

weather
report

28°

at noon



Today

• Sunset, 5:06 p.m.

Tomorrow

• Sunrise, 6:53 a.m.

• Sunset, 5:07 p.m.

Middy Conditions

• Soil Temperature 36 degrees

• Humidity 66 percent

• Sky sunny

• Winds north 17 mph

• Barometer 30.25 inches

and rising

• Record High 73° (1963)

• Record Low -21° (1951)

Last 24 Hours*

High 33°

Low 18°

Precipitation none

Northwest Kansas Forecast

Tonight: Mostly clear, low 10-15, southwest wind 5-15 mph. Tomorrow: Mostly sunny, high mid 40s, low 20-25, southwest wind 5-15 mph.

Extended Forecast

Saturday: dry, high 50s, low 20s. Sunday and Monday: high 45-50, low 20s.

(National Weather Service)

Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.

* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local
markets



Noon

Wheat — \$2.79 bushel

Posted county price — \$2.66

Loan deficiency payment — 0¢

Corn — \$1.91 bushel

Posted county price — \$1.83

Loan deficiency pmt. — 16¢

Milo — \$3.06 hundredweight

Soybeans — \$4.08 bushel

Posted county price — \$3.91

Loan deficiency payment — 99¢

Millet — \$8.25 hundredweight

Sunflowers

Oil current crop — \$6.15 cwt.

Loan deficiency pmt. — \$3.66

Confection current — \$15/\$7 cwt.

Pinto beans — \$14

(Markets provided by Mueller Grain, Frontier

Equity Co-op and 21st Century Bean.

These may not be closing figures.)

afternoon
wire

Late news
from the
Associated
Press



1 p.m.

Hutch people
going home

HUTCHINSON — Two weeks after being forced to evacuate by a natural gas explosion, about 60 residents will be allowed to return to their homes today.

The residents were ordered to leave their homes after the explosion Jan. 18 in the nearby Big Chief Mobile Home Park that destroyed a trailer and killed two.

Each day officials have been checking the area for signs of natural gas. Because the checks have been negative, the decision was made to let residents back in their homes, Police Chief Dick Heitschmidt said.

A leaking cavern at Kansas Gas Services' Yaggy Field seven miles northwest of the city has been the suspected source of natural gas pockets discovered after an explosion at two downtown businesses on Jan. 17.

Tech school closer to college status

Kansas House passes bill to allow school here to award associate degrees

By Rachel Miscall

The Goodland Daily News

A unanimous Kansas House breezed through a bill Wednesday that would make the Northwest Kansas Technical School a college, bringing the Goodland school one step closer to a long-time goal.

It was the first bill passed by the House this year, and possibly the easiest to support, given the 122-0 vote.

Administrators say they are planning to replace everything bearing the school's name, from the sign out front to the wooden pencils on their

desks — as soon as the Senate and governor concur, hopefully by April. What's most important to them, though, is being able to offer associate-level college degrees to students who up to now have had to settle for a certificate.

The Kansas Board of Regents approved the change in November and if the Senate and Gov. Bill Graves sign off, it will mean more than a name change for the school, which opened in Goodland 37 years ago.

Larry Keirns, who plans to retire this year after 35 years as director, said the switch will allow the school to award Associate of Applied Science de-

grees to students who have completed at least 15 credits of required classes at a college or university, earning at least a "C" average. Now, those who graduate from one of the 13 programs the technical school offers receive a "credential" listing courses and grades. Courses will have to be taken through another college, since the school here does not offer general courses, but students would be able to use Colby Community College or its outreach classes.

Keirns said it also means that every brochure, sign, business card and pen that says "Northwest Kansas Technical School" will have to be changed

— a project that could cost thousands.

"We keep thinking of more things we have to change," Keirns said, adding that administrators are planning to begin awarding degrees at graduation this spring.

Rep. Jim Morrison, a Colby Republican who had the bill written, said it is now in the Senate's hands and won't become law until the governor signs it.

Morrison said he doesn't expect any opposition from the Senate, which could vote as early

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County turning to its own

New administrator could be employee

By Rachel Miscall

The Goodland Daily News

The Sherman County commissioners said Wednesday that they have decided not to hire a county administrator at this time, but will keep the job open and look for applicants among people already working for the county.

After a five-minute closed session during their regular meeting, commissioners Chuck Frankenfeld and Kevin Rasure — Mitch Tiede was absent — released a typed statement saying they would not fill the job now, but planned to in the future.

Frankenfeld said the county wants to hire the right person the first time.

"We'd rather be a little slow," he said, "than a little hasty."

The commissioners interviewed two applicants, including a Goodland man, in early January for the job — created in October with the idea that the administrator could manage employees and work towards goals on a daily basis.

The commissioners, part-time officials with regular jobs or businesses of their own, have been finding it tough to keep up with government regulations, rules and laws the county must follow.

The statement said that while both finalists — Tom Betz of Goodland and Roy Ridener of Wichita — were "capable," the commissioners decided to start taking other applications.

