

City to pick projects to pursue

By Doug Stephens
The Goodland Daily News
The Goodland City Commission has to decide what grant projects are the most important to the city.

Schylar Goodwin, a committee member for a grant writing program, asked the commission Monday to come up with 10 projects they would like to focus on, and to flag the top three. Goodwin said he was asking all the government bodies in the county to do the same thing.

"We may not get to all of the projects," Goodwin said. "We might get 30 to 40 of them, but at least we'll know what everybody considers important."

Goodwin said that the committee would meet every two months and would go through the projects with Penny Nemechek, the new grant writer.

Nemechek, currently administrative assistant at Goodland Regional Medical Center, will start as an independent contractor on July 1.

Commissioner Rick Billinger said there were some grants the city always applies for. Were those projects supposed to be included in the list, he asked, or should the list include only new projects?

City Manager Ron Pickman said the city staff could keep working on the regular grants, and suggested putting new projects on the list.

"Of course," Pickman said, "we appreciate all the help we can get."

The commissioners agreed to come up with a list by its next meeting.

Goodwin said the main goal of the program will be to get the \$36,000, the amount it gets from

the government bodies to run an office, as soon as possible, to show the taxpayers that the program can be successful.

"Of course, we aren't going to stop there," Goodwin said.

In other business, the commission:

- Tabled two appointments to the construction and demolition debris committee. The commission has tabled the appointments three times because they have gotten no volunteers.

- Approved a federal drug and alcohol testing policy. It is the same policy as last year's, Pickman said, it is just in a different format.

- Heard Pickman tell about a municipal training class which will be in Goodland Friday, June 28. Commissioner Curtis Hurd asked to be signed up for the class.

Her job is finding money

By Rachel Miscal
The Goodland Daily News

After Penny Nemechek took a class on how to write grants, she told her husband, "This is what I want to do when I grow up."

So when the 33-year-old heard a committee in Sherman County was seeking a grant writer to find money for city, county and school district projects, she jumped at the chance.

"It was a big leap on the part of the county, city and school district to create the program," she said. "I'm taking one as well."

The committee formed to run the new grant writer program hired Nemechek last week, with Schylar Goodwin, a member who first proposed the idea, saying she had the most experience of the six applicants.

It's a risk for Nemechek because she's leaving a job at Goodland Regional Medical Center she's held for 10 years for a contract position that could disappear next year. She'll be having to prove herself and build a program basically from scratch.

City, county and school district officials agreed to pitch in \$12,000 each to pay for the program on a one-year trial. They say they may support it

again next year if it looks like it is working.

Nemechek, who has been administrative assistant at the hospital for 10 years, will start her new job on Monday, July 1.

She will use the \$36,000 to find public and private grants that will pay for city, county and district projects. Nemechek will also split a 6 percent administrative fee off every grant she brings in with the three entities.

Nemechek said she enjoys working at the hospital, but her duties there can keep her from spending time with her three children Garrett, 7; Jamie, 3; and Parker, 2.

She said she has taken three grant writing courses and one foundation development class through the Western Prairie Resource Conservation and Development organization. Nemechek said she has written several grant applications for hospital projects. "More are not funded than are," she said, adding that the trick to securing grants is to go after as many as possible. "My philosophy is it's impossible to win the lottery if you don't buy a ticket."

She said she's sure she can bring in some money, adding that her job is to clearly explain why the grant is needed

and how it will be used.

"I need to help tell the story," she said, "and demonstrate that we have a need and it will be a good investment."

The time it takes to secure a grant depends on the nature and size of the grant, Nemechek said. Different grants have different requirements. Some applications she's written are 50 pages long and some are one page.

Rather than "reinventing the wheel," Nemechek said, she will talk with people who run successful grant-writing programs in other cities, including a woman in Atchison who brings in millions of grant dollars each year.

