

# County may raise property tax 2 percent

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

The preliminary budget probably would raise the county property tax rate by 1.32 mills, or about 2.2 percent, County Clerk Janet Rumpel told Sherman County commissioners at their meeting Tuesday.

Last year, the county had an increase of about 10 mills, or about 20 percent, in the rural property tax rate. The total county tax levy was 58.673 mills plus 5.164 for the rural fire district. Rumpel said the new tax levy would be 59.991 and the fire would be 3.469, and that would mean a total drop in county property taxes.

She said the total of the two property tax levys will drop, and the people in the city will not see the rural fire district tax levy.

Rumpel said she had included all the budgets from the departments, and nothing had jumped up higher than expected. She told the commissioners she had put \$60,000 in the bond and interest fund in case they were planning to do some work on the county buildings.

She mentioned the brick work on the courthouse which has not been done, work on the former Southwest Bell building the county owns. "There would be enough money to put them all together into one bond," she said.

Commission Chairman Mitch Tiede said it would be possible for the county to do some of the projects they have been putting off for the past two years and build a little reserve, too.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure said there were other projects the county needs to look at in the long term. He said the county needs to do something about the outside of the telephone building before it begins to fall down.

Rumpel said she had increased the amount for asphalt in the road and bridge budget, but did not think it was enough to all the work the roads need.

Rasure said the county needs to look at upgrading 8th Street from K-27 west to the Country Club road, and old U.S. 24 needs more work.

On the health services budget, Rumpel said she had increased mental health to \$35,000 from \$30,000 Hospice to \$15,000 from \$10,000 and developmental services to \$45,000 from \$40,000.

For the Good Samaritan Center, she said, she put \$15,000 in to come out of the health services fund and \$30,000 in home maintenance. Rasure said he felt this would be enough to have the county pay half of the cost of a new fire sprinkler system, estimated at \$75,000 to \$90,000.

Rumpel said she allowed a total of 5 percent for pay increases, and that most of the department heads had used 5 percent in their budgets.

Rasure said the 5 percent could cover the total cost, "depending on how we actually approach raises."

"We might do it more like the city did," Commissioner Chuck Thomas said.

"But 5 percent should cover it all," Tiede said.

On the employee benefit reserve fund, Rumpel said she is putting the

reimbursement from the landfill department for employee benefit expenses into this and it has \$100,000. She said the county should get about \$40,000 the next year, which would be added to this fund.

Looking at the 911 emergency system, she said the income from the 50 cents-per-line-per-month tax should increase next year with the addition of charges on cell phones, but she did not have a way to estimate how much. Any extra that comes in will be put into capital outlay to help with the cost of new equipment, she said.

The commissioners said they felt comfortable with the budget figures, and would look them over before the next meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 31. At that meeting they will make any adjustments and set a date for a public hearing.

Rumpel said the budget has to be published 10 days prior to the hearing, so if they approve it on Aug. 31, it can be published on Friday, Sept. 3, and the hearing could be held on Tuesday, Sept. 14.

## Questions raised about new fire signs

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

Signs allowing "authorized personnel only" have appeared in the rural fire station in Goodland, and there was a question at Tuesday's Sherman County commission meeting about who is authorized.

Dennis Bentzinger of Med Enterprises Fire Extinguisher said he had noticed the signs, but figured he was authorized because he had a contract to service the county's fire extinguishers.

Commissioners Kevin Rasure and Chuck Thomas said they did not know anything about the signs. Commissioner Mitch Tiede said he thought Fire Chief Kenny Griffith put the signs up. The commissioners agreed Bentzinger would be authorized because of the county contract.

Griffith said Thursday an insurance company representative recommended the signs because of liability concerns.

"He said the fire station is not a 'public access' building like the courthouse," Griffith said. "Authorized personnel are the firefighters and those who are in company of a firefighter."

Griffith said he did not know if signs had been put up in stations at Kanorado or Brewster.

