

# Chamber requests more money for fireworks; commission delays decision until March meeting

**By Tom Betz**  
*The Goodland Star-News*  
Representatives of the Goodland Chamber asked the city commission to increase the city contribution to the Freedom Fest fireworks at the meeting Monday evening, but the commission members expressed doubts about approving any additional money.

No decision was made by the city commission saying they would like to wait until the final accounting is completed from last year to see how much carryover there might be.

Ken Clouse, a chamber board member and president of Northwest Kansas Technical College, said he appreciated the opportunity to revisit the fireworks issue.

"I have talked to each individually about this," Clouse said. "Just for review, when we were here in October we proposed a three-way split, and that has become more of a reality with the support from Sherman County."

"We need support and commitment from the city. We know this is not the most popular idea to spend city money to shoot fireworks up in the sky."

"As a chamber we believe it is important to have positive events

that represent the community in a positive light. This is not going to bring lots of business to downtown, but it does show people who visit that we have lots to offer and they may come here at a later time.

"We need some assistance for this year. If you can support such an event we would ask you to evaluate whether it was worthwhile. Normally we would ask for five years, but I know you are not thinking that is possible and we would ask for one year to give the chamber a chance to get this back on its feet."

"We would ask that if it is positive you many re-evaluate and support it in the future. The city, chamber and county together can make it a success. I appeal to you to give us a positive reaction."

City Commissioner John Garcia asked Clouse when the chamber needs an answer from the city.

"We need to know pretty soon to be able to plan," Clouse said. "Without the city this will not happen this year."

Garcia asked Ron Pickman, city manager, about how the city could increase the amount of money earmarked for the fireworks.

Pickman said the city has earmarked \$500 for this, and the com-

mission would have to decide what line item in the budget any increase would come from.

"We have received more money from the sales tax," Garcia said, "would any of that be available?"

"That would go into carryover," Pickman said, "but at this time I am not sure where the bottom line is."

"We do not have any departments over in spending, but not sure how the revenue did. City Clerk Mary Volk is working to get the yearend figures completed."

Commissioner Dean Blume asked Courtney Warden, chamber executive director, if Sherman County is a member. She said yes, and Blume asked what they paid in dues. Warden said it was \$600.

"That is the same as the city, \$600," Blume said. "Don't get me wrong, but I want to make it clear where the funding is coming from."

"The citizens are footing the major part of the bill including the dues and money already committed."

Tremon Kizer, chamber board member and school band teacher, said he had a friend come out and help with Freedom Fest. She was surprised that the town the size of Goodland could put on something like this, and said she wished she

could teach in such a place.

"Events like this are a potential to interest people in coming here," Kizer said.

"Would the chamber consider taking bids on the fireworks," Commissioner Dave Daniels asked.

"I guess we could," Warden said. "I don't know where to go to bid fireworks. We have used Joe Diaz because he is local and has done it for the past several years. We would have to know by the first of March to order the fireworks."

"That is a lot of money to go up in the air," Mayor Rick Billinger said, "and \$5,000 on the government side is way too much. There are things a lot more important than fireworks."

"There are things more important than fireworks," Clouse said, "but this event is about promoting Goodland and making an positive impression on people."

"It would have been better if the weather had not been bad last year," Garcia said. "I have a concern about lessening the events, and I think it needs to be embedded. Would rather have some celebration rather than none."

"Does the community really want it?" Billinger asked.

"We did get a lot of money, but not enough," Warden said. "We got over \$3,000 from the community."

"If you got \$3,000 then that should be what you spend," Billinger said.

"There was plenty of planning for last year," Clouse said, "and I believe we can get this back to being self supporting. I don't expect to be rained out this year, and we will not be back here next year."

Daniels said he wants to be open minded about this issue, and was wondering why it is the chamber's responsibility to put on the fireworks.

"Is this for patriotism and celebrating our nation's birthday or bringing people to town?" he asked.

Blume asked if the event raises money is good enough would the extra go into a fireworks fund for the next year?

Warden said that is what the chamber does, and that the money would be used as the base for the next year's event.

Josh Dechant, chamber board member and vice president of Bankwest, said the Freedom Fest is for the nation's birthday.

"If not the chamber, who will do it? Dechant asked. "If we do not have a celebration, then the police

would have more problems with illegal fireworks."

"Did the Veterans of Foreign Wars do this before? said Commissioner Jim Mull. "I have a tough time spending money on fireworks, especially with the other utility rate increases people will be seeing."

"I think we have a good program that has gotten a little grander than we can afford. I am glad to see the county support this, but I have a tough time voting for this."

"I think it is a two-sided problem," Garcia said. "The chamber had a hard year, and the arithmetic is not working out. I suggest you reassess your prices and come with a specific request."

"We have the responsibility to do what is right for the taxpayers. I hate to see the event die because we do it for the spirit and friendship of the people around here."

"We owe you a response."

"If you could guarantee to make it rain, raising money would be very easy," Mull said.

"If we come back later would we be wasting our time?" Clouse asked.

The commission said they would put the item on the agenda for the first meeting in March.

## Schools may benefit from ruling

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constitutionally suitable."

The decision of the court sends the burden of funding schools back to the Kansas Legislature to solve the problem before April 12. Currently, Kansas spends \$2.7 billion annually on education for grades K-12.

Selby said the United School Administrators state finance committee, a board he sits on along with 25 other superintendents, will meet soon and discuss plans to approach legislators. He said they have some ideas on how the money should be distributed and want to make their voices heard.

If Goodland doesn't see the expanded funding some jobs are on the cutting block along with one of the district's schools Selby said.

"We hope that's not necessary," he said.

Selby said they have been mak-


ing cuts as they lose teachers to retirement and relocation, but they are running out of places to cut.

"We have been making staff reductions every year," he said. "We're about to the point where we

can't do that anymore."

Whatever the legislature decides, Selby said we won't see any change in this year's budget. The changes, he said, will go into effect in the next school year.

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