

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News

Commissioner Dave Daniels said at a city meeting last Tuesday that he was pleased with the remodeling of the Ed Wolak building, but he was disappointed with the way some of the contractors billed the city.

Daniels talked about the billing by contractors working on “cost plus” agreements at the regular city commission meeting, held a day late because of the President’s Day holiday.

“I would like to say I’m pleased with the Ed Wolak building and the part the city, and what little part the commission played, in assisting in making it a reality,” Daniels said. “I think it’s a good addition to the City of Goodland and I hope all our expectations become a reality.

“But after looking at all the receipts from

the businesses which did work on the building, I’m, disappointed.

This commissioner feels the city was taken advantage of by some, not all, but some of the businesses that worked on this project.

“Several of the businesses (I think) did an honest job at a fair price, others did not. In future ventures like this, I personally will take a different approach and outlook when dealing with businesses.

“I think bills sent to the city should have a breakdown, separating materials, labor and the cost for each. I understand, on this project, time was of the essence and I think that was a contributing factor to the abuse and some of the businesses saw an open check and took full advantage of the situation.

“I do want to commend the businesses that didn’t operate with this premise, and I

thank them.”

The construction bills were the subject of a split vote on approving the monthly bills at the last city commission meeting, with Mayor Rick Billinger voting against.

The mayor said he felt Rhoads Construction has overbilled the city for its work.

Later, Commissioner John Garcia asked if there were any applicants for the public works director’s, job which became vacant with the death of Mr. Wolak.

City Manager Ron Pickman said he has received one qualified application so far.

Commissioner Dean Blume asked Pickman if he had any heard of any new regulations at an environmental meeting he attended.

The manager said some of the regulations being discussed would be pretty costly to the city.

On water supply, he said, there is a new

chlorine treatment report that has to be done and sent to state and federal agencies.

“This will take some time, because we have to have a plan of the city water system, and show places where water is staying in place,” he said. “The ultimate object of this is to get rid of chlorine byproducts that may be harmful.

“If these are found in the water, it will have to be treated.

That would mean a total change of the city distribution system, because we would have to pump all the water to a central treatment facility before it is put in the water lines.”

Pickman said there are a whole lot of things coming down on the sewer side, and the requirement will be to get all nitrates and phosphates out of the water.

Blume asked if there were any recommendations about the type of plant the city

has.

Pickman said they are probably not going to recommend a lagoon system because the new regulations will require the city to reuse the water, and not discharge any. This will mean more treatment, he said.

“We need to do more exploration of the new technology and products that have been introduced in the past year before we jump on replacing the sewer plant,” Pickman said.

“I am always afraid of these meetings,” Blume said. “They always have new thoughts and new things for us to do.”

The commission went into closed session for 10 minutes to consider possible acquisition of property for future improvements.

The meeting adjourned after just half an hour at 5:50 p.m.

The next city commission meeting will be 5 p.m. on Monday, March 1.



State Sen. Stan Clark handed booklets on the state budget to Curtis Duncan (left) of KLOE Radio and City Commissioner Dean Blume at a town hall meeting Saturday at Hank’s Café.
Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

Democratic caucus to meet in Colby

Area Democrats will converge on Colby on Saturday, March 13, when the party will hold its presidential caucuses at 50 locations across the Kansas.

Party members in the 18 counties of the 40th Senatorial District can participate in the caucus at the City Limits Convention Center, with registration at noon and the caucus at 2 p.m.

Counties include Sherman, Cheyenne, Decatur, Gove, Graham, Greeley, Lane, Logan, Ness, Norton, Rawlins, Rooks, Scott, Sheridan, Thomas, Trego, Wallace and Wichita.

Joey Bahr, field director with the Kansas Democratic Party in Topeka, said it’s a chance for Kansas Democrats to show support for their

candidate and have a voice in the process. Bahr was in Colby as part of a six-day, 23-city trip around the state.

“The main reason I’m doing this is to increase awareness about the caucus,” said Bahr, who is in charge of the event this year.

He said people will gather and then assemble into groups representing the candidates they support. The groups will be counted and the votes translated into delegates for presidential candidates.

Bahr said 27 percent of the state’s registered voters are Democrats.

The Democratic National Convention will be July 26-29 in Boston, and that’s where the party’s nominee will be chosen. Kansas will send 41 delegates and six alternates.

With the announcement that retired Gen. Wesley Clark and former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean are dropping out of the race, Bahr said it’s down to a two-man contest between Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, and Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina.

Minor candidates still in the running include the Rev. Al Sharpton of New York and Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich.

The large field, Bahr said, helped to wake up Democrats across the country and generate interest in this year’s election.

Sen. Kerry, who has racked up primary wins in 15 of 17 states so far, is the front-runner. For information, call (785) 234-0425 or visit www.ksdp.org/caucuses.

