

City increases electric rates 16 percent

By Doug Stephens
The Goodland Daily News
 The city commission voted Monday to raise electric rates for the first time in nine years, a move which will officials say will cost the average household about \$7 a month, about 16 percent more for residential customers. Residential rates went up 1.2 cents a kilowatt hour to 8.5 cents, low-income residential rate up .3 of one cent to 6.5, commercial rates half a cent to 7.5, and the rate the city charges itself 1 cent to 6.5 cents. Industrial rates stayed even at 6.5, and the government classification was eliminated. Government offices were being charged 5.5 cents under the old rates, and now they are grouped in the commercial rate, 7.5 cents. The rate increase will cost the average household \$7.20 a month, said Pickman. The increase was necessary, Pickman said, because the city only collected about 92 percent of the costs to supply electricity last year. The industrial category was the only rate which paid for itself, he said. Even with the increase, the city will still not recover all its costs for residential customers, Pickman said. It will collect about 93 percent of its residen-

tial costs, and will be short about \$114,000. The city will make up for it by recovering about 105 percent from itself, and 104 percent from commercial accounts. Commissioner Rick Billinger asked if the residential rates were being raised high enough. Pickman said the city staff had picked "an amount which we felt comfortable with." "The only reason we have to raise rates is to recover our own costs," he said. The city has had to use reserve funds the past two years to pay for electric costs, and last year the city was short \$307,000, Pickman said. "According to the state," Pickman said, "proprietary accounts like electricity have to be self-sufficient. We can't use tax dollars to pay for them." The city had transferred \$450,000 from the electric fund to the general fund for the past several years, Pickman said, but they could not do that this year because the state won't allow a transfer unless there is a surplus in the account. Without an electric rate increase, the city might have to raise property taxes a little over 20 mills to cover the \$450,000, Pickman said.

The electrical reserve fund has a little over \$1 million in it, said City Clerk Mary Volk, and Pickman said at a previous meeting there should be \$2.5 to 5 million in it to cover emergency repairs at the power plant. "Even this rate increase might not be enough to take care of the transfer," Pickman said, noting that there have already been two months this year in which the electric rates didn't pay for costs. City workers have been told to watch expenses, and have been asked to come up with ideas to save money, Pickman said. The city hasn't raised electric rates since 1993, said Pickman. He said the city should have reviewed rates and gradually increased them over time, rather than all at once like now. "We should have looked at this in 1994," he said. The ordinance passed unanimously, with Commissioner Dean Blume absent. In other business the commission: • Appointed Mayor Tom Rohr and Commissioner Chuck Lutters to the Sherman County Community Foundation board, with Lutters voting against the motion, claiming he already had a full calendar.

• Gave a \$1,000 grant to the Northwest Kansas Animal Shelter, leaving \$550 in the city's grant fund. "They do a good job with limited resources," said Hurd. • Granted permits to Patrician Walker, 1506 Walnut, and Tara R. Avelar, 813 Eastridge, to run home-based daycare centers. • Re-appointed Gary Ginther and Dennis Saint to three-year terms on the Board of Building Appeals. • Appointed Crystal Linsner to finish Kim Duell's term on the City Planning Commission, which expires Dec. 31. Duell had resigned. Chad Tuttle and Joyce Boehme had also applied for the spot. • Approved a resolution allowing the mayor to sign an agreement with the Kyle Railroad and the Kansas Department of Transportation to repair the railroad crossing on Cattletail this summer. The city will only have to pay for advance warning signs and pavement marking. The rest will be paid with federal money, Pickman said. • Formally approved going ahead with the proposed county-city cardboard recycling project. Pickman said Utilicorp gave the city \$3,000 for the project.

Individual containers available for \$4 fee

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Individual yard waste roll-outs will be available on request, and will cost \$4 a month. Fees for the yard dumpster have to be paid a month in advance, so customers don't use the service, then move out of town. Special collections of large items will continue, but there the city will start charging for them. Heavy and bulky items and large appliances will cost \$5 to pick up, while small appliances, tree branches, non-metal furniture, tires and other items will cost \$3. Some items, such as tires, have an additional cost imposed by the county. All items must be bundled or boxed and can't be longer than six feet or weigh more than 50 pounds. Tree branches can be tied with string or taped up, Pickman said. The city will come up with a pick-up schedule. "We need definite rules," Pickman said. Pickman said the county is charging the city when it drops off large items, and the city needs to recoup its costs. The city won't break even, he said, because labor is involved, but he said he thinks the service is important. "It allows those who can't make it to the landfill to get rid of their

large trash at a minimal fee," he said. Pickman said the city staff drew up about 20 versions of the ordinance before they came up with one which they thought was workable. "This is probably the hardest thing we've ever worked on," he said. The staff will compose a letter explaining the system and how this is the city's last chance to comply with the county's new regulations. A copy of Sherman County landfill rules, the city ordinance, and information about recycling will be included with the letter, which will be passed out door-to-door. "...we should provide our customers with the information necessary to make them aware of the rules ...and final notice that if the abuse continues there will be no choice but to change the system and pay the price," Pickman wrote in the memo. Two members of the audience volunteered to pass out the packets in their neighborhoods. "If we all work together," Pickman said, "we can make the system work, and won't have to raise rates. "Maybe we can stop talking trash," Commissioner Curtis Hurd added.

