

State records law being upheld

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thick glass window, told her, "Oh, I don't know if we can do that. Let me ask."

Cooper said after the officer kept her waiting, told her there were no recent reports and then directed her to the district court, she gave up.

"As they weren't going to let me in to talk to anyone else," she said, "I gave up and left."

Gardner's visit was more productive, though the sheriff's office wasn't completely in compliance with the new provision of the Open Records Act, which requires offices to provide brochures explaining the law.

The reporter was asked for information about herself that the records act does not require citizens to provide. While the act doesn't say Kansans must give their occupation or reason for wanting information, Gardner said the clerk questioned her about both.

The reporter said she didn't have a problem getting a copy of the most recent accident report, though she had to pay \$2 for the four-page report.

When she asked for a freedom of information brochure, Artzer searched

for a while, and then said that the office did not have one.

"I asked her whether she was sure," Gardner reported, "since the Open Records Act required them."

The reporter said Artzer told her that the office might have a book, but no brochures.

However, Gardner said, when she called back later, Artzer told her the office did have a brochure, but that she did not get one for me because "I didn't know where it was."

In a separate interview, she said, Sheriff Doug Whitson told her the brochures are on display in the county courthouse, just west of the sheriff's office.

Gardner said the sheriff told her that although employees were told about the brochures during an Open Records Act training session last year, Artzer may have been absent when the location was discussed, or she may have forgotten that the display was in the courthouse.

"He said he has told employees where the display was," she said.

"Everybody is aware of where it's at now," Sheriff Whitson told the reporter. "We have refreshed their memories."

Public records available

ACCESS, from Page 1

this spring when he used public records to check spending on a district-owned credit card. His inquiry led to the superintendent's firing and to his and two other newcomers' election to the board.

In a related survey, a group of University of Kansas journalism students found that all but 10 of the state's 304 public school districts had complied with a new requirement that every public information officer designate a freedom of information officer. That person's job, in part, is to help resolve disputes over public records requests. A grant from the American Society of Newspaper Editors helped finance that survey.

Assistant Attorney General Steve Phillips said the newspaper survey reinforced his belief that compliance with open records laws is up in Kansas. He attributed the increase to publicity about the 1999 audit, which prompted changes in the law.

"I'm getting a lot more phone calls from government officials about the Open Records Act," he said. "There's just been an enormous shift. People are asking questions now."

Sandy Jacquot, legal counsel for the Kansas League of Municipalities, agreed.

"I think government officials are much more attentive," she said.

Jacquot said her organization, and the Kansas Association of Counties distributed thousands of free open records brochures to local governments after the Kansas Legislature adopted the requirement.

Phillips said the lack of education was probably responsible for many agencies not having brochures or an agency might simply run out.

"I imagine you could hit us on a bad day and we might not have them," he said.

The Kansas Open Records Act makes all government records open to the public unless they fall under one of

43 specific exemptions, which range from the location of archeological digs to criminal investigation reports.

Without volunteering their occupations, journalists from 14 newspapers visited the 32 offices in April and found:

- Twenty-four did not have freedom of information brochures available on request.

- Employees at 15 agencies wanted to know why those making the requests wanted to see the records.

- Employees at 11 agencies asked who the person worked for.

- Four sheriff's departments refused to provide complete copies of the records.

In Allen County, a reporter was allowed to see, but not copy, an accident report. He was told that only insurance companies and those involved in accidents could have copies. Sheriff Robbie Atkins, who took office in January, later admitted he didn't fully understand the law, which allows people to make copies.

Ford County complied with a request to see an accident report but deleted the addresses, which are public. Sheriff Dean Bush, who also took office in January, later said the department was rewriting its open records policy.

"We truly are trying to get this right," he said.

In Hodgeman County, a clerk said she could not provide an accident report without first having the name of someone involved. She also refused to let a reporter see a list of sheriff's cases because it contained juveniles' names. Sheriff Fred Gilliam did not return calls seeking comment.

In Rooks County, Sheriff Roger Mongeau said accident reports could be viewed only by media representatives, insurance companies and people involved in accidents. Mongeau, who also took office in January, said open records were covered during a two-week school for new sheriffs in January, but he said he hasn't looked at the materials since.

Giving it his best



Allan Brandner, a client of Golden West Community Services in Goodland, threw a tennis ball Friday morning at the high school track during a track and field meet. The clients competed against each other Friday since the Special Olympics event to be held in Garden City a few weeks ago was canceled because of rainy weather.

