

Windows ready for fair



Josh Doke and Abby Murray, members of the Country Clovers 4-H Club, painted a pig getting wet on the window at the Cowboy Loop on Tuesday morning. 4-Hers raise money and promote the fair by selling window paintings to interested businesses.

Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

City tables payment to company

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

After waiting six months for activity at the Aircraft Seal and Gasket plant, Goodland city commissioners Monday put a request for part of a state grant on hold until they could get some answers from the firm.

The city remodeled an old grocery at 10th and Center for the firm, which has moved in machinery from a California plant and hired two people to work here. Employment was projected at 30 in a year, with up to 100 eventually, but the plant has yet to produce a gasket.

The firm submitted a request to the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission for \$35,000 out of a \$200,000 loan the city approved in December. The money is from a state economic development program which allows cities and counties to help new business with up to \$750,000 in loans. Aircraft Seal and Gasket had to pledge \$100,000 to get the loan bringing the total of the project to \$300,000.

Doug Bruggeman, from the planning commission, presented the request to the city Monday.

City Manager Ron Pickman said he had called Herb Menold, president of Aircraft Seal and Gasket, and asked him to meet with the commission, but was told he would not be available until later in the week.

Bruggeman said under the provisions of the grant, they have two years to reach the level of employ-

ment set in the grant, and that it is \$35,000 for each job created. That means a total of six employees with at least three being low-income people, he said.

"There is going to have to be more activity for me to approve this," Blume said.

Mayor Rick Billinger asked Bruggeman if he had been over to the plant to see what was happening, and if there were specific lists of equipment that had been purchased.

Bruggeman said he has not been in the plant for over a month, but that it was his understanding they were building some of the equipment at the plant plus bringing some from California.

"I don't think we have a choice," Billinger said. "I want to support them, and believe we are committed."

Bruggeman said all payment requests have to be approved by the city. He said the payments are scheduled when the company provides invoices to show that they have spent money that is covered in the loan, including expenditures for working capital, equipment and inventory.

He said the company is required to show that they have spent some of their matching money as well. In the first payment, the figures Bruggeman presented show the company spent about \$16,500 of company money and \$35,000 covered in the economic development grant, which is what they were ask-

ing to have reimbursed.

Pickman said the city lease, which gives Aircraft Seal and Gasket free rent on its plant, requires job creation, and does not have the same time period as the economic development loan.

"Can we table this and hold a special meeting?" Commissioner Dave Daniels asked.

Daniels made the motion to table the issue until they meet with Menold in a special meeting. Commissioner Chuck Lutters, who is employed by Aircraft Seal and Gasket, excused himself from the meeting before the discussion began.

Payment approved

LOAN, from Page 1

the level of cash flow I can handle."

"Are you still looking at the same number of employees?" Daniels asked.

"Yes, there has been no change in plans," Menold said.

Blume made a motion to approve the payment of loan funds, which are part of the \$200,000 economic development loan the city applied for from the state in December. The money, from a state grant, is being matched by \$100,000 from Aircraft Seal and Gasket.

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Senate candidates spar

SENATE, from Page 1

both houses only to have the governor veto it.

"On school finance, I believe since 1992 we have kept up with inflation, but we haven't kept the base up. We added lots of other things to education.

Dwindling enrollment is killing our schools. Some people believe the way to fix it is to throw money at the problem, but that is not always the answer.

"I believe we will pull ourselves up and not wait for someone to come along. I think the communities will help keep the schools open.

"We need to have farmers filling bins with grain. We keep hearing people talk about the Buffalo Commons, (where the Plains empty out), but we are not going to let that happen.

"We should not depend on government payments, and keep farmers in the field.

"Working in Topeka is not easy. You need to build coalitions."

The candidates were asked about economic development and school finance.

Rasure said he felt his youth was an advantage because he has the endorsement of the Senate leadership, and believes that northwest Kansas is the best place to live.

"We need to find ways to sell northwest Kansas to small businesses, and need to help with the marketing of the area," Rasure said. "We need to look at those small businesses with one or two employees that can grow, and we need to help those who are here and have good ideas to build businesses."

Goodland School Superintendent Marvin Selby asked Ostmeyer

what he had done to give schools money, noting that the way the Goodland district is making ends meet is to cut staff.

"We haven't kept up with the base," Ostmeyer said. "We have put about \$2.9 billion into schools, but it frustrates me when they keep yelling for more money.

"We can't do it in western Kansas because we don't have the clout. We need to be careful touching the school finance formula, but if we are not careful we will not come out ahead.

"I agree, we need to get more money to schools, but I am also concerned about the number of parents who are home schooling. I am not sure we want the state to do the whole job. I think we need to figure out what we have done wrong.

"We need to do like farmers and face the cuts. I think we will turn the economy around, and that will help, but not sure we can do it soon enough."

Rasure said he believes the state has to ensure an equal education, and that the Constitution says there should be a statewide finance plan.

Attorney Ron Vignery asked the candidates to say how they would pay for an increase in school finance, and their feeling about vouchers, which allow parents to send students to any school, public or private.

"I believe property tax is the most evil form of tax," Rasure said. "I think we should look at something in the sales tax or income tax.

"On vouchers, I believe we need to protect our public schools."

Ostmeyer said he agrees that they have to work something out to pay for schools.

"I am not sure what is going to come out of the courts," he said. "I

supported vouchers, and believe we have a God-given right to go to school wherever we want to.

"I believe in the public schools, but we have to ask what is wrong. Why do we have so many people home schooling?"

Ken Klemm of Buffalo Guys asked the two candidates about the "Streamlined Sales Tax," which he said is a burden on his business. The law requires merchants who ship out of town to figure tax based on where goods go, rather than a single rate where they are shipped.

"I admit I voted for it," Ostmeyer said. "It was supposed to be approved without the destination sales tax, but it got through because the governor wanted it.

"It is very bad for business, and we have delayed it until January 2005. We did not have enough votes to repeal it."

"It was a bad deal from the start," Rasure said, "and now we find that to get the software we are going to a company in New Zealand.

"This is not the first thing to be outsourced. We are using phone centers in India for assistance to citizens.

"The Streamlined Sales Tax is a bad bill because there may only be one taxing district in Sherman County, but there are 742 in Kansas.

Asked about their stand on abortion and gay marriage, both men said they were pro-life and both supported a constitutional amendment for the defense of the family.

They were asked about gambling in western Kansas, and Rasure said he was undecided on the issue, but felt that it should be up to a vote of the citizens.

Ostmeyer said he was not in favor of gambling.

S&T 3x7 in back

Merchants receive permit for weekend sidewalk sale

SALE, from Page 1

provisions of the two sections are covered in the charter ordinance. The two sections deal with applications and licenses fees for cereal malt beverage only.

• Approved, on a 4-1 vote, an ordinance changing the maximum property tax levy for the public library from 4.6 mills to 4.65 mills. This was what the commission discussed and all present appeared to agree to the change during a budget

workshop on July 7. Mayor Rick Billinger voted against the ordinance because he said he did not remember agreeing to the increase, which would bring in about \$1,500 more per year.

• Approved the bid of Chambliss Roofing of Scott City for \$5,840, to replace roof sheathing and replace broken roof tile on the chapel at the city cemetery. An addition to the bid will be the installation of copper edge flashing. The other bid was \$12,880 from Weather Craft of Goodland.

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