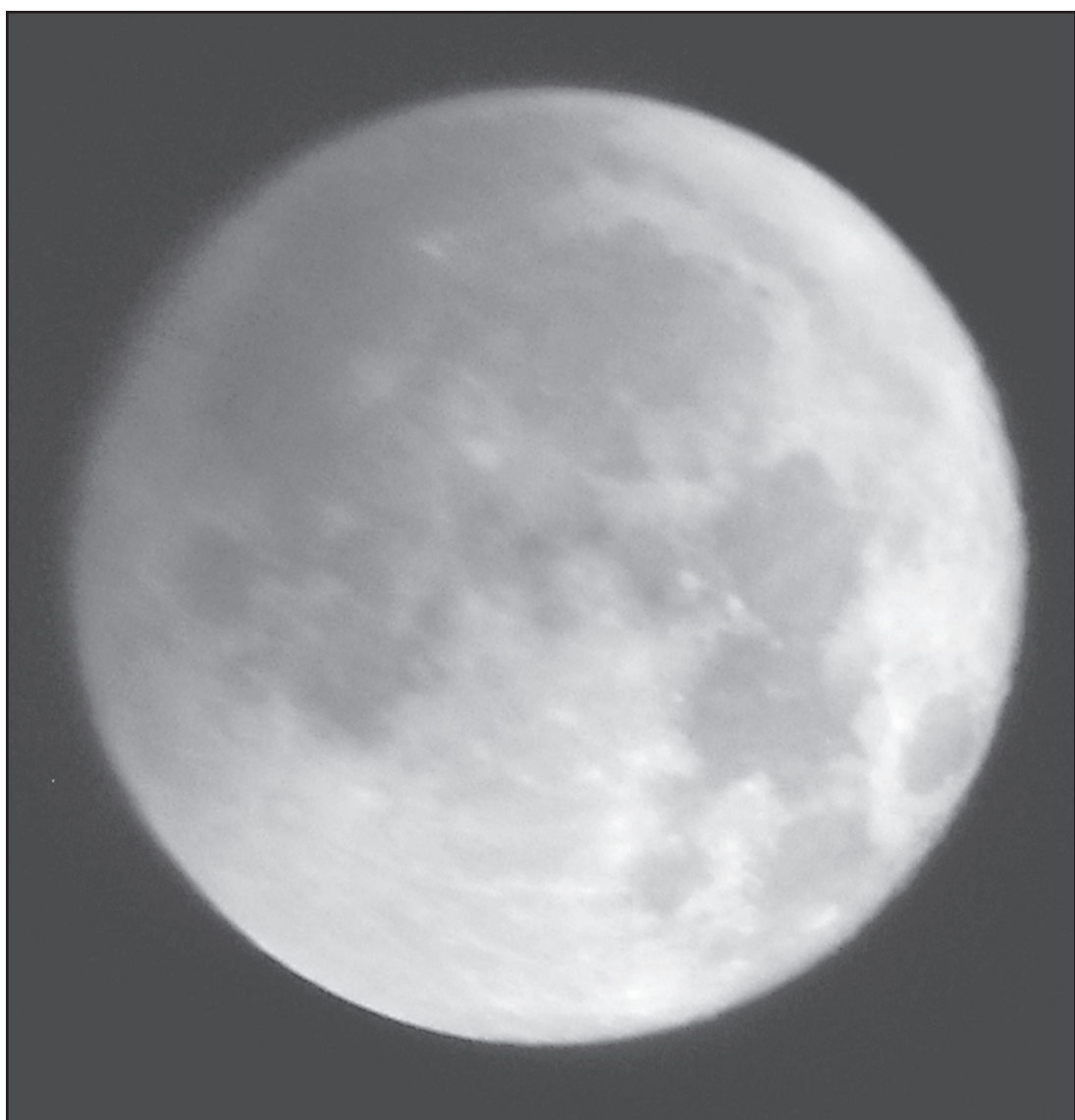


Full moon



Goodland resident Terry Bussen shot this picture of the full moon Sunday night by putting a camera up to the eyepiece of his table-top telescope. The moon reached its full phase on Monday. It will reach last quarter this Monday, and there will be a new moon on Monday, Jan. 23.

