

weather report

7°

noon  
Thursday

Today

• Sunset, 4:40 p.m.

Saturday

• Sunrise, 7:07 a.m.

• Sunset, 4:40 p.m.

Midday Conditions

• Soil temperature 23 degrees

• Humidity 57 percent

• Sky sunny

• Winds north 10 to 28 mph

• Barometer 30.45 inches and steady

• Record High today 74° (2002)

• Record Low today -14° (1937)

Last 24 Hours\*

High Wednesday 29°

Low Wednesday 2°

Precipitation trace

This month trace

Year to date trace

Below Normal 0.06 inches

The Topside Forecast

Today: Sunny with a high near 22, wind chills as low as -21, winds out of west at 5 to 10 mph and a low around 2. Saturday: Sunny with a high near 32, winds out of northwest at 5 to 10 mph and a low around 16.

Extended Forecast

Sunday: Sunny with a high near 46 and a low around 21. Monday: Sunny with a high near 41 and a low around 21. Tuesday: Sunny with a high near 43 and a low around 20.

(National Weather Service)

Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.

\* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

local markets

Noon

Wheat — \$4.48 bushel

Posted county price — \$4.47

Corn — \$3.63 bushel

Posted county price — \$3.70

Milo — \$3.34 bushel

Soybeans — \$9.49 bushel

Posted county price — \$9.74

Millet — \$3.34 hundredweight

Sunflowers

Oil current crop — \$14.55 cwt.

Confection — \$28/\$15 cwt.

Pinto beans — \$32 (new crop)

(Markets by Scoular Grain, Sun Opta, Frontier Ag and 21st Century Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

inside today

More local news and views from your Goodland Star-News

Cowboys hope for win

Cowboys Garth Helton and Hazen Deeds worked the ball around the top of the key against Weskan. The Cowboys play tonight against Lakin at Max Jones. See photo, story on Page 10.

# Frosty arctic chill blows through

**By Tom Betz**  
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Wind chill advisories were in effect until 11 a.m. today as temperatures fell below zero overnight and winds were expected to plunge to 15 to 25 below zero.

The cold arctic air blew into the area on Tuesday bringing a heavy frost to the Goodland area and turning to blowing snow on Wednesday.

High winds up to 36 mph and gusting to 45 mph made driving conditions hazardous with areas of blowing snow creating near white-out conditions.

The Kansas Highway Patrol stopped oversize loads from going east of Goodland Wednesday because of the high winds and blowing snow.

The overnight low Thursday morning was a -2 degrees about 6 a.m., and the temperature had climbed into the single digits around 6 degrees by midday.

The National Weather Service was predicting temperatures to fall to about 7 below zero Thursday night with winds out of the northwest at 10 to 15 mph.

The weather service had issued a wind chill advisory Thursday afternoon until 11 a.m. today saying temperatures should climb into the low 20s by this afternoon, and reach the mid 40s by Sunday.

Tuesday Goodland was overcast with a freezing fog that created a heavy frost on the south side of trees and the city Christmas decorations on Main Ave. At times the frost was so heavy the wind made it appear there was snow falling from many of the trees.

The light snow on Wednesday afternoon brought a trace of moisture and with the winds whipping the snow accumulation was a trace.

A Wind Chill Advisory means very cold air and strong winds will combine to create dangerous wind chills of minus 15 to minus 25 degrees fahrenheit. Frost bite can occur in less than 30 minutes, and hypothermia may occur if precautions are not taken said the advisory from the weather service. Make sure you wear a hat and gloves if you venture outdoors.



Frost clung to the south side of the wrought iron fence and Christmas decorations around the Ennis-Handy House Tuesday as a freezing fog covered Goodland with a northerly wind bringing arctic cold to the Northwest Kansas area and plunging temperatures below zero degrees.

Photo by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News

# Water plan would save city millions in interest

*Water rates would increase \$5 a month*

**By Tom Betz**  
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Citizens who have been waiting for the other shoe to drop on how much the water collection and treatment project will raise the monthly water bill got good news at the city commission meeting on Monday with estimates the water rates would raise about \$5 a month.

