



Flames burned across a wheat field this morning about 12 miles north of Goodland. Photo by Doug Stephens/The Goodland Daily News

No more burning, say commissioners

BURN BAN, from Page 1

about the use of camp stoves and grills at Smoky Gardens on the July 4th holiday, because technically these would be included in the ban.

After discussion Griffith agreed that if people are careful and are using contained camp stoves or grills those could be used, but no open pit fires will be allowed.

"I would ask that people be sure the fire is out in the grill before they leave," he said.

"It will include camp fires at Smoky Gardens because the grass in the area is so dry," Griffith said, "if that ever caught fire we could look like Colo-

rado."

The commissioners unanimously approved imposing the countywide burn ban, which will be effective through July 5th, but can be extended for additional days at the next commissioner meeting scheduled for Tuesday.

"If someone starts a fire with fireworks and there is property damage the person can be charged with arson," Griffith said.

The commissioners said they would alert the Sherman County Sheriff's Department and the county employee who is the caretaker for Smoky Gardens to be extra watchful.



People can use 3-cent stamps with old 34-cent stamps to make up the difference of the price increase going into effect Sunday.

Postage rate increase takes effect on Sunday

STAMP, from Page 1

can still use the old ones, he said, but they will have to add a 3 cent stamp to the envelope.

Marvin Selby, school district superintendent, said the increase would cost the district about \$1,200 per year, which includes mailings for all three elementary schools, the junior high and high school.

Mary Volk, city clerk, said the city will have to pay about \$1,200 extra per year in billing alone. Adding in the building, police and other departments, she estimates the total increase would be \$1,500 to \$2,000 per year—money the city has not budgeted.

Selby said he's not happy the district, already strapped for cash, is going to have to pay extra for postage, but if there has to be an increase, it came at a good time.

"I'm up to my elbows in budget work right now," Selby said. "The new (fiscal) year starts Monday, so this was perfect timing for us."

Besides the cost of first-class mail rising from 34 cents to 37, post cards are going from 21 cents to 23, express mail will be up to \$13.65 from \$12.45, and certified mail will be \$2.30, up from \$2.10.

Dustin Eller, owner of WebKansas, said his business sends out 300 pieces of mail a month, so the increase will cost him about \$9.

"It's not going to hurt us much," Eller said, "but I imagine it would hurt someone who sends out thousands of pieces of mail."

"What do they need that extra 3 cents for? They figure people have no choice. What are they going to do, go down and mail with a competitor?"

The cost of doing business is up, the postal service said in a letter it sent out to explain the increase. It says it has cut costs, including getting rid of tens of thousands of positions, but it still needs more money so service won't be hurt.

The service says it has to deliver to 1.7 million new customers each year, but people aren't sending as much mail, so volume isn't keeping up with customer growth. This year, the service says it plans to deliver 6 billion fewer pieces of mail than last year.

The growth of e-mail might be a reason why people are mailing less, Eller said.

"It probably has a lot to do with it," he said. "You can send mail, pictures, even videos. What are you going to do, send a video through e-mail, or pay \$5 to put it in the mail?"

'Pledge' ruling on hold until dust settles

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A much-maligned ruling on the Pledge of Allegiance is on hold while a federal appeals court decides how to deal with calls for a rehearing in the case.

Judge Alfred T. Goodwin, who wrote the 2-1 opinion that said schools cannot have students recite the pledge, prevented it from taking effect until the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decides whether it wants to alter course. He gave no reason.

Attorney General John Ashcroft said Thursday the Justice Department will request a hearing by an 11-judge panel. As of Thursday afternoon, court clerk Cathy Catterson said no petitions for a rehearing had been submitted.

Gov. Gray Davis and school officials in the town of Elk Grove, where the plaintiff lives, both promised to appeal.

The appeals court can rehear the case with the same three judges, or an 11-judge panel. Goodwin's action has no immediate result, since the ruling already was on hold by court rules for 45 days to allow for any challenges.

Goodwin stunned people across the political spectrum when he declared that reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools is unconstitutional because the phrase "one nation under God" amounts to a government endorsement of religion. The words "under God" were inserted by Congress in 1954 after a campaign by the Knights

of Columbus, a Roman Catholic organization.

Vikram Amar, a Hastings College of the Law scholar, said Goodwin's latest opinion "has no legal force or effect" for the time being.

"They're acknowledging the likelihood that the whole 9th Circuit may take a look at this," Amar said.

Given the public outrage over the initial ruling, Goodwin wanted to make clear that children, for now, are not barred from reciting the pledge in class, legal experts said.

"This is not your ordinary run-of-the-mill decision," said Douglas Mirell, a Los Angeles-based constitutional law attorney.

"Extraordinary cases may require extraordinary measures in order to clarify for the public and the world exactly what the results of the case are."

Craig Johnson, a constitutional rights attorney in New York, agreed. "I think there was a lot of back channel pressure on these judges to put a stay on this given the initial public reaction," Johnson said.

Wednesday's ruling was in response to a California atheist's bid to keep his second-grade daughter from being exposed to religion in school. The decision was met with widespread criticism, including from Congress and President Bush.

State retirement pension system took hit on WorldCom stock

TOPEKA (AP) — The state pension system took a hit from the drop in the price of WorldCom Inc. stock, but officials say it isn't anything to worry about.

The Kansas State Employees Retirement System lost between \$5 million and \$6 million in the value of its

WorldCom holdings, Rob Woodard, KPERS chief investment officer, said Thursday.

"In relative terms, it won't have a significant impact," he said. "No single security movement has that much of an impact because the fund is diverse."

Woodard said KPERS's total assets are around \$9 billion and WorldCom stock accounts for only a minute portion of the pension system's total portfolio.

KPERS holds about 600,000 shares of WorldCom stock directly and indirectly. Trading was halted on

the stock, so KPERS hasn't been able to sell it.

About 56,000 retirees receive monthly pension checks from KPERS.

During fiscal year 2001, KPERS paid out \$550 million in retirement benefits.

Bob Knight's manager leaves

TOPEKA (AP) — Republican gubernatorial candidate Bob Knight's campaign campaign manager has left him.

The change happened less than six weeks before the Aug. 6 primary but said her departure won't hurt the Wichita mayor's efforts.

Kelly Lyle said she parted from the campaign Wednesday on good terms.

"It was apparent that Mayor Knight had a team on the ground, she said, "but there wasn't a good spot for me, so I decided to leave."

She said her leaving won't hurt Knight's chances.

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