

College president please with first year

COLLEGE, from Page 1

finalized. He said Bankwest has given the motel to the college and so far he knows at least 10 students are being housed in the rooms on the east side of the motel parking lot.

He said this is a great deal for the college and he is thinking about other programs the college can do with the motel property.

"I expect Dale Goodwin to have a press release about the motel in the near future," he said.

On opening day Mills and the college staff handed each student an Apple iPad that is networked on the campus.

"Apple was here filming the process," he said, "and will be back in a few months to see how the program is working."

"Northwest Tech is the only two-year campus in the nation to adopt the iPad."

Mills said the college continues to face difficulties in financing with a majority of the funding coming from the state. He said the state provides 82 percent while tuition covers 18 percent.

The technical college survived an attempt to cut the state funding in June, but Dr. Mills expects more pressure to make cuts coming in the

next few months.

He said the Technical Authority is expected to approve a new tiered financing system, and that the Board of Regents will probably approve the tiered plan as well. However, he believes the new plan has to be approved by the state legislature, and with the current state financial picture the increased funding the plan calls for would be hard to get through the legislature.

"I don't know what the legislature will do," he said, "but we will be there lobbying for our college."

He said the 40 percent growth the college enrollment has shown will be the biggest statewide.

"We need to push to get our voice heard in Topeka," he said, "and we need people to step up to be appointed to state boards and positions to help get our message heard."

"That is true on a state level and a federal level, and we need people who will commit to attending those meetings."

Mills is excited about the prospects this year and said people will be able to find out about college events on a new electronic billboard being installed near the intersection of Business U.S. 24 and K-27. He said it will be well visible from the Walmart parking lot.

KDOT plans workshops

A series of workshops to discuss T-WORKS, the state's new transportation plan, began on Monday in Wichita.

The Kansas Department of Transportation will host four in-person workshops and one webinar over the next three weeks to provide information about T-WORKS and to help communities and individuals get organized for the local consult meetings which will be held in each state transportation district this fall.

The workshops will be held:

From 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. today, in

Dodge City at the Dodge House Hotel and Convention Center (2408 W. Wyatt Earp Blvd).

From 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 1, in Olathe at the Holiday Inn (101-West 151st St.).

From 12:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 2, in Pittsburg at Lamplighter Inn (4020 Parkview Drive).

The webinar will be from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 7, for an overview.

For more information and to RSVP please e-mail amyl@ksdot.org.

County, hospital delay transfer

COUNTY, from Page 1

Jolly agreed they could work it out that way to begin with.

Strnad said the county needs to have separate ambulance numbers to help get an idea of what the write-offs are. She said knowing that could turn it from a great picture into a giant cost.

Jolly suggested having Precht and

Rumpel work on the budget.

Rumpel said it would be good that when Mark Bauer of Vonfelt, Bauer and Vonfelt comes he should be consulted on the ambulance budget questions.

The commissioners agreed to set up the next meeting for 8 a. m. on Sept. 20, and Jolly said he would be out of town, but would have Precht come to the meeting.



Post Office project nears completion

Workers from two different construction companies have nearly completed the rebuild of the steps and handicap ramp at the Goodland Post Office. The front steps have been reopened with the addition of new railings (right photo) a couple of weeks ago. After the front doors were reopened a company from Missouri moved in to rebuild the handicap ramp (above) on the east side. The ramp is being widened and once new railings are installed will be reopened. The work on the ramp will not take as long as the front steps as the whole ramp was not taken out, but rather the top was taken down to the rebar before the new top and expansion were poured.

Photos by Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News



Electrical system needs upgrade, younger people

By Tom Betz

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The city power plant and electric system is facing some expensive upgrade issues, and a need to find younger people to learn how to run the plant and power system the city commissioners were told during the city budget work session.

Charlie Bandel, electric distribution crew superintendent, and Rod Blake, power plant superintendent, told the commissioners they could see the city facing some upgrade issues and a need to bring in younger employees to fill the positions of those who are close to retirement.

City Manager Doug Gerber said large upgrades are among the big issues facing the electric utility in the next few years.

He said one of the major issues is updating to meet the Environmental Protection Administration rules. At a recent meeting he said they were told every plant would have to comply with new hazardous air pollutant rules for potential emissions from the power plant.

Blake said the requirement is to reduce emissions by 70 percent.

"It has to do with potential emissions," Gerber said. "Not actual emissions."

Mayor Josh Dechant said it sounded like the city could spend a million dollars, but are not going to spend that much.