City commissioners were pleased with the prospect of being able to reduce the cost to the customers and to save the city more than \$1 million in interest by using existing city reserve funds to pay off the water project loan.

City Manager Doug Gerber said the agreement approved for the water project says the city will have a dedicated source of revenue to pay the loan back. He said the tentative plan is to use existing city reserves to pay the loan, but then the city needs to repay that money back to the city.

Commissioner Rick Billinger asked what was in the budget for water system improvements.

## City looking at armory options

City commissioners Monday indicated they would like community input on what the best option would be for the National Guard Armory that is to be given to the city at the end of February.

City Manager Doug Gerber said he felt it was a good idea to establish a committee to look at the options for the armory, and said it would be good to ask for citizens who might want to serve on the committee to contact the city office at (785) 890-4500.

He said it would be a special committee to look at the plans for what the armory could be used for and would include a city commissioner, city manager and a city employee plus those citizens interested in the armory.

Several commissioners asked if there was going to be an opportunity for the commissioners to tour the armory.

Gerber said he would try to set something up soon.

Commissioner Dave Daniels asked what the difference was between the partial and full debt service projections Gerber included in the packets.

Gerber said the partial is if the commission decided to take more than 20 years to repay the city reserves. He said he included two options for the city to repay at .8 percent interest, which is about what the city is currently getting from the banks, and 1 percent. He said the city could revise that or even not pay back any interest as long as the reserves

were built back up in the future.

“I feel we need to get this project done right,” Billinger said, “and yet have the smallest impact on our citizens, especially the elderly and those on fixed incomes.

“This is why we have reserves and I do know we will have to pay it back, but it is to ourselves.”

Daniels asked about paying the other water loan off and including it to reduce the interest cost to the city. He said the city could save more than 2 percent in interest payments over the next 10 years.

Mayor Josh Dechant said that would be good if the city could pay that loan off.

Gerber said Wednesday he had talked to the state health department officials, and the city could pay that first water loan off and add it to the amount for the water collection and treatment project.

Billinger said he agreed that would be good with the interest rates as low as they are if the city is paying itself back and the interest rate goes up they would be getting more income.

“Other than the other water project loan the city has not done much for the water system,” Billinger said. “We have serious problems we are addressing, and that is where I come from.”

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# City health insurance costs drop slightly for third year

**By Tom Betz**  
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City commissioners got good news Monday as the renewal of the city employee health insurance dropped slightly marking the third year the cost has gone down.

Charlie Krull of Blue Cross and Blue Shield said he was pleased to be bringing good news, and that it was another excellent year for the city. He said the average renewal has seen an increase of 8 to 10 percent, but Goodland's went down by .4

percent.

“That is as good as it gets,” he said, “and we will not be making any benefit changes for next year.”

The city insurance cost dropped 2 percent last year making the second year the city had seen a drop. The drop the year before was because the city changed from a self-funded program to a fully funded health insurance program.

Krull said the city was completing the 25th year of coverage by Blue Cross and Blue Shield. He said he

was amazed at how many groups in his area have been with the company for more than 15 years, and he has presented many of those long term plaques.

City Manager Doug Gerber told the commissioners he recommended approving the renewal, and wants to work with the employees to take advantage of some of the other wellness programs Blue Cross and Blue Shield offer.

Krull said he met Gerber in Beloit and it was good to see him in Good-

land. He said Gerber had talked to him about taking advantage of some new programs that work with the employees.

He said the insurance program remains the same with a \$500 individual deductible and \$1,500 deductible for a family.

The children are covered to age 23, and each covered individual gets five doctor office visits with a cost of \$25 each. There is a \$300 laboratory and x-ray benefit.

“Your rates are about the best

around,” Krull said, “because of your excellent utilization and not having huge claims.”

He said Blue Cross and Blue Shield paid out over \$2 billion in claims last year, and most of that was paid on 3 percent of the claims.

Krull said the city cost will go down a fraction of a percent, and with Gerber's help he will get together with the employees and talk

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