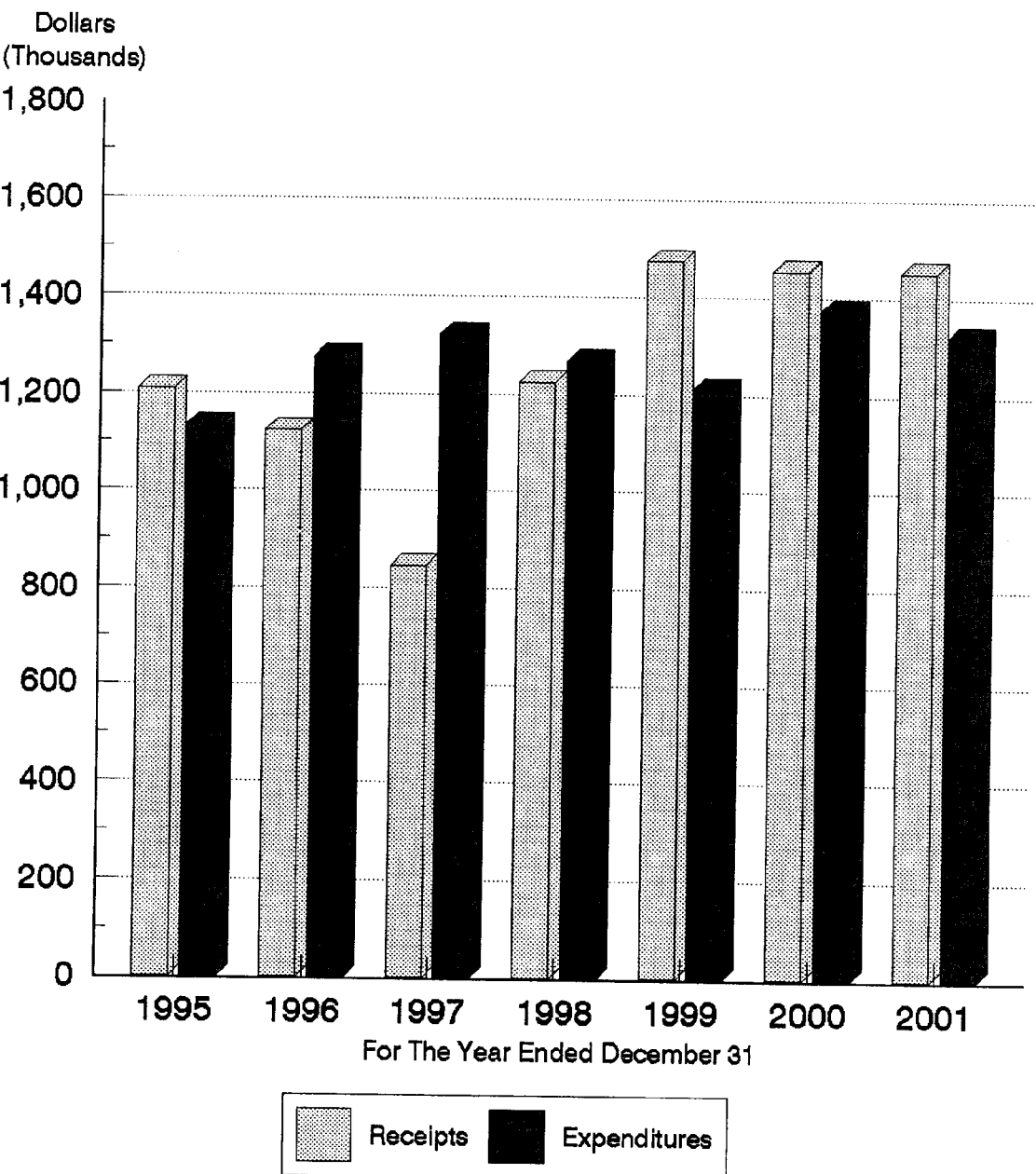
City, county and school officials have acknowledged that it will take more than a year to create a successful program. Nemechek said committee members have told her what they want to see by next July is evidence of a good start.

"I asked the committee how they define success," she said. "They said they couldn't; they just want to see progress."



Nemechek

SHERMAN COUNTY General Fund Receipts and Expenditures



County in good shape

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Daily News

Sherman County has rebuilt its reserves and is in good financial shape, auditor Mark Bauer of VonFeldt, Bauer and VonFeldt from Larned, told the commissioners Friday.

Bauer said the county has seen actual income increase with only a slight increase in taxes over the past five years.

The figures he presented showed that Sherman County had some tough years from 1996 through 1998, when the county was trying to recover from the initial landfill costs, and had to dig into the reserves and ask the state for permission to borrow money on no-fund warrants.

"At that time the county was under the state-imposed tax lid, which made it difficult," Bauer said. "Over the past three years, the county has been able to improve the situation and to rebuild the general fund reserves."

He said the improvement in the county revenues will make it a bit easier to handle the expected 4 percent cut in money from the state to the county.

Bauer said the audit was an "un-qualified opinion," meaning the auditors did not find anything that was amiss or out of compliance with state laws.

Total county funds showed a positive increase over the past year of \$509,823, with a beginning balance of \$2,211,643 and an ending balance of \$2,721,466.

One of the largest increases was in the landfill fund, where the beginning balance was \$138,905 and the ending balance was \$317,459. The landfill

account had receipts of \$521,542, expenditures of \$383,363 and there was \$25,802 held for accounts payable.

The county collected \$244,841 in the special sales tax for repaving old U.S. 24, and after expenditures of \$332,466 had an ending balance of \$111,568. That money plus what was collected the first few months of this year is what the county is using to chip seal the eastern 17 miles of the road this summer.

In an accompanying management letter, Bauer said there were some places where internal controls could be improved.

He noted that some items were being paid directly by treasurer's checks rather than through the voucher system. A listing of those with the monthly vouchers would be a good idea, he said, and he recommended limiting use of treasurer's checks to those items required by state law such as distribution of taxes, checks to the state and tax refunds.

"Again, we have an ongoing battle to have organizations under the county use the county federal employer identification number," he said. "Last year, we had nine, and this year we are doing better, but there is still one — a different one this year — using the county number. They need to have their own federal identification number."

County Attorney Bonnie Selby said she had written to all the nine last year and got them squared away. Bauer said the Kanorado volunteer firemen had opened an account this year using the county number rather than filing for an independent federal identification number.

The commissioners suggested to Selby that she write a letter to the firemen, and follow it up with a letter to all the area banks explaining that they should not open an account without approval of the county treasurer or county clerk using the county identification number.

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