

weather report

52°

at noon



Today

Sunset, 5:55 p.m.

Tomorrow

Sunrise, 5:54 a.m.

Sunset, 5:56 p.m.

Middy Conditions

•Soil Temp. 43 degrees

•Humidity 22 percent

•Sky Sunny

•Winds N-NW 18-29

•Barometer 30.19

inches and rising

•Record High 76° (1938)

•Record Low 1° (1958)

Yesterday's Data

High 76°

Low 42°

Precipitation none

Northwest Kansas

Tonight: Partly cloudy; fog; low 20; winds N 10-20. Tomorrow: Cloudy; fog; chance of rain or light snow; high 40; winds S 10-20.

Extended Forecast

Friday: Chance of rain Friday; high 40s; low 20s. Saturday and Sunday dry; highs 50-60; lows 30.

24-hour weather information is broadcast at 162.400 MHz.

local markets

Noon

Wheat — \$2.52 bu.
Posted county price — \$2.40
Loan deficiency payment — 5¢
Corn — \$1.86 bu.
Posted county price — \$1.87
Loan deficiency payment — 12¢
Milo — \$2.81 cwt.
Soybeans — \$4.11 bu.
Posted county price — \$4.09
Loan deficiency payment — 80¢
Millet — \$4.25 cwt.
Sunflowers
oil current — \$8.05 cwt.
loan deficiency payment — \$2.19
oil 1999 crop — \$8.70 cwt.
conf. current — \$18/\$11 cwt.
Pintos - \$13
Local markets courtesy of Mueller Grain, Sigco Sun and Collingwood Grain
Local bean market courtesy of Prairie Pea and Bean

afternoon wire

Late news from the Associated Press
1 p.m.

Senate pushes gas tax increase

TOPEKA—Sen. Audrey Langworthy believes her Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee will endorse a new transportation plan that includes a gasoline tax increase.

The real challenge for Langworthy and other supporters of the plan will be getting the Senate to approve it intact.

The proposal, drafted by Senate Republican leaders, would increase taxes on gasoline and diesel fuels by 5 cents a gallon and raise vehicle registration fees by 20 percent.

It also would require the state to issue \$990 million in bonds and increase the amount of sales tax revenue the state diverts to transportation projects each year.

With the extra \$2.9 billion raised over 10 years, the state could finance more than \$13.2 billion in transportation improvements, including \$1.1 billion for new roads.

Olympic panel boots six in scandal

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — The International Olympic Committee expelled six members today for taking hundreds of thousands of dollars in graft from officials who brought the 2002 Winter Games to Salt Lake City.

The expulsions followed an overwhelming vote of confidence for Juan Antonio Samaranch, the IOC's embattled president.

Agustin Arroyo of Ecuador, Zein El Abdin Ahmed Abdel Gadir of Sudan, Jean-Claude Ganga of the Congo Re-

public, Lamine Keita of Mali, Sergio Santander of Chile and Paul Wallwork of Samoa were believed to be the first IOC members kicked out for corruption in 105 years.

The vote counts were 72-16 against Arroyo, 86-4 against Gadir, 88-2 against Ganga, 72-16 against Keita, 76-12 against Santander and 67-19 against Wallwork.

Their expulsions marked a watershed in the worst scandal in Olympic history and, officials hoped, the start of

a reform process to regain the luster of the five rings.

Corporate sponsors, sports officials and even leaders of the U.S. Congress have pressured the IOC to make major changes in the wake of the scandal, in which Salt Lake bidders gave cash, travel, medical care and other lavish gifts to try to win votes.

Samaranch said at the start of the emergency general assembly that the IOC "is now on trial" and must take quick, firm action to avoid "very, very

serious" damage.

Samaranch said the session, called just to vote on expulsions and the start of a reform process, was "the most important" in IOC history.

"Our main goal is to take the necessary steps to be absolutely certain that this very sad episode never happens again," he told reporters before the session started. "Throughout the remaining time of my presidency, I intend to make this our highest priority."

In his opening speech to the del-

egates, Samaranch went further, saying he accepted responsibility for the development of a "crisis of this magnitude" and that the IOC should shoulder the blame "even if some of the conduct by bidding cities has itself been unethical."

"It is the IOC that is being judged, and the IOC that must deal with the situation," he said. "Bidding cities which may have acted improperly are a matter of the past; it is our IOC which is now on trial."



Construction was underway Wednesday on the basic portion (above) of the new challenge course on the North Elementary playground. The city crew helped drill the holes for the poles which frame a number of the activities. Bob Noe (right) of Fort Collins, Colo., prepares to tighten a cable on one of the poles to hold the crossbar in place. Guy Johnson, who was helping build the course, said there will be 13 activities. Rhonda Williams from Goodland High School, sponsor of this course, said the cost is being paid from a special grant for the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse. The course is designed to build teamwork and problem solving. Williams said the plan is to train instructors on the course in April and May.

Photos by Tom Betz / Goodland Daily News



County, bank explore financing for projects

By Tom Betz

Goodland Daily News

Sherman County Commission talked Tuesday about ways to keep as much tax money in the community as possible when borrowing to finance county projects. That might involve some "creative" lease-back deals with county equipment.

The commissioners are looking for about \$100,000 to finance the replacement of the Beaver Creek bridge on old U.S. 24 near Caruso, and also need about \$1 million for equipment for the Goodland Regional Medical Center. The county and the hospital are considering a lease option proposed by Larry McCants of the First National Bank of Goodland.

