

# Convict could go free this summer

PAROLE, from Page 1

Saavedra, and in another letter, written to "Jack and community," he apologizes for the murder.

"I hope Jesus' family forgives me for being involved in such a terrible crime," he wrote. "I am not repenting for a birthright, but for my crime."

Kernal mentioned several times he feels like he is going crazy, and on the back of an inventory slip—filled out in March 1994 when the prisoner was moved to a segregated unit at Larned—there is a note saying he wanted to commit suicide and blaming "Jack" for his insanity.

"I am sorry Jack," the note says, "but I am committing suicide because of you. I lost my niece and nephew because of you. I am really going insane. God help me please. For God sake help me."

The inmate asked in a letter that three other young Hispanic men—who were seen outside Saavedra's home after Gomez, Kernal and the juvenile left—be further investigated.

Armstrong, who investigated the murder with KBI agent Charles Murray (who is now retired himself), said Saavedra never identified Gomez or Kernal, but the case was solved through interrogation and interviews.

Court records of testimony at a hearing for Gomez say that while Saavedra was in the hospital after the beating, he indicated there were three attackers by grabbing three of a relative's fingers several times.

The file says before Saavedra

died, he told relatives one, or all, of his assailants was "gordo," the Spanish word for fat, and that they had crosses tattooed on their foreheads. Records say neither Gomez nor Kernal fit that description.

Court files say Armstrong testified he heard Saavedra utter a word that sounded like "Gregorio," Gomez's first name. Mental health experts testified Gomez had a personality disorder, emotional problems and was immature.

Armstrong said he doesn't believe Gomez should get parole.

"He took a life," the former sheriff said. "It was cold-blooded killing. I believe he should serve the full time."

Miskell said Gomez has been denied parole nine times and his last hearing was in June 2000. Before that, Seidel said, the board considered giving the prisoner parole in 1997. She said the fact that the board is seeing Gomez again after only one year means nothing.

"There should be no inferences made," she said, "that he was seen just last year. It's not a life sentence. We have to continue to see him."

Seidel said the board is accepting letters or e-mail from people who want to comment on Gomez or the crime, and will meet face-to-face with anyone who attends one of five public sessions being held across the state this month.

The last two will be this week in Wichita and Topeka. The board will meet from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday at the Finney State Office Build-

ing, 230 William in Wichita, and from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Friday at the Landon State Office Building, 900 Southwest Jackson St. in Topeka.

Seidel said every inmate who is eligible for release must submit a "parole plan" describing where they will live and work on the outside. She said she hasn't seen Gomez's plan.

"They can't be released to the streets," she said, "without us knowing where they will go."

Miskell said Gomez is being held in the administrative segregation unit in El Dorado, which means he is confined to his cell for 23 hours a day. He said he didn't know why Gomez is being segregated, but added that there could be many reasons.

Prisoners are put in the administrative segregation unit if they are considered an escape risk, Miskell said, or if they are having problems with other inmates.

He said Gomez has had five disciplinary violations in the past six years, including having dangerous contraband, violating published orders, misusing personal property and having relationships with staff. Miskell said the last record is from 1998.

Court records show that before 1995, Gomez had several discipline violations, including theft, fighting and disobeying orders. It also shows he received a General Equivalency Degree in 1988, completed a course in heating, air conditioning and refrigeration in 1987 and underwent mental health counseling and substance abuse treatment.

# City reviews franchise with S&T

By Janet Craft

The Goodland Daily News

City commissioners listened to two franchise agreements with S&T Communications at their meeting Monday, the first of three readings required by a state law.

One agreement is for a phone system and the other is for a cable system, which the Brewster firm wants to build to compete with existing systems in town.

Mike Gross, assistant general manager, said the company will be competing with Southwestern Bell and Eagle Cable Service and would probably have five or six employees in a Goodland office. They would offer phone, cable and Internet services.

Gross said the work would be done in six stages and probably wouldn't start before next year.

He said they would be tearing up streets and alleys when they laid fiber optic lines and underground cable in Goodland, but would repave the streets and rerock the alleys.

Gross said they want to set up an advisory committee consisting of three people and would like to have Pickman as one of the members. He added the company will be very community oriented and plans to give money to Pioneer Park.

A bid to remove junk and scrap from two pieces of property on Business U.S. 24 was given to Christner Salvage and Recycling of Herington. The business will do the job for \$16,400 by June 23.

Keith Cook is owner of the two properties, which are at 911 E. U.S. 24 and 529 W. U.S. 24. The city says he has let metal parts and pieces pile up, and it has received complaints about the two locations and has been trying to get the places cleaned up for some time.

