

The Goodland Star-News staff takes on Scholars' Bowl



Unsure what to expect, staff members at *The Goodland Star-News* took on the Goodland High School Scholars' Bowl team Monday. Sports editor Greg Stover (left) and newspaper Publisher Steve Haynes shared one end of the table while Pat Schiefen, copy editor (below left); Sharon Corcoran, society editor; and Kathryn Burke, reporter, worked together to win the match 8-2.

Photos by Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News



County insurance goes up 4.2 percent

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News
With a drop in claims over the past year, Sherman County employee health insurance cost will increase by just 4.2 percent this year, commissioners were told Tuesday, well under the 12 percent national average.

Charles Krull, a representative from Blue Cross and Blue Shield, was at the county commission meeting Tuesday to discuss the upcoming renewal of the county's self-funded insurance plan.

Krull said last year was pretty decent, with total claims of \$1,715,000, but that after the discounts through Blue Cross and Blue Shield, they had paid \$665,000. He said \$224,000 of that total were claims over \$15,000.

Sherman County pays all claims up to \$15,000 per contract. Krull said there were 66 contracts last

year, and there are 64 this year. He said the total was \$50,000 under what had been estimated.

"The large claims are down," he said, "and the usage has stabilized."

The county has a non-deductible plan, and Krull said everything is paid at 50 percent until the total reaches \$15,000, when the stop loss takes over and pays 100 percent.

As of October, the county had about \$219,000 in claims with \$130,000 in hospital and doctor bills, \$81,100 in drug claims and \$8,000 in dental claims. He said they had estimated a total of \$316,000 claims for last year.

For the next year, which begins on March 1, Krull said the cost is estimated at \$326,183, a 2.2 percent increase.

He said the individual plan cost \$166 per month last year and will be \$178 for this year. The family plan cost for last year was \$368 per

month and will be \$395 for this year.

County Clerk Janet Rumpel said the county has budgeted \$750,000 for the employee insurance, and anything that is not used in the claims goes into the insurance reserve fund.

"It is good that you are keeping the reserve fund up," Krull said. "That will put you in good shape in case there is a bad year."

Krull reviewed the details of the county health plan, which is Blue Choice and a Preferred Provider program. He said it is shared pay up to 50 percent with an out of pocket cost of \$1,500 for an individual and \$3,000 for a family. There is a \$2 million maximum and children are covered up to age 23.

The prescription card program is a 10-20 plan, which means generic

drugs cost the person \$10 and brand name drugs cost \$20. Krull said this is one area where the commissioners might look at raising in the future if they find a need to cut the costs.

"Drugs is everyone's largest concern," Krull said. "The trend seems to have stabilized in the past few years, and we see something of a turnaround in some of the costs of health care."

"The nationwide network that Blue Cross and Blue Shield is part of has helped because now we can get the same discounts in Colorado or Nebraska that we get in Kansas."

"Blue Cross and Blue Shield covers 62 percent of all the people insured in the state."

The commissioners approved the renewal of the health insurance plan.

corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual.

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One Week Only!

Commissioners start year with same chairman

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

Two Sherman County commissioners were sworn in for new terms Tuesday morning, then the commissioners decided to keep the same chairman as they went through the annual reorganization process.

Commissioners Mitch Tiede and Kevin Rasure were sworn in by County Clerk Janet Rumpel. Tiede agreed to remain as chairman for this year, and was elected unanimously. Rasure was named vice chair.

The four Goodland banks, First National, Bankwest, Western State and People's State, were named as depositories for county money. *The Goodland Star-News* was designated the official newspaper.

The commissioners had discussed having all computer purchases come out of a single computer fund rather than having computer funds in different departments.

Rumpel said there was a reason for how the system was set up. She said the main computer fund is part of the General Fund, which includes all the offices in the courthouse. She said in the past, each department had a separate computer line in their budget, but the commissioners felt it would be better to bring all that under one fund.

However, she said that does not include departments like the sheriff, appraiser or road and bridge, which do not purchase items through the general fund.

"These have separate tax levies," Rumpel said, "and should have separate line items for computer purchases. If you are talking about the purchase of a single computer for one of those offices, it should be in their budget, but if you are talking about purchasing something for the whole county, that would come out of the larger computer fund."

The commissioners decided, after Rumpel's explanation, to leave the computer fund as it is set up, and make sure the other departments have line items for computer purchases in their budgets.

On another computer issue, Crystal Wright, county payroll clerk, told the commissioners that Infinitec, the company that provides computer software was suggesting an upgrade in the county payroll program to provide more security and comply with new regulations.

She said the cost of the upgrade would be \$12,995, including the software and a maintenance agreement to provide support and upgrades.

One of the new features of the program would be a computerized time clock which would require all county employees to clock in through a computer terminal. Wright said this did not seem to be a workable program for Sherman County because it would require the addition of computer terminals at places as the transfer station, health department, and road and bridge offices.

She said asking Infinitec to take this out would mean the cost would be \$11,000, but then it would not include the support and upgrades.

Rasure said he did not feel the county needs to jump to a new payroll system, and asked if the current software is working.

Wright said the system is working well as it is, but that if the county does not upgrade, they will lose support on the existing system.

Thomas suggested it was Infinitec that was pushing the new software, and he did not see a reason to spend the money.

Tiede said he agreed, and Wright said she would have Wade McCarty of the company come out on Tuesday to give the commissioners a more detailed explanation.

New Listings



412 West 6th....Big rooms! Ready-to-move-into condition! This home offers a large living room, big kitchen with all appliances, two

spacious bedrooms, bath with laundry on the main floor. The basement has a family room, bedroom, bath and storage area. Central heat and air, underground sprinklers, newer carpet in living room and hall, newer vinyl in kitchen, oversized attached garage are just a few of the extras. Please call Donna Moore to see this nice home. Offered at \$75,000.



702 East 14th....Step inside this home and you'll fall in love with its

style and design. This beautifully decorated home offers vaulted ceilings with formal dining room, living room, open kitchen with center island and beautiful cabinetry. Master bedroom offers large walk in closets and masterbath. Outside you'll find a nicely landscaped yard, a patio and double car garage. Located in nice neighborhood and close to schools. Priced at \$85,000. Contact Cynthia for your personal showing of this wonderful home! Or visit www.cynthiabutts.com for further information.



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garage, fenced yard. Family room, eat-in kitchen. Please let Donna Moore show you this home. \$65,000.



1520 Broadway....Why pay rent you can own this affordable 4 bedroom home! Inside you'll find newly installed carpet, linoleum and paint. Has a partial basement with extra bath and utility room. Includes detached garage and is close to schools. Priced at

\$19,900. Ask Cynthia to show you this home or visit www.cynthiabutts.com for further information.

Cynthia Butts, 899-3944; Donna Moore 899-6159.

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