the same mistake again. The report found that there is more evidence than ever that tobacco prevention programs work to reduce smoking, save lives and save money by reducing tobacco-related health care costs. Washington State, which has been a national leader in funding tobacco prevention, has reduced smoking by 60 percent among sixth graders and by 43 percent

among 12th graders since the late 1990s. A recent study found that California's tobacco control program saved \$86 billion in health care costs in its first 15 years, compared to \$1.8 billion spent on the program, for a return on investment of nearly 50:1. In Kansas, 20.6 percent of high school students smoke, and 3,300 more kids become regular smokers every year. Each year, tobacco claims 3,900 lives and costs the state \$927 million in health care bills.


School board: Denver trip eyed

(Continued from Page 1) and Miller, and the Teacher Individual Development Plans as presented. Superintendent Griffith said that he could have a cell phone for each classroom for approximately \$90 per month. The board asked about the possibility of notifying classrooms through the teacher's laptop computers. Superintendent Griffith said he will check into that possibility. Monica Wilson and the senior class are proposing a class trip to Denver. The board asked that they present a plan. This item was

tabled until the plan is presented. Superintendent Griffith reported that the Almena School District had received \$5000 from the Hansen Foundation to purchase new playground equipment at the Long Island facility, and that he is looking into other grant possibilities. He asked that the 7 percent stipend be paid to him for being awarded this grant, which the board approved. Bids for the individual roofs were available for review. The board asked Superintendent Griffith to determine the cost per

square foot for these repairs. Superintendent Griffith read Northern Valley Elementary Principal Robertson's report on recent and upcoming events for the elementary and middle schools and reported on recent and upcoming events for the high school. He also shared thank-you notes from the families of Elliott Conard and Amanda Turman. The school was asked to keep in mind that the first Monday of each month is city council meeting night and would appreciate the school trying not to schedule activities for that night.

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