Photo by Terry Bussen

School meetings begin; district wants fewer buildings

SCHOOL, from Page 1

two of the three elementaries. For North Elementary to add the sixth graders another pod of classrooms would need to be added. These could be placed in a tornado/storm shelter, he said. There are also Federal Emergency Management Agency dollars available for a shelter.

West Elementary, Biermann said would stay the same but need a tornado/storm shelter.

Biermann said the district's plans can definitely be changed by public input at this point.

When asked if there was anyway to pay for the renovations as we go by a participant, Biermann said the amounts of money needed are to big to come out of capital outlay. Currently, he said, the budget is used just to keep what we have going not to improve anything. Eighty-three percent of the budget is for salaries and that does not include supplies.

When asked about Kansas Governor Sam Brownback's plans to have the state put less dollars into

education, he said he did not think it would pass and if passed the courts would not approve. There is just too much difference in valuations between property in the Kansas City area, some areas in southwest Kansas and northwest Kansas. For example a mill in Sherman County is worth \$63,000, but in Holcomb it is worth \$250,000.

If a bond issue would be passed, Biermann said, the work would be done in phases. As it stands, no architects have been hired or plans drawn up.

When asked about empty buildings, Biermann said, the district would not keep Grant and try to find a buyer.

The other meetings are scheduled at 1 p.m. Monday, Jan. 23; 5 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 25; 4 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 31; 8 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 6; and 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 9. The groups will be limited to 30. To sign up call 890-2397.

Superintendent Biermann has also offered to come to any organization if asked to also talk about facilities.

January is Radon Action Month

Gov. Sam Brownback and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment have proclaimed January "Kansas Radon Action Month" to help educate Kansans about the dangers of radon exposure and encourage actions to identify and to address radon problems in the home.

"Radon is the first leading cause of lung cancer in people who have never smoked and is estimated to cause over 200 lung cancer deaths in Kansas every year," said Robert

Moser, M.D., state health officer. "...All Kansans should test their homes, fix any homes with elevated radon levels and build new homes using radon-resistant methods."

About one out of every three radon measurements performed in Kansas are elevated. Some areas have higher levels than others, though elevated levels of radon have been detected in every county in the state. As many as one in 15 homes across the U.S. has elevated radon levels that often go undetected.

Inexpensive radon test kits, available at local hardware and builder's supply stores and at your extension office, can reveal the amount of radon in any building. Those with high levels can usually be fixed with simple and affordable venting techniques. Homeowners should talk with a certified radon contractor if levels above 4 pCi/l are detected.

A list of contractors is available at the Kansas Radon Hotline, (800) 693-5343. For information go to www.kansasradonprogram.org.

County commissioners to review insurance quotes

COUNTY, from Page 1

she had received the Blue Cross proposal and was trying to put together some options for the commissioners to see before making a decision.

She said the Blue Cross numbers look good for the self-funded program. She said the self-funded program gives the county better control of the money. She said the county had looked at the self-funded option last year, but the commissioners were uncomfortable about the total cost.

Commissioner Cynthia Strnad said she had been the one last year who was not sure the county could afford the self-funded program. She said when she had been on the commission previously the county had been self-funded and it had worked well.

Strnad said she had thought more about the self-funded and with a check with County Clerk Janet Rumpel felt the county was in a good financial condition to make that decision.

Fernandez said the key to the self-funded program is to make sure it is budgeted at the maximum liability, and it is a commitment for at least three to five years.

She agreed the advantage is the claims are rated over about three years rather than the previous 12 months as is done with the fully-funded program.