Cook said people needing parts for

machinery they can't get elsewhere come to him and asked the commissioners for a 60-day extension, but it was denied. The commission decided to move ahead on the matter with a vote of 4-1. Commissioner Rick Billinger voted no.

The commission decided to put vinyl slats in the chain link fence between the city shop and Steever Water Park to make the area look more attractive. The cost will be around \$2,900 for the slats from Rasure Lumber Do-It Center in Goodland.

Pickman said the park should open next week, Wednesday, May 30, unless there were problems. He said the city crew put in the sprinkler system and sod at the water park last week.

"I'm very proud of the work they do and I appreciate their work," he said.

He thanked Topside Office Products for its donation of a cash register to the park.

The commission adopted a return to work policy for city workers who might be injured on the job. The policy is based on what a doctor would allow the employee to do and the employee would be paid a wage based on what they could do. The difference between the wage allowed and what the employee usually made would be picked up by workman's compensation insurance.

Pickman said the city would save money on insurance rates because the less money the insurance company spends on claims, the less chance there would be a rate increase for the city.

The commissioners gave the bid for the city street sealing project to B&H Paving of Scott City, the only bidder for the job, for \$135,627.

They approved a home occupation special use permit for a daycare center for Marcia L. Harkins at 722 W. 13th, contingent upon her receiving a state

permit.

The commissioners appointed Lloyd Holbrook to the High Plains Museum board for another three-year term.

They filled one of two positions on the Shade Tree Commission, which would be open in June. They appointed Dale Ellison to the tree commission for another three-year term, but did not fill the spot left by the resignation of Rudy Gemmer, who quit because of health reasons. Anyone interested in serving on the tree commission can contact any of the city commissioners or the city office.

Mayor Tom Rohr sent congratulations to the recent graduates of Goodland High School and the Northwest Kansas Technical College.

The commissioners scheduled a workshop with city staff to discuss city policies for 5 p.m. on Monday, June 11.

There was no presentation on the Topside of Kansas 24-Hour Relay Challenge, as it won't be held this year.

The commissioners will meet again at 5 p.m. on Monday, June 4, on the second floor of the city office building.

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# Bikers show support for veterans

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fourth year. He travels with his brothers Chris and Hector, and a third brother, Sharp, drives a support vehicle which has a trailer for out-of-commission motorcycles. He also provides knife sharpening services.

From their official web site at [www.rftw.org](http://www.rftw.org), the veterans describe the mission: "Run For The Wall (RFTW) was started in 1989 as an effort by a couple of Vietnam Veterans who traveled across the heartland of America on motorcycles, talking to local radio, television, and newspapers about the fact we have thousands of men and women still unaccounted for

from all of our wars. We continue this tradition every May.

"The trip takes 10 days to reach the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, where our Run officially ends on the Friday evening before Memorial Day. Additionally, we have things scheduled for the weekend, ending with participation in the Rolling Thunder Parade in Washington on Sunday. It is quite a sight to behold, 200,000 motorcycles all starting at once and parading through downtown Washington, ending at the Wall."

Some of the early motorcyclists actually got to Goodland on Saturday, but the largest group arrived at the New Trail Truck Stop and Total stations

about 9:30 a.m. Sunday.

They lined up at every available pump to fill their tanks and pick up some additional water or snacks on their way east.

The group of about 134 motorcycles and accompanying support vehicles took about an hour to get everyone fueled and ready for the next leg to Oakley for lunch.

The route through Goodland is known as the Central Route and there is now a Southern Route which travels from Ontario, Calif., through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi and Virginia before reaching Washington on Saturday.

# Drunk driving laws tougher

TOPEKA (AP) — In a rare end-of-May event, Gov. Bill Graves signed a bill strengthening the state's drunken driving laws by increasing fines and jail time.

Graves was joined at a Statehouse ceremony Tuesday by Attorney General Carla Stovall and members of her Far-Reaching Alteration of Traffic and Alcohol Laws, or FATAL, Task Force.

The governor said the law reflected continued efforts to maintain and enhance the quality of every Kansan.

Stovall said the law was the culmi-

nation of three years of work by her task force. The result will be "holding DUI offenders accountable for their actions," she said.

The new law also will permanently revoke the driver's license of anyone who fails a blood-alcohol test for the fifth time.

"After a period of time, it will say to them that there comes a point when the state will not give you your driver's license back and doesn't allow you to drive again," she said. "And that's an important lesson."

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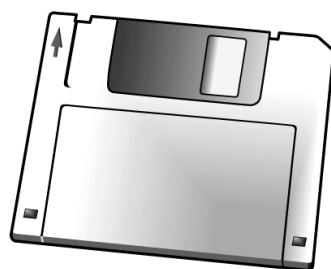
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