

weather report

39°

at noon

Today

- Sunset, 5:55 p.m.
- Tomorrow**
- Sunrise, 5:54 a.m.
- Sunset, 5:56 p.m.

Midday Conditions

- Soil Temperature 41 degrees
- Humidity 54 percent
- Sky cloudy
- Winds south 24-29 mph
- Barometer 30.03 inches and steady
- Record High 76° (1938)
- Record Low 1° (1958)

Last 24 Hours*

- High 42°
- Low 19°
- Precipitation .01 inches/Snow trace

Northwest Kansas Forecast

Tonight: Cloudy, 60 percent chance of precipitation, low 25-30, winds north 20-30 mph. Tomorrow: Mostly cloudy, 20 percent chance of precipitation, high 50, winds north 10-20 mph, low 25-30.

Extended Forecast

Sunday: dry, high 65-70, low 30. Monday: chance of rain, high 50, low 25-30. Tuesday: chance of snow, high 50, low 25-30. (National Weather Service) Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz. * Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local markets

Noon

- Wheat — \$2.33 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$2.17
 - Loan deficiency payment — 28¢
 - Corn — \$1.91 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$1.92
 - Loan deficiency payment — 7¢
 - Milo — \$2.93 hundredweight
 - Soybeans — \$4.62 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$4.44
 - Loan deficiency payment — 45¢
 - Millet — \$3.70 hundredweight
 - Sunflowers
 - Oil current crop — \$6.50 cwt.
 - Loan deficiency pmt. — \$3.73
 - Confection current — \$13/\$7 cwt.
 - Pinto beans — \$12 (new crop)
- (Markets provided by Mueller Grain, Sigco Sun, Frontier Equity Co-op and Prairie Pea and Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

afternoon wire

Late news from the Associated Press

1 p.m.

Vermont law pleases gays

MONTPELIER, Vt.—Lesbian and gay couples could be walking down the aisle here by this fall. In a historic step Thursday, the state House voted 76-69 to adopt a bill allowing homosexuals to form "civil unions" that mirror marriage and provide all the same rights and benefits. If it becomes law, the state will have gone further than any other in recognizing same-sex couples. "This certainly is groundbreaking," said Peg Byron, education director for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, a gay advocacy group. "I think it really sets a moral as well as a legislative example for the rest of the country." Vermont lawmakers still sought to preserve the term "marriage" solely for the union of a man and a woman, adopting an amendment making that clear.

Congress gives flights here reprieve

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Daily News

A bill passed by Congress on Wednesday and headed to the president's desk may help save air service in Goodland, Great Bend and Lamar, Colo., for at least three months.

A provision in the Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century deals bars changes in the Essential Air Service program, saying that all orders from the secretary of transportation issued after Sept. 30 "establishing, modifying, or revoking essential air service levels shall be null and void"

"Our office is interpreting this as good news," said Tobi Edwards, Congressman Jerry Moran's press secretary, "and believe it does grant at least a 90 days extension to air service in Goodland. Service to the three plains towns has been scheduled to stop April 2.

"The Congressman is now meeting with officials in the administration and Department of Transportation to make sure they are interpreting this provision the same way. This is Washington, and we must make sure the right people are seeing this the way we feel it is intended."

The provision gives the secretary 90 days to

review all the orders and issue new ones based on the changes in the law.

"That is good news," said Goodland City Manager Ron Pickman. "I hope it gives us the time to find a carrier who is willing to provide dependable service to our community. I don't think Great Lakes Aviation (the current United Express carrier) will like this, and believe they do not want to be in Goodland."

A major problem cited by officials here has been flights with are either full when they arrive here or are canceled, leaving people stranded. Pickman said that in the past several days, Great

Lakes has canceled at least two flights here, stranding a number of people who wanted to fly to Denver. He said one flight was canceled because of "flight crew shortage," and the other was canceled because another Great Lakes plane had a mechanical problem and the plane for Goodland was diverted to that route.

"There were seven people waiting to board the plane the day they diverted the plane," Pickman said.

Edwards said the bill is expected to reach the

See AIRLINE, Page 7

City may dedicate ball park

Memorial to honor all who loved game

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Daily News

Goodland City Commissioners will discuss a request to name the new ball field "Memorial Park" during Monday's regular meeting beginning at 5 p.m., and City Manager Ron Pickman will update the commission on the status of the water park bids.

A citizen group raising money for additions to the new ball park has asked the commission to consider naming it "Memorial Field," saying that would cover all those who have been important in the baseball programs in Goodland over the past 40-plus years.

The commission delayed action at the March 6 meeting to give the administration time to see if there were any restrictions on naming the park.

The Goodland Baseball Committee, headed by Scott Weber, coach of the K-18 baseball team, asked for the commission to name the field so the group could use it in their fund-raising efforts. He told the commission the group wants to raise money for a perimeter fence, dugouts and a batting cage to be built this year.

Preliminary work has been started to design the field and get the lighting and building material ordered. The plan is to have the basic field completed in time for this year's baseball season beginning in May.

As the ball park project moves forward, plans continue to take shape on the new Steever Water Park. Pickman will report to the commission on his efforts to reduce the cost of the new water park to within the \$2.1 million the commission has set aside.

"I think I am within \$20,000," Pickman said Thursday. "Now it is getting a bit tougher to find places to cut, but I am sure we can find a way."