Gerber said the rule would require the city to put a catalytic converter on each engine to change the hazardous air pollutants into greenhouse gases.

"It is a set up," Blake said. "It is a conspiracy to put small plants out of business."

The rule has been adopted, Gerber said, even though he and Blake pushed very hard for the regional power group to fight it. To comply could cost the city about \$100,000 per engine.

"It would de-rate our plant," Blake said. "I cannot designate the

engines as black start units. This all came from California. You can thank the Sierra Club. It became law in May, and we have until May 2013 to comply."

Blake said another issue is the 110,000 gallons of diesel fuel the city has on hand that does not meet the requirements for ultra low sulfur fuel. He said the requirement is to have fuel with 7 to 9 parts per million of sulfur, but the city fuel is at 118 parts per million.

Blake said he was looking to sell this fuel and replace it with the low sulfur fuel.

"I cannot burn the fuel we have as the air permit will not allow that," he said.

Gerber said that is one issue, and the city is working on other issues. One of the other issues is replacing the breakers between the plant and the interconnect.

Blake said the city has spent more than \$300,000 replacing breakers at sub stations. He said six of the breakers are at the sub station and six at the interconnect. He said most of those have been replaced.

An ongoing project Blake said is changing the switch gear at the plant. He said an issue is trying to find a company what will build the new switches to retrofit into the old breaker boxes.

The big issue he said, was the load tap changer on the main transformer that failed in June. He said that happened about two years ago with the same issue and burned out the motor. Another issue is why the motor burned out. The equipment is about 30 years old, he said.

He is getting quotes on a new system as this is the main link in the chain with the outside world. He is getting quotes from three companies and estimates the cost to be about \$800,000.

Commissioner Rick Billinger asked if the city went down when this happened.

Blake said the city did not go

down, but the power plant ran for 36 hours and operated it manually.

"We were told when we install the new breakers we could have more outages," he said. "The new ones are going to work and be more sensitive."

Bandel agreed the city needs the new transformer.

"It is a time bomb waiting for something to happen," he said.

Blake said the waiting period on a new transformer could be from 46 to 52 weeks.

"If we say yes, it could take a year to replace it," Commissioner Dave Daniels said.

Billinger said it does not sound like there is much of a choice.

On another issue Billinger asked about the planned transfers into reserves.

"Where are we getting the additional money," he said

"We got more money in than we expected," said commissioner John Garcia.

City Clerk Mary Volk said she was trying to put more money into the reserves.

"I want to make sure we are not raising the electrical rates," Billinger said.

"Not that we should not be talking about raising rates," Gerber said. "These two guys (Bandel and Blake) are going to cost the city about \$3 million in the next few years. We need to have money in the system for these expenses."

Gerber said another issue is about personnel. He said Bandel is close to retirement.

"I am going to retire pretty soon," Bandel said. "I have one guy who said he is retiring in three years."

Garcia said it would be good to talk about who could be moving into Bandel's position.

"They are about to retire," Blake said. "I was 24 when I started in the power plant. I need some young blood. I need some people. Cross training is familiarizing you with what

you employees do. They only sort of like it. Charlie needs a lineman.

"The employees will tell you they are working together," Gerber said, "but they are not going to get good at it."

"I need good guys," Blake said. "I am not sure I am going to get some."

Billinger asked about recruiting from the tech college in Manhattan.

Blake said a problem of getting the young guys is the pay.

Garcia asked what the starting base is.

Blake said \$11 to \$12 an hour.

"I could bring in a guy who has previous experience in plants," Blake said. "I have 31 years in this

kind of stuff. You don't teach this and there is no manual for it. You learn it on the job.

"You can spend a lot of money on plant and system," he said, "but there would be no one to run it."

Dechant asked what it would take to get someone in to learn the plant.

"I have been told we are over staffed, at times," Blake said. "When we are running we always have someone on vacation. I see disaster on the horizon."

"If you get someone in here who wants to stay then you are undercutting the existing guys," Bandel said.

Gerber said the personnel issue is why the staff is looking at doing a

salary survey next year.

"We are going to lose a lot of institutional knowledge in the next couple of years," he said. "We can bring in someone to run the plant, but they would not have the background and experience over the years."

"I have said he is overstaffed, if you are looking at the daily running. The solution is totally unfair. We need to raid some other plants."

Billinger said he appreciated the men bringing this to the commission's attention. He suggested doing some recruitment with Northwest Tech and others.

Gerber said he wanted to raise the issue and wanted the commission to be open to bringing in new people.

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