

from our viewpoint...

## Commissioners look for manager

His last day was Friday, and outside of a small reception at the city offices held by the city employees he left town pretty quietly after being the city manager for three years and four months.

For those who got to know former City Manager Wayne Hill he will be missed. Some who dealt with him are glad to see him gone, and for many people Hill was not someone they knew.

Hill used his expertise from when he was a public works director and city manager in Guymon to get the city sewer system into shape and to work out some proposals to help deal with the wells that have nitrate problems.

Hill worked with the city crews and went through the process of hiring and then again hiring a fire chief while most of the volunteer firemen resigned. Today the city fire department is in good shape under Chief Brian James.

Hill said he enjoyed his time in Goodland, and liked working with the people both who worked for the city and those who he met.

A dark spot in Hill's tenure came last week when the city commissioners asked him into a closed session and ask him questions not part of the agenda of that special meeting.

Under Kansas open meetings law city commissioners can call special meetings and go behind closed doors to interview candidates for the city manager position. In the past two weeks the commissioners have interviewed about five candidates, but word is the top two picks have already taken other jobs.

On the day of the meeting in question the commissioners were interviewing another candidate by telephone when Hill walked by and they asked him to come into the meeting. He said he thought they were going to ask him something about the job, but instead began to question him about the employee evaluations he had completed.

Under the city manager system the commissioners hire the city manager and he is in charge of the other employees. What the commissioners were asking was not in the confines of the state open meetings exception for personnel.

One commissioner wanted to know why Hill was doing the evaluations in December and wanted to see all of the evaluations. Hill said annual evaluations were always done in December. He said the commissioners were not entitled to see them under state law.

A commissioner suggested the new manager should do the evaluations, but Hill said that would not be fair to the new person who would not have time to get to know the employees.

He left the meeting after the commissioners asked him not to approve the evaluations of the department heads, which is not an action that can be taken in closed session.

Hill said he met with two of the commissioners together after a couple of days to show them the total figures showing all the employee raises based on the evaluations were well within the salary program the commission approved in August, and with the department heads figured in the total was 20 percent below budget.

"I felt I had worked to keep within the budget, and at the same time reward the city employees for their hard and loyal work to this community," he said.

As one who got to know Hill we found him to be an honest man who always was up front about what he saw as the future needs of the city and the best for the citizens.

The commissioners will soon choose a new city manager, and we hope they will better understand what the duties and responsibilities of that position are. The manager is the one person they hire to handle the day to day administration of the city departments. The commissioners are the policy making body who work through the manager to move the city forward. — Tom Betz



## Gift showed spirit of Christmas alive

At this time of year, Christmas always seems to have the ability to bring people back to the home base. Our current economy is showing its effect on most of us as well. It translates to each of us not being able to spend as much money on trinkets for our loved ones. What we are doing instead... is spending more valuable "time" with them. It seems as though "bad times" in the economy has been in the news but I want to report the Christ in Christmas is still very much alive and well.

My mother was in town; visiting our children from Florida because we can't go to their home at Christmas. (She makes an effort to spend time with the kids every three to four months.) Our plans were to take the kids to the Denver Zoo to see the Zoo Lights this past Wednesday evening.

Upon our arrival, we were told that the park was open only to a private party and not to the general public. We were crushed! Mom attempted her theatrical plea to the gals that were selling tickets to the party-goers. She was leaving the very next day and really wanted to spend the precious time with her grandchildren at the zoo lights which was promised to them. Didn't they have kindness in their heart and could see that this was so important to her? The ticket nazi showed no remorse as she pointed toward the door stating verbatim that tonight was a private party and **not** open to the public; not caring at all that my mom was not going to be in town the next night.

We moved to the ticket-takers and again my mom restated her plea and request that they just let us in for a short time so she could spend time with her grandchildren. She, unlike the woman at the counter, was extremely kind but explained the night was a private party and



### from other pens

• commentary

even though she totally understood our plight, would not be able to allow us to pass through her gate. Our hearts and chests fell as we looked down at the little faces looking up with tears welling in their precious young eyes.

The very next moment made us look to the heavens and send a tiny but all-important prayer of thanks upward.

A woman stood before us with her arms outstretched. She had a child standing at her side also. He was, however, several years older than my son but still considered a child. He followed this woman as though she was leading the way. He was dressed in a warm coat and a hat and seemed to be anxious to get into the park so he could spend his time with the animals. This woman had no name. We did not know her. She mentioned she heard my mom's plea to the ticket nazi and came right out to explain she could invite us as her guests! She made sure this was okay by asking permission so as not to be denied before offering this gesture of kindness to us.

