

SBC representative talks to commissioners

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News
The new phone company in Goodland has been talking to the city and county about switching their phone service, and Tuesday representatives from SBC Corp. spoke to the county commissioners about staying with their company.

Darin Miller, SBC director of external affairs from Garden City, said he had no problem competing for the county's phone service, but that he wants to be sure the quote from the competition is comparing apples to apples.

"I know your long distance service has been switched," Miller said, "but with recent changes in our rates, I know we can get a better rate on that part of the service."

"We probably can get a better rate on some of the other services which are not

County roundup

At their meeting Tuesday, Sherman County commissioners:

- Heard that the prairie dog program is working, but deadline for landowners to act is near. Story on Page 1.
- SBC Corp. asked to keep the county's phone business. Story at left.
- Along-time member of the county hospital board resigned. Story below right.

regulated, like the local service is. SBC is not regulated on long distance, and we may be able to get the rate down to about 3.3 cents a minute.

"The local service is very regulated, and the competition is different because they

can publish their rates and are not as regulated.

"We don't have a problem with competition, and were glad to see S&T overbuild our system. That is the way the original deregulation was supposed to work. It makes for better competition and in the long run will lower the rates to the customers."

Miller said SBC, formerly Southwestern Bell, soon will be installing digital subscriber lines, or DSL, to provide high-speed Internet service in Goodland. He said they would offer competitive rate starting around \$29 a month depending on the bandwidth the customer wants.

"DSL is coming to Goodland," he said. "We are just waiting on the Kansas Corporation Commission for their final approval."

Commissioner Mitch Tiede said he was

frustrated with the monthly bill from SBC, and asked why it cannot be simpler.

Miller said he had heard that before, and had passed it on to his superiors, but that a lot of what is in the monthly billing is required by state and federal regulations.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure complained about a lack of communication with the company. He said that they do not see anyone from the firm and find it hard to contact anyone.

"I keep telling my bosses that the main frustration in northwest Kansas is a lack of personal contact," Miller said. "I have been telling them we should have a person in Goodland and Colby to handle questions and answer the phones. I think they are beginning to listen a little, and I will tell them again."

Rasure asked Miller what he saw as the

future for SBC.

"I know that SBC wants to get into all aspects of the communication business including the video," he said. "They are working on an agreement with Echo Star to allow customers to order Dish Network through SBC, and it would be billed on the monthly statement."

"I will do what I can to keep your business and ask that when you are looking at the service, please contact us to give us a fair chance."

Rasure thanked Miller for coming, but said it seemed like the company only shows up when it looks like they are going to lose the customer. Miller said he would try to see that the county has more up-to-date information when there are changes in rates and new services being offered.

Workers see small increase

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News

City workers will see a 1 percent increase in their pay beginning in January based on a plan adopted by the City Commission on Monday, with some eligible for merit raises of up to 4 percent.

City Manager Ron Pickman said all full-time employees will receive the 1 percent cost of living increase except the city manager, who is under contract.

The pay plan includes a provision for merit raises based on the employees annual performance evaluation. The merit raise can be up to 4 percent.

Employees hired before January 2000 will receive their merit raise on Jan. 1. Those hired after Jan. 2000 will receive any merit raise on their anniversary date.

Employees who have reached the maximum of their pay level will only receive the cost of living increase, Pickman said.

The commissioner unanimously approved the pay plan.

City Commissioner Chuck Lutters said he thought the schools may need to have the sewer rates adjusted under the new ordinance. He said it might be good to charge the district based on the water usage of December, January and February in a similar manner to residential charges.

"I know they are using less during these months because all the sports activity is inside," Lutters said. "I think it is something we need to look at, but we won't really know until the new rates go into effect."

Commissioner Dean Blume said he did not want to make changes in the new sewer rates unless there was a clear need.

"How many of these are we going to hear about?" Blume asked.

No action was taken on the sewer rates, but Pickman said he would be willing to look at the situation.

Mayor Rick Billinger reported that the city commissioners had attended the annual dinner sponsored by Aquila, the city's gas utility. Company representatives said they expect the gas rates to go up this winter, but not as high as expected.

The next city commission meeting will be 5 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 1, in the commission room on the second floor of the City Administration Building at 204 W. 11th.

City roundup

At its meeting Monday, the Goodland City Commission:

- Set a hearing on a loan request for Aircraft Seal and Gasket Corp. Story on Page 1
- Gave city workers a 1 percent pay raise in January, with some eligible for merit raises up to 4 percent. Story above.

corrections

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 to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.