Contract approved for financial officer

The Goodland Regional Medical Center board approved a contract for the hospital’s chief financial officer and decided to move forward with refinancing its long-term debt.

The board held a special meeting at noon last Tuesday to approve a resolution to approach the county commission to help with for 10-

year industrial revenue bonds for private placement.

The bonds are ready to be issued, Hospital Administrator Jay Jolly said, and all the county banks will be invited to buy some.

The bonds will restructure the hospital’s financing, Chief Financial Officer Jim Precht said, and re-

duce monthly payments by \$10,000.

Among the items in long-term debt, he said, is the new addition to the hospital.

The board also approved a three-year contract for Precht for \$70,000 per year.

Health care big concern

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year, to pay premiums on long-term care insurance policies, for health insurance policies when a person is between jobs and provide a tax-deferred means of saving for future health care needs.

The accounts allow people to purchase health insurance with a larger deductible to save money on the premiums, he said, and then pay the deductible from the savings account. Any money from the account that is not used is carried over from year to year.

Clark said he has suggested to the governor and to legislative leaders this concept should be an option for participants in the Kansas State Employees Health Plan.

“My family would jump at this option,” he said.

The savings accounts are intended to help more people to afford health insurance, he said, and thus take some of the burden off the government.

“If state budgets would increase tax receipts by 5 percent annually and Medicaid costs continue to increase at their current rate,” Clark said, “by 2020 Medicaid will consume the entire budgets of every state in the union. Doing nothing is not an option.”

Hearings are being held on an alternative school finance plan, Morrison said. It would emphasize student achievement, rather than the number of students, as under the current formula.

In the past, he said, money spent on education has more than doubled while test scores went down.

The new plan will consider achievement, he said, and gives schools money to close the gap if kids aren’t achieving, while having incentives to encourage continued achievement.

This is a work in progress, Morrison said; the legislature is trying to put a plan on the table and work on it.

“If we get promises in place and not be subject to politics,” he said, “this could be a very good bill.”

Morrison said the Legislature did not live up to promises it made in the ’80s, and now education is in crisis.

“If the state ever decides to cut what it gives to education globally,” he said, “we are in trouble.

“What we have right now is a system that rewards the number of pupils, not performance. If we keep losing pupils, we’re toast.”

Clark said this is the first year since he has been in the Senate that he has been pushing economic de-

velopment. People earn on average 47 percent more in cities than in rural Kansas, he said; there needs to be a reason for high school and college graduates to come back. Clark said the Legislature needs to make that a priority this year and next.

Morrison said the “destination sales tax” is at a point where it is going to be enforced if the Legislature can’t kill it.

At the very end of the 2003 session, the so-called streamlined sales tax passed, Morrison said, requiring merchants to pay the sales tax rate of the taxing jurisdiction where goods are delivered rather than where purchased.

This destination-style tax was put into effect, he said, with the purpose of forcing Internet and mail-order companies to pay sales tax when delivering goods to Kansas.

He said legislators had understood businesses grossing less than \$5 million per year would be exempt and computer programs and other assistance would be in place before full implementation.

It appears the Legislature will not stop implementation, Morrison said, but hopes they will clarify the law and create better guidelines.

Clark said the Senate needs 14-16 more votes to change the tax.

Six-year-old crashes into truck

A 6-year-old Hill City boy died Saturday, Feb. 14, 2004, after the bicycle he was riding crashed into the side of a moving tractor-trailer rig.

Chaston Andrew VanDerVeen, a former Goodland Head Start student, was riding his bicycle east on a city street in Hill City just after 4 p.m. Friday, the Kansas Highway Patrol reported, when he went through a stop sign at Fourth St., or U.S. Highway 283.

The report said the boy’s bicycle hit the left side of a tractor-trailer driven by Willis Wochner, 33, Sutton, Neb. Wochner, who was not injured, was northbound on the highway.

The child was taken to Wesley Medical Center in Wichita, where he died the next day.

Chaston was born March 23, 1997, in Dallas. He was a student at Hill City Grade School.

Survivors include his parents, Kenberlea VanDerVeen of Hill City, formerly of Goodland, and Victor Montes of Central Point, Ore.; his grandparents, Jay and Judy VanDerVeen of Prairie View, Victor and Leelynn Montes of Dallas and Patty and Gary Carlson of Missouri; and a great-grandmother, Marie Delimont of Norton.

Services were at 10 a.m. Thursday at Luctor Christian Reformed Church in Phillips County, with burial in Luctor Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the Chaston VanDerVeen Memorial Fund or the Hill City Grade School Library for books in care of the Olliff-Boeve Memorial Chapel, 1115 Second, Phillipsburg, Kan. 67661.

Visitation was Wednesday at the funeral home with family present from 7-8 p.m.

corrections

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