The woman was tall, with blonde hair set high on her head. She looked very ordinary but what she offered was not ordinary at all. Not only was she offering us a ticket for admission, she was setting a valuable example to the boy standing at her side. After explaining to us she was going to get us in by saying we were her guests, she immediately went inside to the ticket nazi behind the counter. She collected tickets for 2 adults and 2 children. She then

made her way back to us.

We were standing in a huddle with our jaws open and a wide-eyed expression on our faces. When we asked how much we owed her, her only reply to us was not to worry about it... that it was on her! We screamed like we were kids again, hugged her and profusely thanked her. Her exact words to us were "Merry Christmas!"

Both my mom and I had tears in our eyes... we just couldn't imagine the possibility that a stranger would do this for us. How nice! Christ still exists amongst the turmoil of today's economy, political woes, the credit crunch and the constant reminder that we are now in a recession.

The woman and the boy then vanished into the crowd of gleeful children, scrambling adults and flashing lights. We joined the crowd inside the park and enjoyed seeing the lights, hearing the animal sounds echoing from above in the tree branches and participating as though we belonged. Both my mom and I agreed to "pay it forward" and continue the movement. Since we have no way to thank the pair that made it possible for us to enjoy each other's company, take priceless pictures and remember the night that God smiled down and granted us a Christmas wish.

My mom has returned to Florida. She and I will continue to remember our special time at the zoo and will continue the tradition of paying it forward so that we, in turn, will be able to provide not only a special something for some unsuspecting guest but also the valuable lesson to my children to continue the love and warmth especially at this time of year.

Jordie Mann is an advertising representative for The Goodland Star-News.

## Thanks to all for success of dinner

Wow, We Did It!!

Thanks to everyone for attending the Chamber's Third Annual Christmas Dinner and Dance. We sold 236 meal tickets and had several people join us for the dance with the Jimmy Dee Band, of Russell.

The band — by the way — is **not** retiring as we were told and advertised. Good news is that we have booked them for December 5, 2009, so mark your calendar now!

Thanks to Joni and Scarlett who called each one of you and invited you to join us.

Our Shop Around Goodland This Christmas has been a great promotion thanks to all of you. We held the slogan campaign back in September and Koren Dechant gave us the great idea and we have had so much fun with it.

The decorated wreaths were a huge success, with special thanks to: Northwest Kansas Technical College; Accounting & Tax Service, Frontier Ag; Prairie Rose (4); Swayne Family; Goodland High School Art Club; Sherman County Farm Bureau; Western State Bank; S&T Communication; Yost Farm Supply; Elliott's; Rasure Lumber; Trachsel A&B; Goodland Elks Lodge; Short and Son; Klip N Kurl



### from our readers

• to the editor

Salon; The Goodland Star-News; Goodland Activity Center; The Framing Place; Gleason Chiropractic; First National Bank and The Chamber office. The wreaths were auctioned off by Chris Soehner of Seed Solutions — Pioneer Seed and we raised over \$1,100.

I would like to personally thank each business that purchased one and decorated it. We are brain storming for next year already on what we can do to get everyone involved again.

I need to express thanks to Zona Price at the Elks Lodge for her help on getting band sponsors for the Jimmy Dee Band. Those that donated were: Bankwest; First National Bank; Frontier Ag; Peoples State Bank; Short & Son; Wal-Mart; Western State Bank and Wilkens Truck & Trailer. Your help was greatly appreciated, more than you think. To Zona, Janet

and Scott, you did a great job behind the bar and keep everyone happy!

To W&W Catering, Connie Waldman and Regi Woodard and your crew, you did a great job and everyone said the food was awesome. Connie said everyone was served in 35 minutes. I believe that was due to their organization and the service they provided.

In all the hustle and bustle of planning the Christmas Party, I failed to mention that as a Chamber, we went to the City Commission to ask about Lighting up Goodland for the holidays. It was passed by the Commissioners to give everyone a 10 percent discount on their City Electric Bill for the month of December (This will be on the bill you receive at the end of January).

We encourage everyone to decorate your house or business with lights. Then we invite everyone to go out with your family, get some hot chocolate and ride around and enjoy the scene you will see in our community. Please be sure to thank your commissioners and the City office for the discount.

We would like to remind parents who brought their children to visit with Santa on Nov. 15 that your pictures were printed at the Photo Lab at Wal-Mart and they are ready to be picked up.

I heard so many good comments about the Chamber Saturday night, which to the board is encouraging and we are looking forward to serving Goodland in 2009 and the future. We have had a rough year and made some changes, but we are ready to move forward and have some new ideas we are going to bring to you.

Once again, thank you to all who made our Third Annual Christmas Dinner and Dance a success.

Jeris McCombs  
President Goodland Chamber

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