Traditionally, money is borrowed for bridge projects by selling bonds, but the commissioners were interested in McCant's suggestion that he could raise the money for the county by a lease arrangement. The bank would purchase some county equipment as the physical purpose of the lease, and in turn the county would be able to use the proceeds as the matching funds for the bridge project.

McCants said this would be financed

at the public fund rate, estimated to be about 5 percent. The lease could be set up on terms of three to five years, and there would not be any balloon payment at the end. After the lease was paid off, the county would again own the equipment.

"This would be a true lease, and it has been one of the best public finance tools I have found," McCants said. "It is the same program the county used to purchase the noxious weed truck a few years ago."

"I think we got our eyes opened when we saw that \$30,000 fee from the bonding company this last year," said Commissioner Kenny Davis. "I think we would rather do things locally if at all possible."

"I can assure you we can do this cheaper than any bonding company," McCants said.

He said the hospital board has been working on a list of equipment that needs to be upgraded and is considering a master lease program where the bank would purchase the equipment and then lease it to the hospital. McCants said the hospital is looking at around \$1 million in equipment which would be purchased in this manner.

"We would adjust the interest rate on a quarterly basis, but it would remain very close to what the interest rate is on the investments the hospital and county already have," McCants said. "Your net funding cost would be about zero, as you would be moving money from one pocket to another."

He said the program is also similar to what the Goodland School District is using to fund the Max Jones Fieldhouse expansion, but said the interest rate on that was set at 4.9 percent because it is to be paid back in a very short time.

"The only benefit the bank gets from this really is the tax benefit," he said. "We can help you by giving you your own money back. We want to help the county."

"Since I am on the hospital board I want everything to be up front. I would ask the commissioners to approve allowing the hospital board to enter into the master lease agreement. I think this is also something we could look at for the county in the future."

Commissioner Davis made a motion to allow the hospital to enter into a master lease agreement with First National. Commissioner Chuck Frankenfled seconded the motion and it passed

unanimously with Commissioner Gary Townsend also voting yes.

Hospital Finance Officer Andy Laue said the lease would greatly help the hospital with its equipment needs.

The commissioners asked about the progress on the clinic project and when the new doctors are expected to arrive. Laue said the new obstetrics wing should be completed by the end of March, the clinic by the end of April.

He said the two new doctors are expected to come this summer after they complete their training programs.

On another topic, McCants suggested the commissioners and the hospital need to consider an expansion of the long-term care facility to meet the growing needs of the elderly in the area.

"It would appear we need at least 30 to 40 more long-term nursing home beds," he said. "I think the proposed assisted living centers will bring more need for the long-term beds as they help expand our population."

"There are already over 40 on a waiting list at the Good Samaritan Center, and I feel we need to address this. I think this is the most critical health issue for senior citizens in our community."

In other business, commissioners:

- Received the final checks on the A.L. Hendrick's estate, and said the money would go to the County Home Maintenance fund for use at the Good Samaritan Center.

- Reappointed Marvin Duell and Melvin Seick to the rural fire board.

- Approved a fairgrounds lease for the Tri-State Sheep Breeder's Association for their use April 2 and 3.

- Sheriff Whitson discussed the bid for a wireless link between the jail and the city building. The bid was for \$8,750. The final decision will be delayed until Whitson can discuss an antenna on the city building.

- Discussed a split shift salary scale proposed by Mary Messamore, central dispatch director. There were questions from the commissioners about how this would be handled, and since Messamore was unable to attend the meeting it was delayed until March 31.

- Approved a change order on the courthouse restroom renovation project to allow for ventilation in the men's restroom for \$896.

The next regular commission meeting will be 8 a.m., Wednesday, March 31, in the commission room on the first floor of the county courthouse.

Engineer says trucker drove by gate

BOURBONNAIS, Ill. (AP) — Federal investigators said today they are looking into whether the driver of a semitrailer drove around a crossing barrier in an attempt to beat an oncoming train, causing the nation's deadliest railroad accident in three years.

Officials with the National Transportation Safety Board said the driver, John Stokes, was just one part of the investigation into the wreck of the City of New Orleans, and that the train engineer and the warning system were also being examined.

At least 11 people were killed and more than 100 injured in Monday

night's accident, federal officials said today, lowering the death toll from 13. National Transportation Safety Board member John Goglia said the agency was frustrated with Amtrak's delays in getting accurate information about passengers to investigators.

Goglia also said investigators were going to wait until interviews today with the driver and the engineer before reaching any conclusions on the cause of the crash.

Amtrak's chairman, Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson, said Tuesday that Stokes was trying to dodge the crossing gates, thinking the oncoming train

was a slow-moving freight train instead of a faster passenger train.

"The engineer said he saw the lights flashing, he saw the barriers down and then he saw the truck stop and try to get around it," Thompson said. "There was no way to avoid it."

Stokes has said the barriers did not go down until he was on the tracks.

Tire marks were found on the road, the timber of the crossing, and on the road shoulder in the dirt, said Bob Lauby, director of the NTSB's office of railroad safety.

"The tire marks may belong to the truck, they may not," Lauby said today.

School district gets offer to buy land for new center

When the Goodland School Board met in special session Monday to talk about the possible sale of its surplus land west of the hospital, one of the board members suggested they would probably be back Thursday to consider an offer.

It appears he was right, as the board has scheduled a special meeting for noon Thursday at the district office to consider a possible sale.

Superintendent Marvin Selby said

a "verbal offer" has been received from developer Joyce Mitchell through her real estate agent, Tom Harrison of Homeland Realty.

Mitchell wants to buy part of the school district's 39 acres to build an assisted-living retirement center.

Selby said he is gathering information about availability of city services to the land, which may effect either the sale price or cost of development.