

The Goodland Daily News

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Six Pages

Goodland, Kansas 67735

weather report

61°

at noon



Today

• Sunset, 7:20 p.m.

Tomorrow

• Sunrise, 6:13 a.m.
• Sunset, 7:21 p.m.

Midday Conditions

• Soil Temperature 50 degrees
• Humidity 33 percent
• Sky sunny
• Winds southwest 25-32 mph
• Barometer 30.18 inches and falling
• Record High 80° (1936)
• Record Low 9° (1953)

Last 24 Hours*

High 56°
Low 30°
Precipitation none

Northwest Kansas Forecast

Tonight: Clear, low 40-45, winds southwest 10-20 mph. Tomorrow: Mostly sunny, dry, high mid 80s, winds southwest 10-20 mph, low 40.

Extended Forecast

Friday: dry, high 80s, low 40s. Saturday: chance of rain, high 70s, low 40. Sunday: dry, high 70s, low 40.

(National Weather Service)

Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.
* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local markets

Noon

Wheat — \$2.17 bushel
Posted county price — \$2.02
Loan deficiency payment — 43¢
Corn — \$1.76 bushel
Posted county price — \$1.91
Loan deficiency payment — 8¢
Milo — \$2.66 hundredweight
Soybeans — \$4.62 bushel
Posted county price — \$4.53
Loan deficiency payment — 36¢
Millet — \$3.60 hundredweight
Sunflowers
Oil current crop — \$6.15 cwt.
Loan deficiency pmt. — \$3.30
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.

Father tires of negotiation

WASHINGTON — The government prepared today to order Elian Gonzalez's Miami relatives to give him up Thursday, while still urging them to reach a last-minute separate peace with the 6-year-old's Cuban father for a prompt and peaceful transfer.

Elian's father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, said in a meeting with a minister that he was through negotiating.

"He is going to simply ask now that the attorney general issue a court order and that the boy be returned immediately to him," The Rev. Joan Brown said.

The Cuban American National Foundation, an exile group, said it still hoped to set up a meeting. The Justice Department was not prepared to wait forever and planned to issue instructions for Elian's transfer in a letter to his Miami relatives this afternoon.

Schools, teachers plan talks

Short lists lead sides to predict quick end

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Daily News

The annual contract negotiations between the Goodland School Board and the teachers union are to begin at 4 p.m. Thursday at the district office.

Both sides exchanged letters listing items to be negotiated in February, but both wanted to wait until the state budget was completed to see what new money might be available.

The players will be much the same: The school board negotiating team is led by board member Kathy Russell and the union team by Mary Porterfield.

The school board listed four points for negotiation:

- Evaluate the sick leave policy.
- Have the right to offer signing bonuses to hire well-qualified people.
- Add wording to the section about the extended calendar for the 1999-2000 school year to say that the normal duty day may be extended to include open houses, special education staffings and faculty meetings as determined by the school board and administration.
- Change the eligibility of retiring employees to add a line to say that the retiree ... is not less than age 57, meets the Kansas Public Employee Retirement System requirements and has 12 years in the district.

There are 11 items on the teachers' letter, with the top two being salary and fringe benefits. Under the salary item, teachers want more money for experience and education, and under fringe benefits they want health insurance to include dental coverage.

Other items include modifying or adding the number of days for sick, personal, parental and adoptive leave.

There is an item for handling complaints about teachers, and modifying the grievance procedure to conclude with binding arbitration. In negotiations, the teachers want to have binding fact finding when the parties have exhausted procedures under state law.

The teachers are proposing to modify the evaluation form to meet changing needs. A proposal to add wording which would allow an automatic progression on the salary schedule no matter when negotiations are settled.

The last item would provide money to teachers for taking college credit.



A prairie fire west of Goodland this morning threatened several houses, including one (above) belonging to North Elementary Principal Steve Raymer. The blaze started as a controlled burn, but a stiff southwest wind drove it away from its keepers. The fire consumed windbreaks (below) and damaged at least one barn before it jumped Eighth Street.

Photo by Debra Turner/The Goodland Daily News

Fire sweeps area west of city

By Debra Turner

The Goodland Daily News

A supposedly controlled burn escaped this morning and swept unchecked for nearly two miles, burning fields, trees and a barn and threatening several houses before firemen could corral it.

The burn area was west of the Frontier Equity Co-op just south of the railroad tracks. Driven by stiff southwest winds, the flames raced north, consuming a stack of hay bales and jumping Eighth Street.

Goodland rural firemen were called to the scene a few minutes before noon, but didn't have enough trucks or men to get around the fast-moving blaze.

Fire supervisors at the scene started calling for help within minutes of arriving at the blaze. Goodland city firemen were called just after noon and Kanorado rural firemen two minutes later. Two minutes after that, the chiefs asked for Brewster volunteer firemen to respond as well.