The maximum liability under the self-funded Blue Cross plan is about \$927,000 and the maximum liability of the Blue Cross fully-funded plan is about \$821,000.

Strnad said the difference is about \$100,000, and if the county does not reach the maximum that will be a saving to the county.

Rumpel said the insurance money goes into the employee benefit fund, and presently there is more than \$140,000 in that fund to cover the

difference in the plans.

Fernandez said Sherman County was getting a good quote from Blue Cross and Blue Shield with an increase of about two percent for the next year. She said insurance companies look at the county utilization, and Sherman County has had a couple of good years.

"I want to look at other self-funded companies," she said. "I can try to have the information by Friday. Can I meet with you to go over the figures?"

Commissioner Max Linin said he would not be available for a meeting on Friday. Commissioner Larry Enfield and Strnad said they could be available at 1 p.m.

Fernandez said it is important to consider it a long term commitment. She said it was rare for a group to hit the maximum liability. She said she has had two hit the maximum in the past 24 years.

Another part of the comparison will be reinsurance, Fernandez said, because Blue Cross is self-reinsured.

She said outside insurance companies do audit the claims, but the county could shop for reinsurance carriers on an annual basis to see if there is a savings.

"There are pluses and minuses on both options, but it does seem like a good idea to look at the figures," she said.

Fernandez said she has been getting quotes for vision coverage and long term care to give the commissioners other things to look at.

Rumpel asked about the brochures Fernandez had been working on.

Fernandez said she could have a proof to show the commissioners on Friday.

Strnad asked if the wellness programs were in the brochure.

Fernandez said she did not remember that being in the informa-

tion.

Rumpel said she was sure it was not included.

Fernandez said they could add that after the meeting on Friday.

In other business the commissioners:

- Re-elected Strnad as chairman and Linin as vice-chair. Strnad said she would be the chair as long as the other two agreed to continue to help.

- Approved appointment of Melody Knudson to the Regional Medical Services Council.

- Approved insurance for the Homeland Security emergency medical supply trailer, and authorized Butch Vandiver to send people to Hoxie to pick up the trailer and bring it to the Sherman County fairgrounds.

Gary Winter of the Homeland Security Council said Sherman County will need to draft an agreement about how the trailer is used and how it is requested by the surrounding counties, how it is to be taken to the scene and what needs to be done to refill it once the emergency is over. He said the agreement needs to be presented to the Emergency Services Council in February.

Strnad said Winter said Sherman County does not have an agreement with the Homeland Security Council, and needs to get one on file soon.

- Heard that requests for bids have been sent out for crack sealing on old U.S. 24. Vandiver said he had sent invitations to bid out and the plan is to have those for the last meeting of January.

Enfield suggested that Vandiver and Rumpel open the bids before the meeting to give the commissioners a chance to review before the meeting.

Vandiver said that would work as the bids are to be in the last week of January, and he can go over them

with Rumpel.

- Heard a report about the Sherman County Racing Association, and the need to approve the race dates to keep the track sanctioned.

Strnad said she had talked to Don Bolt of Jennings who said he was working with the Sherman County Racing Association and the IMCA about the dates.

The commissioners said they would submit a proposed lease to the racing people at the meeting on Tuesday with the hope to help them tie down the racing dates.

- Held a closed door session with Vandiver for 15 minutes and a second one for 5 minutes with the three commissioners.

When they reopened the meeting Strnad said Vandiver will stay on with the county when the new engineer, Ken Campbell, arrives in February. She said Butch will go back to his duties in construction.

"We want to thank him for his work for the last year and a half," she said.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

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He Sells!

Sire: Sitz Upward • MGS: SAV Net Worth
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Mill Bar Pioneer 6873

SAV Pioneer 17 Sons Sell!

He Sells!

Sire: SAV Pioneer • MGS: Retail Product
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205 Day Wt. 742 • WR 116

Mill Bar Heritage 6880

SAV Heritage 12 Sons Sell!

He Sells!

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