County looks at hazardous waste program options

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Daily News
 Sherman County hasn't bothered with household hazardous waste in the past, but with the opening of the new landfill, the commissioners are looking for help from surrounding counties to get a program started.

ported that on April 2 there would be a demonstration of a bailer to compact the incoming solid waste to make it easier handle at the landfill site. He suggested that the same bailer might be used to compact the cardboard for recycling. Later in the meeting, there was a telephone conference call with the Sherman County commissioners, Linsner, Way, and Cathy Colglazier of the state Department of Health and Environment to discuss the requirements for a household hazardous waste program. Colglazier said the state has grant money to help set up a program, and possibly pay for the first year. She said these grants can be requested in May and September. Steve Sellmeyer, an engineering associate in the state Bureau of Waste Management, Solid Waste Permit Section, said the main difference between a satellite program and a permanent permitted program is the building and how the material is stored. In a permanent program, the building has to be designed for handling household hazardous waste, but in a satellite program the material can be stored in between two and four special cabinets for up to a year, and the building does not have to meet all the special requirements. Linsner asked about handling latex paint, and Sellmeyer said it is not really a hazardous item, but that since they are taking oil-based paint as hazardous waste, it is convenient to take the latex paint. He said it was not a problem to accept the latex paint and mix it together in a barrel, but that if the county plans

to give the mixed latex paint away, there must be some sort of new can or container to put the paint in. Colglazier said when the county holds a collection day, only trained people can handle the incoming materials. She said there is a day-long training program offered by the state, and that someone has to have this training before any collections can be done. Another way is to have someone who has the training supervise the collection. Linsner asked about having volunteers to help, and Colglazier said any volunteer must be trained, but that they could unload incoming materials which the fully trained people would then place in the proper locations. She said whatever program Sherman County chooses, they will have to write a plan that will be approved by the state. Sellmeyer said it would take several months to get a permit, but a satellite program could be going within a few weeks. In other business the commissioners: • Met in closed session with Mary Messamore, central dispatch director, and Fred Hall and Darrel Cloyd, members of the county communications board, at the commissioners request to discuss personnel matters. The session lasted 15 minutes and there was no action taken when the meeting was reopened. • Met in closed session with Way about a personnel matter. The session lasted 20 minutes, and when the meeting reopened Commissioner Chuck Frankenfeld made a motion to increase the salary of Paula Geist, the new road

and bridge secretary. The motions were seconded by Commissioner Mitch Tiede and it passes unanimously with Commissioner Kevin Rasure voting in favor. • Approved a contract with Penco Engineers for inspection of 75 bridges for \$3,375. • Held a closed session with County Attorney Bonnie Selby, lawyer Scott Showalter and Sheriff Doug Whitson about a legal matter. • Sheriff Whitson asked for a second closed session to discuss a personnel matter. Included in the session were Selby, Rumpel and Linsner as the payroll clerk. The session lasted 30 minutes, but no action was taken when the meeting reopened. • Made a decision to switch the county long distance phone service to S & T Telephone of Brewster. Rasure made the motion and it was seconded by Tiede. The motion passed unanimously 3-0. • Accepted a bid from Dean Graber for \$1,296, to spray weeds at the county fairgrounds. • Approved a list of solid waste items that will be accepted at the county transfer station, and decided to publish it along with a statement explaining the reasons for adopting the list. Copies list will be available at the road and bridge office and the county clerk's office. • Approved payment of \$112,567 in bills. They discussed several with Sheriff Whitson, and decided one to the Goodland Regional Medical Center should be voided to see if the State of Arkansas will pay for the medical care of a prisoner who was held in the Bastille.