The 2004 Chrysler PT Cruiser rests on the side of Thomas Country Road 3. Curtis L. Musil died in the accident about 12:45 p.m. Wednesday, eight miles south of I-70.

Photo by Tisha Cox / The Colby Free Press

Brewster man dies in accident

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

A 58-year-old Brewster man was killed Wednesday when his car rolled on a county road south of town and he was thrown from the vehicle.

The Kansas Highway Patrol said Curtis L. Musil was dead at the scene of the wreck about 12:45 p.m. eight miles south of I-70 on County Road 3.

Troopers said Musil was northbound when his 2004 Chrysler PT Cruiser dropped off the west shoulder.

He overcorrected and the car went into the east ditch, then came back onto the road and began to roll.

It came to rest right-side-up in the west ditch.

Musil was not wearing a seatbelt, the patrol said. Funeral services are pending with Kersenbrock Funeral Chapel in Colby.

Trooper Joe Greene said they were not sure what caused the accident. He said as far as he could tell, neither speeding nor alcohol appear to be involved.

Kathi Wright of Thomas County Emergency Medical Services in Colby said a Sherman County ambulance from Brewster responded to the accident.

She said the decision on who responds to an accident depends on the area where it occurs.

college collage

Goodland college student awarded scholarship

Alyssa Mason, a sophomore at Southwestern College in Winfield, recently received the Frances Phelps Memorial Endowed Scholarship.



Mason

Mason, a philosophy and religion major, is the daughter of Jeffery and Nona Mason and 2002 graduate of Goodland High School. She is a member Discipleship Southwestern and also participates in music and small theatre productions.

Mason received her scholarship award certificate from college president Dick Merriman at a special dinner for Presidential Scholars.

student of the week



Name: Nicole Titus
Parents: Lori Titus
Grade: Senior
Age: 17

We've nominated this student because: Nicole is a hard working student who excels in class, on the job and in DECA club. Nicole is the President of the DECA II Chapter at Goodland High School and has led the chapter members well this year.

Student Comment: My favorite subject is Marketing. I believe what Mr. Schwasinger teaches is valuable to students, especially when they enter their

careers. When I graduate from Goodland High School, I will remember the great times I had in the Marketing classes, on my job at American Family Insurance and with my friends in DECA.

Activities involved in at school: DECA and Stuco.

My choice of movies, books, and games: I like the Matrix series of movies and my favorite author is Lurene McDaniel.

After I leave Goodland High School I intend to: attend Barton County Community College and earn an Associate Degree in business. Then I plan to transfer to Fort Hays State University to earn a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

And 10 years from now, I think I'll be: starting my career as an insurance adjuster.

Favorite Quote: "The man who goes alone can start today; but he who travels with another must wait until the other is ready." -Henry David Thoreau-

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Member resigns hospital board

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News

Sherman County commissioners received a resignation Tuesday from lawyer Pete Whalen, a longtime member of the Goodland Regional Medical Center's board.

"I have served on the hospital board for a total period of almost 25 years," Whalen wrote. "We have seen many changes and have solved many problems. There are many new and difficult problems facing the board at this time."

"Although I have enjoyed this work, I feel at this time it is in the best interest of the board, the hospital and me personally to submit my resignation to you. It is time for the younger people of the community to step forward and serve."

"I personally feel we have an outstanding hospital and an excellent staff, board and administrator. It is something the community can be proud of."

The commissioners said they ap-

preciated Whalen's letter, and felt it was a positive comment on the hospital. They said they will be looking for someone to fill the vacancy in the next few weeks, and encourage anyone who wants to serve to contact one of the commissioners or present a letter to the county clerk.

The commissioners agreed to appoint Dennis Taylor to the City/County Recreation board, replacing Steve Duell, who did not want to serve another term.

The commissioners received a list of people for the four vacancies on the Good Samaritan advisory board. Each commissioner will contact three of the people to see if they will serve, and hope to make the appointments at the next meeting on Wednesday.

The commissioners held a five-minute closed door session on a personnel matter before they adjourned at 9:53 a.m. The next meeting will be 8 a.m. Wednesday in the commission room.



Whalen

Enjoy the wonders of a European Christmas at Christkindl Market at the Denver Pavilions... thrill to the spectacular Xcel Energy Parade of Lights... browse through Denver's decorated department stores and specialty shops... marvel at the beauty of *The Nutcracker*... or view masterpieces by the world's most famous artists at a special Denver Art Museum exhibition.

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