

Weather Corner



Tonight...Mostly clear. Lows in the upper 60s. South winds 10 to 15 mph.

Saturday...Sunny...Breezy. Highs around 105. Southwest winds 15 to 25 mph. Saturday night...Mostly clear. Breezy. Lows in the upper 60s. South winds 15 to 25 mph.

Sunday...Sunny. Highs around 105. South winds 15 to 20 mph. Sunday night...Mostly clear. Lows around 70.

Monday...Sunny. Highs around 102. Monday night through Wednesday...Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. Lows in the mid 60s. Highs in the mid 90s.

Wednesday night and Thursday...Mostly cloudy. A 30 percent chance of thunderstorms. Lows in the mid 60s. Highs in the upper 80s.

Thursday's low, high: 67, 96.

Water usage Thursday 2,334,000 gallons

3 Consecutive Days over 3.5 million will put us in a water watch

3 Consecutive Days over 4.0 million will put us in a water warning

3 Consecutive Days over 4.5 million will put us in a water emergency

A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-8367.

Goodland to reduce property taxes

By Tom Betz
ntbetz@nwkansas.com

City property owners will keep a little more green in their pockets next year with a decrease of more than 7.4 percent in the property tax in the proposed budget to be approved at a commission meeting Monday evening.

The budget hearing will be at 5 p.m. at the opening of the commission meeting, and approval should come later in the agenda.

The budget for next year will reduce the property tax level by 4.19 mills and that means for a homeowner with a home appraised at \$75,000, city property taxes will drop \$36.18, and for a commercial business appraised at \$75,000 the tax will drop \$78.66.

The total city budget will increase from \$13,960,733 to \$14,442,754 (3.5 percent), but the city property tax collected will drop from \$1,381,771 to \$1,331,046, a 3.7 percent decrease.

During city budget work sessions July 7-8, commissioners said they wanted to be sure the property tax would go down. They cut transfers to the general fund and decided not to raise utility rates to keep the budget below last year.

The commissioners held a work session at 7 a.m. Tuesday morning to review the budget figures, and talk about the amount set aside for merit raises for city employees. During the sessions last month, they had agreed to cut the total salary amount by one-third from \$305,000 to \$203,000 to help bring the property tax down from a proposed drop of 2.2 mills to the 4.19 mills.

At Tuesday's session, Mayor Rick Billinger said he was concerned the total amount of the pro-

posed salary increases was higher than needed and wanted to review the numbers to see if it could be cut any more.

City Manager Wayne Hill said having the merit raises in the budget does not mean all of the money would be spent, but it would give him the flexibility to raise some of the lower-paid and critical jobs to be more competitive.

Billinger said he was more comfortable with a set percentage like the 5 percent that was in the budget last year.

City Commissioner Josh Dechant went through the figures and said it appeared to him that the total for salaries was \$4,000 higher than what was in the budget for this year. The budget for this year had a total salary figure of \$199,000 and the proposed budget for next year has a figure of \$203,000.

City Commissioner Dave Daniels, who attended the meeting via speaker phone, said he had first thought the figures were high, but when everything had been explained, he felt the budget should be adopted as proposed.

City Commissioner John Garcia, however, said he agreed with Billinger that the figures appeared to be too high, and suggested cutting them by another \$50,000.

City Commissioner Annette Fairbanks said she felt the figures were fair, and did not see any reason to change the budget.

Billinger said it appeared there was a consensus to leave the budget figures alone. No official vote was taken because it was a work session.

Daniels said he would not be at the meeting on Monday, but could be reached by phone again if needed to vote.

Governor touts Kansas for lab

MANHATTAN (AP) — State and local officials promoted Kansas as a good site for a new national biodefense lab, but a handful of local residents expressed skepticism and even opposition during a federal hearing Thursday.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is considering a site on the Kansas State University campus for the new National Bio- and Agro Defense Facility. Construction is expected to cost at least \$451 million, and the lab's payroll is estimated at between \$25 million and \$30 million.

The department expects to make a decision later this year.

State, local and university officials called the lab a natural fit for Kansas, given the state's agriculture economy and research already under way.

"We have a long-standing commitment to this work, we have unparalleled expertise, and we have demonstrated that we can pull people and resources together to make things happen," Gov. Kathleen Sebelius told a panel of three Homeland Security officials who had the hearing.

Also under consideration are sites in Athens, Ga.; Butner, N.C.; San Antonio; and Flora, Miss. Another alternative would be building a new research lab on Plum Island, N.Y., where the existing one is located.

That option is considered less

likely because the administration spent considerable time and money scouting new locations and because of concerns about operating from a location accessible only by ferry or helicopter.

During the Kansas State University hearing, a few local residents sought assurances that deadly diseases handled by the lab won't accidentally escape.

