

Well deserved rewards



Stephanie Fairbanks, a senior, filled her plate during an academic awards dinner Tuesday night at Goodland High School. Students who were on the honor roll both semesters last school year received academic letters, and Dennis Friedrichs, last year's teacher of the year, gave a short speech.

Photo by Doug Stephens/The Goodland Daily News

Scandals may raise taxes

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valuation will be \$57,289,165, down \$643,433. She said the drop would mean it would take an additional half mill property tax increase to produce the same revenue as last year.

"This changes the figures across the board," she said. "The change will cut Kanorado a bit more because of the loss of valuation, but it will leave them with a little increase over last year by \$459."

The commissioners are trying to find ways to hold down the property tax levy, but not cut any services. They want to do a final review of the figures on Tuesday, and a hearing on the budget for next year should be Tuesday, Sept. 17, Rumpel said.

The clerk said she had reached a new record in the number of times she had refigured the annual budget, but the commissioners came up with more changes and she headed back to the calculator.

Two departments the commissioners looked at were the appraiser, where they were looking at cutting \$5,900, and road and bridge, where they were considering a cut of \$23,000.

These cuts would help drop the tax level by half a mill, Rumpel said.

"We need to cut some," Commissioner Kevin Rasure said. "We are too high, but I don't want to go backwards, either."

"We have been lucky for the past few years with some carryover," said Commission Chairman Chuck Frankenfeld.

"I agree we need to hold it down, but I don't want to have to play catch-up," said Commissioner Mitch Tiede.

"This is not an easy choice," Frankenfeld said. "We need another option, but there aren't any I can see."

With the cuts from the road and bridge of \$28,645, Rumpel estimated the tax levy would be 52.263 mills. Later, she said they had it down to 51.059, which is .586 under the levy two years ago, but up 10 percent from last year's 46.478.

Rasure said he thought that was too high, and suggested they consider scaling back the proposed salary increase of 3 percent.

"Raises are not automatic in this world," he said. "One suggestion would be to postpone any raises for six months to see what happens. I know there are some merit raises we might have to do, and I don't think the raises are out of line, either."

Rumpel said keeping the employee health insurance without raising costs to the employees is a benefit some overlook. She said health insurance cost to the county may go up 30 percent in the next year. Another area of increase may be workers compensation insurance because of an outstanding claim from last year.

Tiede and Frankenfeld said they would like to see the figures using the suggestion by Rasure of putting a hold on raises from January through June to see how things are doing.

They talked to Assessor Terry Ballard about the cut in his budget, and

he said he could find a way to cut out the \$5,900, but would like to take it out of other line items.

The commissioners thanked Ballard and said they would let him find the line items where he wanted to cut as long as the total for the department dropped by the \$5,900.

Looking at the proposed 3 percent raise, Ballard said if they cut that down to 2 or 1 1/2 percent, it would not be much of a raise for anyone.

He agreed delaying the raises until June was one option.

"You could try freezing them until a certain point, and then review the budget without making any promises," Ballard said.

"We don't like it, but don't think there is any choice," Rasure said.

"Well I'll let you all do it," Ballard said. "You know my sentiments."

Tiede said holding the raises will give the commissioners time to see what is happening with the economy.

The commissioners agreed to refigure salaries based on the estimated expenses for this year plus the figure for about a 1 1/2 percent for next year. The 1 1/2 percent would be the actual cost of giving a 3 percent raise in the second half of the year.

The commissioners will meet at 8 a.m. Friday to pay the second half of the bills for the month, and review the latest budget figures.

They meet in the commission room on the main floor of the Sherman County courthouse, 813 Broadway Ave.

Virus confirmed in Norton county

By Doug Stephens

The Goodland Daily News

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has confirmed that a horse in Norton County has the West Nile virus, along with horses in two other counties and birds in four, bringing the total to 28 in the state.

Thursday, the department reported that a Wallace County horse had the disease. Sheriff Larry Townsend said the animal was on the southern border of the county and had just been brought in from another state.

"We think the horse was probably

already infected when it was brought here," Townsend said. "We are dry here, and there are few mosquitoes to spread the virus."

The virus is spread by mosquitoes which feed on infected birds and then bite other animals. Many animals can be infected, but only birds, horses and people get sick.

Most people who are sick will have flu-like symptoms, and very few can suffer encephalitis or meningitis, swellings of the tissues of the brain, and can die.

Older people are the most at risk. No

person in Kansas has been found to have the virus.

Townsend said it is important for people not to panic. There is a less than 1 percent chance of getting seriously sick if infected.

The Wallace County horse was tested when it started having trouble keeping its balance, Townsend said, and a blood sample was sent to a Kansas State research center for testing. The test came back positive on Thursday.

The horse is doing fine, the sheriff said, and is expected to recover.

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