Bentzinger said he had keys and a combination that allows him access to the fire stations, and he has had them since he began doing the fire extinguishers.

"I want to let you know that I am supplying the extinguishers for the fire schools," he said, "and I had fire extinguishers that could have been used at the demolition derby."

"That cost the county about \$200 for the extinguishers used to put out the car fires."

Bentzinger went on to complain about recent county purchases of fire safety equipment.

"I haven't got to bid on anything, and I noticed there was \$4,000 spent with my competitor (Weis Fire Safety Equipment of Salina).

"When I asked the fire chief, Kenny Griffith, he told me 'It's not my fault. It's the powers above.'"

Bentzinger said he had asked Griffith if the powers above were Public Works Manager Curt Way or Commissioner Tiede.

"I want to keep the cost down," Bentzinger said. "I want to have a chance to bid on the equipment."

Tiede said he did not know of anybody above Griffith who would be the "powers above" and Way said he had nothing to do with ordering fire equipment. That it was up to Griffith, he said.

"We can visit with him," Commissioner Kevin Rasure said.

The other commissioners agreed and asked to have the fire chiefs and the fire board put on the agenda for the Sept. 7 meeting.

Bentzinger said some of the fire extinguishers in Brewster were missing.

Rasure said the county has an inventory of what is to be there and they will look into getting it updated by the new fire chief there, Mike Schultz.

When the fire board comes to the meeting, the commissioners said, all the fire chiefs should come to review their operations and make sure everybody is on the same page.

## J.C. Penney store introduces new manager

By Kathryn Gurfinkel

The Goodland Star-News

Amid the shuffle of back-to-school shoppers and piles of clothes Monday, the Goodland J.C. Penney store had a visit from the new boss, Stephen Loyd. "This is my first store," the new manager said, "so I'm very excited to be here."

Loyd, 48, was named manager for the McCook, Neb., and Goodland Penney's stores on June 4. He moved to McCook with his wife

Karen from a store in Wichita to accept the promotion.

"We just got moved in last weekend," he said. "It's been a long road."



Loyd

Loyd said his wife, the former Karen Steinbring, lived in Oberlin before they met, so she was excited to move to a familiar place.

"It's kind of like coming home," he said.

Moving from Wichita to a small-town store is

almost like coming home for Loyd, too.

"I started in a small town in Jefferson City, Mo.," he said. "It's almost the same. It's just smaller."

Even though he spent the past 10 years in Wichita, he said he has moved all around the country. He has worked at stores in Missouri, Chicago and Lawrence.

"I'm a gypsy," he said.

Loyd has a long history with the company, spending a quarter of a century working as senior department manager and an assistant manager.

"I've been with the J.C. Penney company for 25 years," he said. "I'm not a newcomer."

So far, he said he doesn't have any big changes in mind for the store here.

He said employees are cleaning the store and working on widening and clearing out aisles to make shopping easier. Glass on the front of the store is being repaired.

Loyd said he will be in the Good-

land store two days a week, or more if needed.

"It's whatever they need," he said. "I told them to just call and I'll be here."

Even in the transfer from one manager to another, he said, the store won the first week of a company-wide promotional back-to-school contest for August. Loyd said each of the employees each won a gift card for beating out 18 other stores in the contest.

"This store has just been fantastic," Loyd said. "We've got a great team."

The staff is holding an open house from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday in honor of their new manager. Coffee and cookies will be served while visitors get a chance to meet Loyd and his wife. Loyd said he looks forward to working in Goodland and meeting his customers at the open house.

"I'm just glad to be here," he said.

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- Population study on each crop
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**Early Bird Registration** (received BEFORE August 19)

Number Attending: x \$15/person\* = Total Enclosed \$  
(\*includes proceedings, complimentary hat and supper)

**Regular and On-Site Registration** (AFTER August 19)

Number Attending: x \$25/person\* = Total Enclosed \$  
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