Sandy Cravens, a farmer and stockwoman northeast of Manhattan, wore a black visor with "NO BIO" across the bill and carried a plastic pig with "NO BIO" written on a denim patch glued to its side. The pig squealed when she walked to the front of the auditorium to speak.

She said an accidental or intentional release of foot-and-mouth disease or other pathogens would devastate the region.

"I think the research needs to be done, just not here," she said. "They are only doing it for monetary gain."

She added: "Make the terrorists bring it here, not come here to blow it up."

In June, Homeland Security released its 1,005-page draft environmental impact study calculating that economic losses in an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease could surpass \$4 billion if the lab were built near livestock herds in Kansas or Texas.

That would be roughly \$1 billion higher than the government's estimate of losses for a hypotheti-

cal outbreak from its existing lab on Plum Island.

The foot-and-mouth virus does not infect humans but could devastate herds of cattle, swine, lambs and sheep.

Kansas officials have been aggressive in preparing their bid for the lab. The 2008 Legislature approved construction of backup utility systems to support the facility.

Kansas State University already conducts similar research at its Biosecurity Research Institute.

Cravens said she wouldn't want to send a child to Kansas State if the new lab were to be built in Manhattan, a sentiment she said she has others express.

But Ron Trewyn, Kansas State's vice president for research, said it's important that the new lab's research be conducted near those already doing similar work. He also said more than 130 animal health firms operate between Manhattan to Columbia, Mo.

He said five of the eight pathogens that the new lab will research can immediately be studied at the Biosecurity Research Institute.

Trewyn said the new lab won't be a threat to the community, just as the federal Centers for Disease Control isn't a risk to Atlanta.

"The threat to Kansas isn't NBAF being here, it's NBAF not being here," he said.

Cat saves life

INDEPENDENCE, Mo. (AP) — A 97-year-old woman says her cat's early morning yowling saved her from a house fire.

Grace George, of Independence, said her cat Boo Boo's yowling from an open bedroom window early Wednesday woke her up from a sound sleep. She started to put the cat outside. Then she smelled smoke.

"I knew I had to get out of the house," said George.

We want your local news e-mail to
pdecker@nwkansas.com or jvannostrand@nwkansas.com

AUCTION
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VOTE FOR CLOYDE D. HOPPER ON AUGUST 5, 2008
A vote for Cloyde Hopper is a vote for responsible leadership and change.
With over 40 years as a practicing law enforcement professional. My background is well diversified, and focused on management, leadership and supervision.
I believe the greatest legacy of a leader is to have trained individuals to lead and to replace that leader with greater performance.
Therefore, all things considered, my practical experience combined with my education, leadership skills, ethical values and integrity; make me an excellent choice for Thomas County Sheriff.
I want your vote in the August Primary, but also your considerations for the standards and values I represent.
*Paid for by Cloyde D. Hopper; Terry Cousins, Treasurer

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* Competitive rental payments & signup incentives on areas of poor production.
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August 5th ***VOTE***
SCOTT SHOWALTER
DISTRICT JUDGE
REPUBLICAN
Position 2-Residing in Sherman County

- Life-long resident of Northwest Kansas.
- Graduate of Goodland High School, Fort Hays State University and Washburn Law School.
- Successfully practiced law in Northwest Kansas for the past 25 years.
- Sherman County Attorney for 10 years. Current Kanorado Judge.
- Court Trustee for the 15th Judicial District for the past 14 years.

If elected I would provide a strong and dedicated voice for the people of the 15th Judicial District. With over 70 jury trials and numerous appellant court and Supreme Court appearances, I have the experience to handle the job in a fair and impartial way. My family has been residents of Northwest Kansas since homesteading in Thomas County in 1882. We have watched and helped this area grow for the past 126 years.

Please support and vote for me in the August 5th Republican Primary for District Judge, Position 2. This position is for the entire judicial district but the judge must reside in Sherman County. I have been a resident of Sherman County for the past 33 years.

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Paid for by Showalter for Judge-Tom Palmer, Treasurer

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Thanks to all for making the 13th Annual Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass Festival a huge success!

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Kansas QuickLube
John Tweed Agency
Mid-Century Garden Club
Plum Creek Ltd.
Thomas County Community Foundation

Special Thanks to:
Don Ziegelmeier, Horse Drawn Rides
Peggy Westmoreland, Pony Rides
High Plains Lions Club and Kiwanis Club of Thomas County for sponsorship of the Bluegrass Youth Contest
Sound men: Dennis Meitl, Bob & Brandon McLemore, Dan Keller, Roger Bell
Camp Hosts: Duane & Amydell Burns and Roger & Kelly Bell
Ticket outlets: Plum Creek Ltd., Farmer's & Merchants Branch Bank at Dillon's & Colby Chamber of Commerce
A special thanks to all of the volunteers who spent untold hours making this event a success and especially to all those who attended.

Colby Bluegrass Committee