"Although we remain committed to hiring a county administrator," the statement says, "we have determined that it would be appropriate to consider other options...."

One of those, the statement says, would be to promote and train a county employee, "who would be familiar with the current situation and the needs of Sherman County."

After the meeting, Frankenfeld said they don't have a specific employee in mind. But, he noted, Sherman County has competent workers who could bring a knowledge of the county.

The commissioners hadn't discussed looking back over other applications from the first batch, he said, adding that it is a possibility. Three finalists were picked from 11 applicants, but one, from Kansas City, Mo., accepted another offer the day before interviewing.

While the county will accept applications, Frankenfeld said, the commissioners have decided not to advertise the position like they did last year.

"We won't actively look for applicants," he said, "but it is an open position."



City moves snow piles

City workers used a huge snow blower and dump trucks on Wednesday afternoon to clear snow from 12th Street near Grant Junior High. Once the trucks were filled, the drivers would take the load to a vacant lot north of West Elementary School. Ed Wolak, public works director, said it could take more than a week to clear all streets, which had about 8 inches of snow fall on them in the past week. He said the city crew could be moving over 500 tons of snow.

Photos by Rachel Miscall
The Goodland Daily News

Despite conflict, Senate to OK Ashcroft today

By Libby Quaid

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The Senate was poised today to confirm John Ashcroft to be President Bush's attorney general though the chamber's top Democrat said he hoped to muster enough votes to signal that his party would block "far-right" nominees in the future.

"We'll cooperate when they're from the center," Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., told reporters, "but we're going to be very concerned when they come from the far right, and we'll use whatever means necessary."

Divided largely along party lines, senators engaged in the final hours of debate on the most controversial of Bush's Cabinet picks, and the Senate was expected to approve him later today.

day.

All 50 Senate Republicans were solidly behind Ashcroft. The number of declared Democratic opponents to Ashcroft surpassed 30, with Democrats hoping to reach 41 — the number required to kill a nomination using the procedural delay of a filibuster.

In this case, Daschle said, Democrats abandoned the idea of a filibuster because Ashcroft, a former GOP senator from Missouri, was a colleague, and because many believed a president deserves to choose his own Cabinet members, none of whom are lifetime appointees.

The widow who succeeded Ashcroft in the Senate, Democrat Jean Carnahan of Missouri, declared she would vote against her family's longtime political

rival. Her late husband, Gov. Mel Carnahan, defeated Ashcroft posthumously after a plane crash during their campaign, and Jean Carnahan was appointed to what would have been his seat in the Senate.

Mrs. Carnahan said Ashcroft "was just too divisive for our country." She called her vote "an act of conscience."

Sen. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut announced his opposition to Ashcroft, whom he said he has known for 40 years.

Lieberman, who as Democratic vice presidential nominee last year, spoke frequently of his religious beliefs, denied conservatives' charges that Democrats' opposition has been sparked by Ashcroft's outspoken commitment to his own Christian views.

"On issues ranging from civil rights to privacy rights, Senator Ashcroft has repeatedly taken positions considerably outside the mainstream of American thinking," said Lieberman, adding later, "It is Senator Ashcroft's record, not his religion, we should judge today."

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said members of the Congressional Black Caucus told Bush Wednesday about their "deep passion" in opposing Ashcroft's nomination, but no one asked the president to withdraw it.

"They implored him to make certain that the Department of Justice enforces civil rights laws, and is sensitive to civil rights concerns. The president said, 'I hear you,'" Fleischer said. "He thinks John Ashcroft is a man of integrity."

Hospital reports losing \$644,000 despite cutbacks last year

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Daily News

The Goodland Regional Medical Center financial reports for November and December showed more red ink, with a total loss of \$644,416 for the year.

November showed a loss of \$133,570 while December's loss was \$58,047. The hospital's interim leadership has been making cuts, and the bud-

get for this year shows a loss of only \$200,000.

Chief Financial Officer Andy Laue, a member of the three-person management team, explained several specific areas where the expenses were higher than budgeted at a meeting of the hospital board Tuesday.

The hospital actually made money in December, he said, but shows a loss because he wrote off \$104,645 in bad

debts, about four times what it was in November. That clears up the books for this year, he said.

"I felt it was better to bite the bullet," Laue said. "The way the computer figures this, it was running below last year, but I felt it was a bit light and that it would be better to take the hit now."

On the income side, the hospital took in about \$200,000 more in patient revenue than in 1999, but it was \$600,000

under what had been budgeted. Total patient revenue for 2000 was \$9,667,069 while it had been \$9,444,763 in 1999.

The contractual deductions for insurance and Medicare and Medicaid were about \$100,000 higher in 2000, but actually \$500,000 below what had been anticipated in the budget. The deductions were \$2,439,689 in 1999 and \$2,548,263 in 2000.

After the deductions and addition of other income, he said, the operating revenue was just a bit ahead of the budgeted amount of \$7,349,664. The operating revenue in 2000 was \$7,365,589, which was about \$150,000 ahead of 1999's \$7,212,297.

In the expenses, Laue pointed out several areas which were over budget,

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