Photo by Janet Craft/The Goodland Daily News

Cheney says price caps, pressure won't solve energy crisis

WASHINGTON (AP) — Vice President Dick Cheney is offering few encouraging words for Democrats seeking immediate relief for California's energy crisis.

"They got into trouble in California over a period of years, and it's going to take two or three years to get out of it," Cheney said Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation." "There are going to be blackouts this summer."

Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., said she was appalled that President Bush is not considering price caps or investigating companies she said are charging exorbitant prices for electricity. She noted that both Cheney and Bush are former oil industry executives.

"It's really rather stunning because

Board to consider outside review

The Goodland Regional Medical Center board meets at 7 p.m. tonight and will consider a proposal to have an outside review of Rural Health Ventures clinic operations.

This will be the first board meeting with Jay Jolly, the administrator who began work on May 1.

The proposal for the independent review was presented by Mary Ann Elliott, head of the Rural Health Ventures, at the April board meeting, but the board delayed action until the new administrator was on the job.

The meeting will also include a closed session dealing with personnel.

The board will meet in the new conference room at hospital.

those of us who are living through this have suggested many things," Boxer said on CBS. "So the vice president sits very coolly, and I admire his cool, but he really sounds like an oilman, not a vice president charged with helping the people."

If dairy farmers sought as much profit as oil companies — in some cases, 1,600 percent — a gallon of milk would cost \$190, she said.

But Cheney, chief architect of the administration energy plan released last week, said capping prices would not increase energy supplies or reduce demand.

"We get politicians who want to go

Street bids to be open

The Goodland City commissioners plan to approve a bid for sealing the city's streets at today's meeting.

The annual maintenance project is done each summer on about one-third of the streets in Goodland.

City Manager Ron Pickman will give a report on the progress and plans for the grand opening of Steever Water Park.

The commissioners will have the first reading of two ordinances for franchise agreements between the city and S&T Communications. One is for a phone system and the other for a cable system.

There have to be three readings of ordinances before the commission can approve them, Pickman said.

In other business, the commission will:

- Hear a budget request for the Goodland economic development

committee from Stephen West, chairman of the Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce and head of the development panel.

- Decide on a home occupation special use permit for a daycare center from Marcia L. Harkins, 722 W. 13th.

- Discuss a return-to-work policy for anyone who is injured on the job.

- Make two appointments to the Goodland Shade Tree Commission.

- Hear a bid for nuisance abatement.

- Discuss filling an opening on the High Plains Museum board.

- Hear a report about the Topside of Kansas 24-Hour Relay Challenge.

- Talk about the type of screening material to put in the chain link fence between the city shop and Steever Water Park.

The commission will meet at 5 p.m. on the second floor of the Goodland city office.

Students will meet hero

UNIONTOWN (AP) — A magazine clipping gave four high school students a new hero — and a chance to meet her.

Their hero isn't a pop star or an athlete, but a frail, 91-year-old woman who lives in a small apartment halfway across the world and speaks only a few words of their language.

"It's not even a reality yet," said Megan Stewart, one of the four students from this small southeast Kansas town. "It won't be a reality until I step off the plane in Poland and go, 'Hey, I'm gonna meet Irena Sendler.'"

Stewart, Elizabeth Cambers, Sabrina Coons and Gabrielle Bradbury couldn't believe Sendler's story when they first

read a magazine clipping crediting her with saving 2,500 Jewish children from death during World War II.

Sendler, who was not Jewish, posed as a nurse to gain entrance into the Warsaw ghetto during World War II.

Up to 500,000 Jews were herded into the ghetto by the Nazis. An average of 5,000 people died each month from starvation, disease, exposure to cold and shootings.

Sendler, a young mother, convinced Jewish parents that their children had a better chance of survival if she could smuggle them out of the ghetto and into homes where they could be hidden and cared for until after the war.

Cheney said the answer to long-term price stability lies in building more oil refineries in the United States and in reviewing a system whereby different states require different blends of fuel — some mixed with the corn additive ethanol, for example — to meet clean air standards.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., said Congress should look into at least temporarily suspending the 18.4-cent-a-gallon federal gasoline tax.

Cheney said, however, that would pose problems for the highway trust fund, which relies on that tax to build and maintain the nation's transportation infrastructure.

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