

Lobbyist for bomb victims wants share

WASHINGTON (AP) — Roy Sells was reluctant to part with any compensation he might receive as an Oklahoma City bombing victim, but said he was won over by a longtime friend and adviser to Attorney General John Ashcroft who promised to use his connections to win government payments in exchange for 10 percent to 27.5 percent of the proceeds.

Sells is among about 120 survivors and victims' relatives from the 1995 bombing who signed up for the lobbying campaign, which fell apart last month amid lawsuits and an ethics complaint involving the organizers, according to court documents and interviews.

The intent was to win a share of the hundreds of millions of dollars set aside for families of Sept. 11 victims. "I'm not happy thinking about having to give them 10 percent or 25 percent of it," said Sells, whose wife died in the blast. "But it seemed like, at that time, no one else was doing anything as far as the Oklahoma City victims were concerned. I'm discouraged that they were that kind of money-hungry, get-rich-quick type deal."

The attorney general's friend, Charles Polk, is well known among Missouri Republicans and was at Ashcroft's side in early 2001 during his contentious Senate confirmation hearing.

Justice officials said Thursday that Polk has had occasional contact with senior Justice officials, including Ashcroft, adviser David Israelite and Sept. 11 fund administrator Kenneth Feinberg.

But officials were unaware he was soliciting business from Oklahoma City victims, or had a financial stake, Justice spokeswoman Barbara Comstock said.

"No one in the attorney general's office, including the attorney general himself, had any idea that Charles Polk was working on any legal matters related to Oklahoma City victims or that Polk had a financial interest in connection with Oklahoma City," Comstock said.

Polk said in a statement released by his attorney that he worked as a lobbyist in an attempt to win compensation for the Oklahoma victims but never discussed it with Ashcroft and cleared all his actions in advance with lawyers.

"We operated under the assumption that we were in compliance with all applicable laws," Polk's statement said.

Some who worked with Polk say the St. Louis attorney suggested to them that Ashcroft's department supported the idea of extending the compensation Congress set up for Sept. 11 victims to the Oklahoma City families.

"He did say the Department of Justice felt there was probably an injustice and it would probably administratively happen, but it wasn't for certain," said Kathleen Treanor, an Oklahoma City woman who lost her 4-year-old child and in-laws in the explosion on April 19, 1995, which killed 168 people. She joined the effort to sign up victims for the campaign.

Marshal follows dad's path

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animals with young 4-Hers. He and Marcia now grow corn, wheat and soybeans and raise cattle on their farm.

"He answered questions," Marcia said, "and helped people take care of problems."

Marcia, who was born in Stafford County and met Steve at Hutchinson Junior College, wasn't a 4-Her as a kid, but said she became involved through their children.

She said she helped their two sons, Alex and Nick with their 4-H projects, was a food leader for about five years and was leader of the County Clovers 4-H Club for about 3 years.

Steve said he went off the fair board in 2000 because he felt it was time for new blood. Steve Duell, has been president for two years.

That doesn't mean Evert isn't still involved in the community. He is a volunteer emergency medical technician on the ambulance crew and is a member of the hospital board and the co-op board.

He still helps with the fair if he's



Marcia and Steve Evert

needed, he said, but tries to stay behind-the-scenes as much as possible. "I'm pretty low key now," he said. Steve said his father taught him the

importance of being involved. "If you don't like the way something is going, either get with the program, or leave it alone," he said.

Water issue may be decided Monday

If water usage in the city hasn't gone down this month, the City Commission has two choices at its meeting Monday: keep telling people to conserve water or moving to enforced conservation, with fines for people who waste water.

At their last meeting, the commission declared a "water warning," asking people to watch how much water they use, and said they would look at usage and decide whether to declare an emergency this month.

In a water emergency, the city can

restrict lawn watering, shut down car washes and coin-operated laundries, and charge people who use the most water a higher rate.

The city is asking that people don't water their lawns between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., and then only two hours at a time, every other day on an even-odd pattern. They suggest people only wash their cars if necessary, and then at a car wash, which might use less water than someone with a hose and bucket.

These rulls could become mandatory at Monday's meeting. The commission endorsed the conservation after learning the city used 91 million gallons of water in June and 47 million in the first 14 days of July. The city is only allotted an average of 45 million gallons a month under its well permits.

City Manager Ron Pickman said some people have ignored the warning, but many have cut back on their water use.

"Every little bit helps," he said.

City to approve \$10 million budget

BUDGET, from Page 1

month, City Manager Ron Pickman stressed that costs are going up for the city, and with a shrinking population, revenue is going down.