Farmers struggle with losses

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many families — come due Jan. 1. That makes the February delinquency figures a good indicator of how the state's farm families are doing. "I was expecting them to be up, but quite honestly they are lower than we have seen in some recent years for this time of year," said Arlyn Stiebe, farm loan chief for the agency. The agency's delinquency rate now stands at 15.7 percent — below the 18 percent it was last year at this time and even below the 2000 delinquency rate of 16.1 percent, he said. By comparison, the agency's had a 19 percent of its farm loans past due in 1999 and 23.5 percent of them past due in 1996. "A lot of the lower delinquency rate is due to the fact that the government came up with these supplemental payments which helped some borrowers make their payments to us and other creditors ... if it weren't for that, basically they would all be going broke," Stiebe said. Another difference between the farm economy now and during the farm crisis of the 1980s is that farmland values are still relatively high and interest rates were at historic highs then. Now they are at lows. "Nobody wants to be the ultimate pessimist," Stiebe said. "I think we are awful close to a similar situation that we had in the 1980s ... If we had those two factors again with the current situation, we would be right back in the same situation we were in the 1980s." Kansas Rural Family Helpline (866-327-6578) has gotten at least 300 calls in its first year of operation, many of

those dealing with financial problems at the farm. "We have seen some increases throughout the winter," said Charlie Griffin, project director for the helpline. "I think wintertime is typically a time when farmers get in the house. They look at the books, get ready to do taxes and start making financial decisions about the coming year." Duane Hund, a farm analyst for Kansas State University, works with struggling farm families across the state. He said a lot of the families he is working with now got hammered by big losses in their milo crops because of last summer's drought. Others had big losses when the federal cattle market dropped in the last few months. "I believe that next year that figure could go up, depending on how the farm bill comes out," Hund said. "There are people I am working with whose banks are waiting to see what the farm bill does." Chuck Holcomb said he and other farmers are keeping their farm loans current in part because of the lessons learned from the farm crisis of the 1980s. "The first thing you do is make sure that loan is paid," said Chuck Holcomb. "You put off updating that tractor, you put off everything else — because if that loan is not paid and they foreclose on it, you are done."

Filipino authorities warned in 1995 that terrorists were training in U.S.

By Jim Gomez and John Soloman
Associated Press Writers
 U.S. authorities were alerted as early as 1995 that several Middle Eastern pilots were training at American flight schools and at least one had proposed hijacking a plane to crash into federal buildings, according to documents and interviews with Filipino and U.S. authorities.

then he will hijack said aircraft, control its cockpit and dive it at the CIA headquarters," one Filipino police report from 1995 said. "There will be no bomb or any explosive that he will use in its execution. It is a suicidal mission that he is very much willing to execute," it said. Filipino authorities told AP they shared the information immediately with FBI agents in Manila in 1995, and ultimately concluded that U.S. authorities focused too much on the bombing plot and not enough on the possibility of suicide hijackings. "We shared that with the FBI," said Robert Delfin, chief of intelligence command for the Philippine National Police. "They may have mislooked (sic) and didn't appreciate the info coming from the Philippine police." Murad, who later claimed he was tortured during his interrogations, detailed to Filipino authorities how he and a Pakistani friend crisscrossed the United States, attending flight schools in New York, Texas, California and North Carolina on his way to earning a commercial pilot's license. He also identified to Filipino police approximately 10 other Middle Eastern

men who met him at the flight schools or were getting similar training. One was a Middle Eastern flight instructor who came to the United States for more training; another a former soldier in the United Arab Emirates. Others came from Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. None of the pilots match the names of the 19 hijackers from Sept. 11, but Filipino police's investigation of Murad and Yousef uncovered information pointing to a Muslim cleric from Malaysia who has emerged in the past few months as a key figure in the investigation of last year's suicide hijackings. Authorities in Malaysia have said they believe the cleric, who goes by the name Hambali, met with two of the Sept. 11 hijackers in 2000 and may be a central figure in terrorist groups with links to bin Laden that have emerged in southeast Asia. Authorities are seeking Hambali's arrest. FBI and other law enforcement officials involved in the Murad investigation, who spoke only on condition of anonymity, said American authorities were focused mostly on the plot to detonate bombs on airliners because it was developed and imminent when the

men were arrested. The officials said the government had very general information from Murad about an idea, not a complete plan, for flying a plane into the CIA headquarters near Washington, but believed he was considering a small single engine plane and not a commercial airliner. The officials said the FBI interviewed people at the flight schools highlighted by Filipino police but did not develop evidence that any of the other Middle Easterners other than Murad were directly plotting terrorism. With no other evidence of a threat, they took no further action, the officials said. FBI agents descended upon the flying schools in 1995, and returned to some of those locations after Sept. 11. "There were several of them (Middle Eastern pilot students) here. At one point three or four were here," said Laura Flynn, an assistant manager at Richmore Flight School in Schenectady, N.Y., where Murad and a friend attended in the mid-1990s. "Supposedly they didn't know each other before, they just happened to show up here at the same time. But they all obviously knew each other," she said.

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