

Dealing with prairie dogs sticky situation

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News
Prairie dogs are prompting complaints in Sherman County — especially in the northeast — and county commissioners have set a special public meeting for 8 a.m. on Thursday, July 24, to discuss the issue.

At the commissioner's regular meeting Monday, Daryl West of the county Noxious Weed Department and County Attorney Bonnie Selby discussed the prairie dog situation and some of the alternatives.

Some landowners are not "controlling" prairie dogs on their land, and neighbors have been complaining to the county.

Commissioner Mitch Tiede and Commission Chairman Kevin Rasure said they have been receiving calls about the prairie dogs, and that some of the people have been irate, insisting that the county take action. West said when people call, his

department goes out and takes care of what they can. He said there are colonies is in McPherson township southwest of Goodland, eastern Voltaire township, and Llanos and Shermanville townships northeast of Goodland.

West said the problem is that several of the townships do not have money or township officers to help pay for the poison grain used to treat the prairie dog problems.

He said Voltaire has a program that will pay half the cost of the poison, but that there is nothing in the other townships.

The worst problem is in Shermanville north of Edson, West said.

The poison comes in buckets which cost \$52 each and it takes several buckets to treat a prairie dog town. West said his assistant, John Johnson, is the one who handles most of the field work.

Johnson said some of the prairie dog towns are getting to where there is only a couple of feet between mounds, and that with the increase in the dogs, there are more rattlesnakes.

Tiede said he did not think they would ever eliminate all the rodents, but it would be good to thin them down.

West was asked what he does when he receives a prairie dog complaint. He said he notifies the landowner to give them time to treat the problem, but if they do not, the county has a resolution which says the county may treat the problem and then charge the cost against the land and add it to the property taxes.

Selby said the cost can be collected each year, but that the problem has not been getting the landowners to pay. Rather, there are several who don't seem to do enough treatment to control the spread of

the dogs.

"We need to get in or get out," Rasure said.

He said that Scott County had recently repealed their resolution and said it was up to the landowners to handle the problem.

State Wildlife Officer Mike Hopper said the state is looking for solutions to the prairie dog issue.

He said that several people are shooting prairie dogs and he personally felt that was a better method of control than the poisoning.

"The poison is not discriminatory and kills beneficial birds and other animals," Hopper said. "We need to manage the dogs, not obliterate them."

The question was what it would cost the county to poison the highest concentration of prairie dogs, and West said he did not think \$10,000 would be enough.

"No matter what the cost to treat

the problem, it has to be paid by the landowner," West said. "The question is whether the landowners can afford the cost."

"The dogs are going to whip us," Hopper said. "I believe there are options which could be explored to actually make money from this natural renewable resource."

"There are many people who want to hunt prairie dogs, and we could promote dog hunting."

"I don't see us winning," Rasure said.

"We are treating and treating and losing ground," Tiede agreed.

"We have to do something with the resolution," Commissioner Chuck Thomas said.

Hopper said it would be good to get Cheyenne and Rawlins counties involved, and that Wildlife Secretary Mike Hayden was looking for ideas on what the state can do. The state has held hearings on a prairie

dog management plan, but so far has not issued any rules. Environmental groups are pushing to have the ground squirrels listed as a threatened or endangered species, which under federal law could prohibit any kill of colonies.

"We don't want the feds to come in and dictate to us," Hopper said.

Rasure suggested calling the public meeting to give everyone a chance to be involved and to discuss what the options are.

West said it was not something that has to be decided immediately because the best time to treat the prairie dogs is in the fall and early winter when the grass has died the animals are looking for food.

The special meeting will be held at 8 a.m. on July 24 in the commissioner room on the main floor of the Sherman County courthouse, 813 Broadway Ave.

Board raises pay

SCHOOLS, from Page 1

"There is no good news on that front," Selby said. The loss of 34 students will have an impact on the amount of state money the school district will receive next year.

The board approved transferring \$18,000 into the contingency reserve to bring it to the maximum allowed under state law of 4 percent of the total general fund budget. The total will be \$248,000.

Russell said it was good that board member Mike Campbell had kept pushing to add to the contingency reserve over the past few years, because it looks like the district will need it in the year ahead.

Selby said it was good to have the reserve, and with the increases in insurance and other things the district cannot control, it provides a cushion.

"It is good to have a cushion, but it will not last long if we have to use it," he said.

The board approved the hiring of Connie Prather of DeBeque, Colo., as the counselor at Grant Junior High. She has been a counselor in Colorado and retired this year. Her husband is a hunting guide and they are ranchers in western Colorado.

After a 15-minute closed door session on personnel matters, the board unanimously approved paying \$1,000 each to Harvey Swager, high school principal; Jim Mull, junior high principal; Steve Raymer, North elementary principal and acting high school activity director; Sharon Gregory, Central principal and Jerry Burkett, West principal, for supplemental work done in the second semester following the resignation of an administrator.

High school Activity Director Dick Liess left the district at the end of December to work at Western State Bank.

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m. on Monday, June 23, at the district office 1312 Main Ave.

Internet tonight!
899-2338

Know any
good TALES?
Give Sharon a
call at the
Star-News
899-2338



This cute bungalow is ready for a new owner. 2 bedroom with full basement and carport. Central heat and air plus nice lawn, covered patio and underground sprinklers completes the package. CALL FOR YOUR SHOWING TODAY.

Other listings:

W. 8th Street (lots)	402 Grand	6610 Rd 10
923 Syracuse	1104 Cherry	1008 Main (commercial)
2810 Commerce Rd #2	1224 Main (mixed use)	1608 Main (commercial)
1516-1518 Center	1625 Wyoming	724 Main
321 Broadway	916 College	221 Cottonwood
1301 Harrison	415 W. 2nd	
209 E. 15th	1016 E. 10th	

Check www.goodlandksmls.com for further details

Cole Real Estate

Charlene Cole, Broker Diana Spinney, Salesperson
Roger Kisner, Auctioneer



785-899-2683

112 West 13th
Goodland, KS 67735



Xpressos 'men in tights' perform at Route 66 show

"Men in Tights" was a highlight of the Goodland High School Xpressos' "Route 66" guest night on Saturday, May 24. The show choir's boys did their impression of a chorus line. They are Timothy Kafka, Preston Lambrecht, Bill Linin, Ian Scherling, Josh Topliff, Daniel Blake, Alan Cebula, Joseph Felver, Craig Mason and Mike Zimmerman.

Photo by Liz West / The Goodland

Star-News



corrections

In the Tuesday, June 10, issue of *The Goodland Star-News*, an article on the eight-man All Star Football game on Page 8 incorrectly reported the kickoff times for the two games to be played Saturday at Beloit. The Division I game is at 2 p.m. and the Division II game is at 10 a.m. Central Time. The times were reversed in a news release received from the Kansas Eight-Man Football Association.

☆☆☆☆

The K-18 sports photo on Page 8 in the Tuesday *Star-News* showed a runner scoring at home plate. The runner was Brett Lalicker, not Brandon Hatfield. This was a reporting error.

☆☆☆☆

The girls in a little league photo on Page 8 of the same paper was identified incorrectly as being from St. Francis. The two girls in the photo were on teams from Sharon Springs. This also was a reporting error.

☆☆☆☆

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling about any failure to live up to this standard.



The Goodland Star-News

and The Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce and Ambassadors welcome

Advanced Auto Body

Jason Finley

403 E.19th St. • Goodland, Kan. 67735 • 785-899-5555