He said another part of the project is dealing with the old pool, closed since last summer. He said he is considering how to demolish the pool. The plan was to keep the old bath house for storage, but after looking at it closer, Pickman said he is not sure it is worth keeping.

The commission will consider an amendment to the city code dealing with the storage of inoperable vehicles. The amendment is to try to define what a stock car is to allow storage of this type of race car under the city code, but to also keep the definition tight enough to allow the city to remove "junk" cars.

Also the commission will consider adoption of the agreement with Sherman County which will trade a portion of North Caldwell for city-owned sections of old U.S. 24 to allow the county to upgrade and repair these two pieces as part of the county's chip seal project. The commission will also consider:

- A grant request from Charlotte Linsner and Willie Mannebach on behalf of the Community Volunteer Appreciation Committee.

- A request for economic development funding from the Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce presented by Stephen West, president of Western State Bank.

- Demolition bids for 1616 Main, 418 Center, 422 Sherman, 1301 Syracuse, 902 Main, 119 E. 12th, 910 W. Ninth, 622 W. 10th and 515 E. Eighth.

The commission meets at 5 p.m. upstairs at the City Administration Building, 204 West 11th.

Learning about the sciences



Third through sixth graders had a chance to attend workshops Monday night for the Jump Start Your Mind event at North School. Students could attend presentations by emergency medical technicians, doctors, science, technology and math teachers, a gardener, a nutritionist and a

soil scientist. Emily Linden (left) and Amanda Amthor looked at Dr. Natalie Griego's eyes to see her pupils get smaller, while Danny Hachmeister watched.

Photo by Janet Craft/The Goodland Daily News

Ranchers ask what's good about dogs

By Cynthia Haynes

The Goodland Daily News

Area farmers and ranchers debated how to control prairie dogs while keeping them from becoming extinct at a meeting Thursday night in Colby with state and federal officials.

The meeting at the Ramada Inn, the last of three being held across western Kansas, drew about 50 people to listen and voice their opinions on how the states should manage its prairie dog populations. There were precious few friends of the prairie dog among them.

The farm and ranch landowners who made up about 80 percent of the audience were divided on whether prairie dogs should be totally exterminated or just confined to selected areas.

Charles Lee, with the Kansas State University Department of Animal Science and the state extension service, described the life and habits of prairie dogs. Then Dan Mulhern of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service talked about a petition that has been filed to put the small mammals on the federal "threatened species" list.

If the prairie dog is listed as threatened, he said, control of the animals would be taken away from the landowners and states by the federal government.

The government has gotten into the prairie dog protection business because of a formal petition from the National Wildlife Federation.

In the petition, the conservation group asserts that the prairie dog, which once ranged across two million acres in 11 western states, now can be found on only about 42,000 acres, a 95 to 98 percent drop in habitat since the 1880s.

Several people at the meeting disputed the numbers.

"There's not a chance in the world that these things are endangered," one rancher claimed.

The audience was incensed to find

Prairie dogs not part of canine world

Prairie Dogs bark and bite but they aren't dogs.

The small, furry mammal is really a rodent, a member of the squirrel family. There are five species in the U.S., but only the black-tailed species is common. It has been proposed for protection because of decreased numbers caused by widespread destruction of habitat, disease and depredation by predators and humans.

The prairie dog is a burrowing ground squirrel which lives three to four years and gets to be about three pounds. The animals live communally with a male, two to four females and their offspring together in the same system of tunnels.

The tunnels or burrows are usually three to six feet deep, with 30 to 50 entrances and average 15 feet in length, although some have been found to measure 60 feet, said Charles Lee of Kansas State University.

The prairie dog eats grasses, seeds, weeds and some insects, devouring up to two pounds of forage per week.

Females have one litter of four to five pups per year and many of the young die before they ever get above ground.

Prairie dogs are a favorite food for black-footed ferrets, coyotes, badgers, bobcats, ferruginous hawks,



golden eagles and prairie falcons. There abandoned burrows provide homes for burrowing owls, rattlesnakes and ferrets.

Living on the prairie, the animals prefer a level, well drained area and keep the ground around their homes bare. Kansas allows hunting prairie dogs with no bag limit and no season, but a license is required.

Disagreement exists as to whether the prairie dog is good or bad for the land. Some studies show that after prairie dogs move on, the grasses grow back better and the soil is in better shape.

Several products are on the market for poisoning the rodents, and Kansas townships have the right to have them eliminated under state law.

However, the rodents are classed as wildlife by the state Department of Wildlife and Parks, which regulates

hunting. The biggest threats to the prairie dog, experts say, are ranchers and farmers, urban development, poison and recreational shooting, plague, which can be transferred to man; and widely spaced colonies, which do not allow for gene transfer and result in inbreeding.

The animals are still found in 11 western states including the western half of Kansas, although their territory, which was estimated to be two million acres in the late 1800s, has been diminished to about 42,000 acres.

The prairie dog looks like the perfect stuffed animal and communicates with its fellows by barks, chirps, tail twitching, gestures and kissing — all of which makes them a cute little critter to city folks, if still a nuisance to farmers and ranchers.

felt that the only good prairie dog was a dead prairie dog.

One man said he'll just continue to control prairie dogs the way he always has — shoot them, poison them but not eliminate them.

"Control is the answer," he said, "not

See RANCHERS, Page 7