"Let's not spend any money unless we absolutely have to," he said.

Most utility departments have less money in the proposed budget for next year. The water department will have \$997,000, down from \$1,049,000; sewers will have \$308,000, from \$333,000; and solid waste \$576,000 from \$631,000. The only utility to raise spending was the electric department, which goes from \$4.7 to \$4.9 million.

Higher electricity costs accounts for part of the increase, Pickman said, and a plan to lure businesses to town by paying for part of their utility connection fees tacked a total of \$100,000 to the water, sewer and electrical budgets.

The city will spend \$310,000 paying for bonds and interest, and \$517,000 for employee benefits, up from \$487,000 budgeted last year. Most of the increase comes from higher insurance rates, Pickman said. \$11,800 is set aside for vehicle inspections by the police department, down \$3,000 from last year.

The Goodland Public Library will get \$110,500, up \$1,000, plus \$9,693 for employee benefits. The airport fund will have \$177,238 in it, down from \$203,000.

The general fund is budgeted for \$2.7 million, up about \$140,000, although about \$56,000 of that was

City meeting

At a meeting Monday, the Goodland City Commission plans to:

- Hold a budget meeting and approve the 2003 budget. See story left.
- Decide whether to enforce water conservation rules. See story above.
- Appoint a five-member park committee.
- Fill terms on the cemetery and museum advisory boards.
- Learn about an invitation

money cut from several departments and transferred to a reserve fund to help match state and federal grants.

Pickman said he asked his department heads to keep their proposed budgets at the same levels as they were this year, or even lower. Many couldn't do that, so Pickman recommended cuts to the commissioners, including \$5,600 from the fire department, \$4,000 from the police, \$5,000 from the library, \$3,800 from the High Plains Museum and more than \$30,000 from the parks department.

Most of the money from the parks was for a proposed sprinkler system, Pickman said. The commission is planning to set up a committee to study the parks on Monday, and they will come

from the Kansas Rural Water Association.

- Hear proposals to take over the city's trash collection.
- Go into closed session to talk about buying property.
- Hear about a Municipal Leadership Academy class on Tuesday, Aug. 23, in Larned.
- Learn about a meeting with the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission to talk about the Open Meeting Law on Wednesday, Aug. 28, in Hill City.

up with a plan to maintain the parks in time for the 2004 budget.

Although money is set aside for departments to buy new equipment or replace old vehicles, Pickman said nothing would be spent until it had to be.

"We'll hold off on buying anything as long as we possible can," he said. "We have money set aside in case we have to use it, but if we don't have to, we won't."

Interest rates on the city's investments dropped this year, Pickman said, to under 2 percent, down from 5 percent a few years ago. Still, he said, any interest is better than none.

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Schedule of fair events

Northwest Kansas District Free Fair starts Monday, Aug. 5, at the Sherman County Fairgrounds, with some events starting on Saturday.

This year's schedule:

Saturday, Aug. 3:
8:30 a.m. Dog show
5 p.m. Parade line-up
6 p.m. Parade

Monday:

8 a.m. Judging 4-H foods and crafts, Catch-It-Pig contest sign-up starts

9 a.m. 4-H life skills judging

7 p.m. Kids' rodeo

Tuesday:

8:30 a.m. Llama show

3 p.m. Sheep lead, goat show

3:30 p.m. Sheep show

5 p.m. Horse show

Health clinic may join with hospital

By Sharon Corcoran

The Goodland Daily News

The Goodland Regional Medical Center board talked about the pros and cons of changing the classification of Rural Health Ventures from a free-standing clinic to a hospital-based clinic during its meeting Monday.

The board needs to consider such issues as how the decision will affect employee health plans and pensions, said hospital Administrator Jay Jolly.

The hospital has talked about this for years, said Human Resources Director

Dale Schields, because it might increase reimbursements for the doctors.

It may benefit the clinic to make the change, he said, as it could provide more stability in management.

There are definitely cons, Schields said, as the hospital will add additional employees to its benefit plans.

In order for the change to be made, Jolly said, the hospital and rural health boards will have to approve it. If the change is made, he added, the clinic would be treated as a department of the hospital.

The board plans to meet at 6 p.m. Monday, Aug. 12, with the medical staff. The next regular meeting is at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 26.

Later, new board members were welcomed and those leaving were recognized with plaques for their service.

Gennifer House and Kim Duell replaced Dr. Robert McCullough and Dennis Shank on the board. Shank, who finished a two-year term, was not present to receive his plaque. Dr. McCullough finished Dr. Greg Bongers' term.

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