At least seven trucks from the four departments responded, along with tankers and other auxiliary vehicles. A Sherman County ambulance crew went out to the area to stand by, and city police officers were asked to take drinking water to the fire crews.

Sheriff's deputies were stopping traffic on Eighth Street west of town to keep people from driving into the heavy smoke and flames. Deputy Bob Lamb said the flames were moving fast through wheat stubble. He was turning all traffic around on Eighth.

The National Weather Service said



the wind was blowing 25 miles an hour out of the southwest, with gusts to 32 mph.

Billows of smoke rose into the sky as the flames jumped from grass and stubble to windbreaks and hay bales. Flames shot into the air and the smoke cloud turned thick and black.

The fire came dangerously close to

two houses and started a barn on fire. Firemen protecting the houses excitedly called for help as they ran out of water, but other trucks were arriving.

The fire crossed Eighth Street moving very quickly across the stubble. Brewster crews arriving about 12:40 p.m. with their rigs were told to go to the north end, where chiefs hoped a

road would help stop the blaze.

A short time later, just after 1 p.m., the city trucks returned to their station and the fire effort started to wind down. It was part of a busy day for volunteers, though, as they had been called to a wreck on I-70 earlier in the day, and to a minor fire at the Good Samaritan Center later in the afternoon.

Off in the ditch



A Florida couple was injured this morning when wind caught their boat trailer and caused the wife, who was driving, to lose control of their utility vehicle. The truck rolled across the south ditch, landing on the passenger side and trapping the man inside. Firemen were called to help rescue him, and the ambulance took both to the hospital. Trooper Rich Hageman said the couple was eastbound near Ruleton when the wreck occurred just before 9:30 a.m.

— Photo by Debra Turner/The Goodland Daily News

Motel owners complain about county bed tax, board

By Janet Craft

The Goodland Daily News

Things got a bit tense at times at Tuesday's Sherman County commissioner meeting, when hotel/motel operators met to discuss the Convention and Visitors Bureau board and the use of the transient guest tax, often called the bed tax.

Operators complain that the tax singles out their business and their customers but say they often don't see the benefit. The money is supposed to be spent on promoting tourism in the county.

The county commissioners usually appoint a range of people to the board which spends the tax money, not just motel operators. The county has complained that it's tough to get motel people to serve on the board, but the operators say the early-morning meetings are hard for them to make.

The matter was on the agenda for 9 a.m., but due to a mix-up, most of the operators didn't show up until 10. Commissioner Kenny Davis asked Karl Hildreth, manager of Best Western Buffalo Inn, to speak. Hildreth told the board that two calls would be coming in that morning from hotel owners. He said that Commissioner Gary Townsend had asked him to have operators show up at the meeting to talk about the board.

Shortly after the discussion began,

Bill Stoick, Aberdeen, S.D., owner of Goodland's Super 8 Motel, called to say that he wanted representation on the board.

Stoick wanted to know if there was a law governing how the money is collected and spent. County Attorney Bonnie Selby said she had just updated records and could send him a copy. The tax is collected only on guest room rentals, and is supposed to be spent to promote tourism in the county.

Stoick asked that she send one to his motel's manager, Elaine Morrow. He remained on the phone during the discussion to hear what went on.

Motel owner Jeffrey Harsh from K-Inn, said he would prefer to suspended the guest tax and not be on any board. He said he thinks only about 20 percent of the money goes to promote tourism. He said Goodland is freer in where the money goes, but that he didn't think it was a healthy thing.

Hildreth asked Harsh if he would like to be on the board. Harsh said at this stage, he didn't know if he would.

Joni Wilson, manager of the Comfort Inn, said she had been on the board before. "I feel that my efforts are to no avail," she said.

She added that her boss, Stanley Weilert, would like representation on the board. However, his wish is to try to get the tax dropped or cut to 2 percent, as he thinks 3 percent is too high.

He felt that the money hasn't been well spent, she added.

Bob Hildreth, owner of the Buffalo Inn, said he thinks the tax is excessive for what the motel industry gets back. He said he was on the board for a short while and feels that there needs to be some changes.

Wilson said she would serve on the board if the meetings weren't at 8 a.m. She quit attending because of the time.

"This is not a new issue," Harsh said. "It's been a sand burr under the saddle, so if you gentlemen could help..."

Karl Hildreth said he thought the tax winds up hurting the hotel business.

"My customers are penalized and I'm penalized," he said about the tax.

John Golden, a former county commissioner who was on the board when the tax was established, said it is the public at large who is paying taxes. He said the motel is the collector and that the bureau board's job is to use the tax to attract people to the community.

Golden thought it was good that there's a broad base of representation on the board. He added that the hotels should be the biggest benefactors.

"We need to say good things about our community," Golden said.

"I think you are way off base," Karl Hildreth responded.

The commissioners tabled the matter until next Tuesday's meeting, which will begin at 8 a.m.