

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News

The Goodland City Commission approved placing more flag poles for the veterans section of the cemetery at a meeting Monday.

Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars had asked for permission to add flag poles along the sides of a section being reserved for burial of veterans, and City Manager Ron Pickman said he did not see any problem.

However, Pickman said the city could not approve a request from the group to donate the 80 burial plots in that section.

He said the plots cost \$50 each, and under state law the city cannot give them away. He said the city could not reduce the lot price for the veterans without reducing the price for everyone.

In a change of order, the commission

went into closed session with Darin Neufeld, engineer for Evans, Bierly and Hutchison Associates, for five minutes to consider a possible acquisition of property for airport expansion. When the commission members returned to open session, Commissioner Jim Mull made a motion to authorize the city manager to continue negotiations for the purchase of the property. That passed unanimously.

The commission approved the reappointment of Dave Branda, Jerry Fairbanks and Max Alderman to the High Plains Museum board for three-year terms.

Pickman said the Kansas Municipal Electric Association had changed their by-laws and the city needs to appoint two directors and an alternate to represent the city.

Mayor Rick Billinger was elected to the two-year director's term, and Rod Blake, electric superintendent, was elected to a

one-year term. Next year, the second position will have a two-year term to put them on a rotating basis. Chuck Lutters, public works manager, was elected as the alternate with a two-year term.

Pickman said the mediation on problems in construction at Steever Water Park was completed last week, and he expects work to begin soon to replace the kiddie pool. He said the details of the settlement are being written up and they will release the findings when available.

"I can said it was a fairly good meeting," Pickman said.

Commissioner Dave Daniels asked about an update on Aircraft Seal and Gasket. Pickman said the locks on the building were changed Monday, and that an attorney for the state said the city needs to ensure the equipment covered as security for an economic development loan is protected.

He said the city had been notified of one lawsuit filed against the company, and expects more. The change is not expected to be a problem for an automobile antenna company moving into the plant, Pickman said, because the Aircraft Seal and Gasket equipment can be moved out of the way or to another location.

Billinger asked about the progress of a wind energy company interesting in the area in finding a suitable location. Pickman said they had been trying to find a site on city property, but had not been successful so far.

The company is opening an office on Main, said Mark Justus, owner of Renewable Energy Resources, and expects to bring five employees to town.

He said Goodland will be the headquarters for all the wind power projects they will be doing in northwestern Kansas and east-

ern Colorado.

At the end of the commission agenda, Mull said, "This is my last meeting, and I want to congratulate Leadership Sherman County for the number of candidates and leaders they are developing. I think that program is showing great success."

"I wish the new commissioners the best, and have enjoyed this short time on the commission."

"I appreciate the opportunity to serve," said Commissioner Dean Blume, who is leaving the commission. "At times it has been exciting and frustrating, but we have made some progress. I was disappointed we did not deal with some of the major issues like a new sewer plant and improving the streets and alleys. This is going to probably cost an extra \$5 million to get it done."

The meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m. The next meeting will be 5 p.m. on Monday.

School third to drop program

By Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News

The Goodland School District became the third entity to drop out of the joint grant-writer contract after a meeting Monday, March 21, opening the way for a new agreement of some kind.

Last month, the Goodland City Commission and the Sherman County commissioners both decided not to participate under the current contract, which expires in June.

The Goodland Regional Medical Center is the fourth program participant. It's board also voted Monday to end the contract.

The agencies have split a \$36,000 salary, \$750 per month each, to Penny Nemecek, who has been the grant writer for the past three years.

"Half our partnership has gotten out already," said Superintendent Marvin Selby before the vote. "I think it would behoove us to get out, too."

Board member Dick Short made the motion, member Danny Whalen seconded and the board voted unanimously to drop the current program effective on Thursday, June 30.

The board first looked at canceling the program in January when Selby, following the board's instructions from last year, brought the subject up.

He said last year the board was pressured into continuing the program because everyone else had already approved it, so they wanted to talk early.

In the three-year program, Selby said, the school didn't receive any grants, but Nemecek wrote several proposals.

He said, Nemecek helped to write a technology grant for North Elementary recently.

"I think she was very helpful in that," he said adding the staff at North did a lot of the work themselves.

The city won a \$260,000 grant to rebuild downtown intersections and a grant for airport renovations, but it has been successful in getting transportation grants on its own before the program.

City commissioners voted unanimously to cancel the program last week after hearing the county had already dropped it. City Manager Ron Pickman told the board that if the contract was renewed without the county, it would up the price from \$9,000 per year to \$12,000, more if others dropped out.

The county gave up the program because commissioners said they weren't satisfied with the current arrangement.

School board members agreed that they wanted to cancel the grantwriter's current contract, but were still interested in working with Nemecek.

Both city and county commissioners discussed working with the grant writer under different arrangements.

In January, Selby told the school board he was approached by an out-of-town grant writer who promised results.

He said the writer asked for \$5,000 up front and then would continue to write applications until one was approved.

The writer, he said, specializes in education grants, has a staff of five and guarantees results.

Monday, board member Danny Whalen asked if that grant writer might still be available.

Selby said the writer expressed interest in giving the board a presentation, and he will contact him.

correction

In the story "Drunk driver pleads no contest" on the front page of the Tuesday, April 5, *Goodland Star-News*, one accident victim's name was misspelled. Her name is Mary Wyatt, not Wyatt. This was a reporter's error, repeated in several stories over the last few months.

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Wallace County firemen sprayed water Monday to put out a fire which consumed a B's Pump and Well truck owned by Rex Smith of Goodland. Both men working on the rig escaped basically unhurt.

Photo by Julie Samuelson / The Western Times

Men on boon truck escape electrocution

By Julie K. Samuelson
The Western Times

Two Goodland men working on a well near Sharon Springs touched a 7,000-volt power line with the boom of their truck Monday — and lived to tell about it.

Both said they felt pretty lucky to be alive. The truck didn't fare so well; it burned wildly until firemen arrived to put the blaze out.

Rex Smith, owner of B's Pump and Well Service of Goodland, said he and his hired man, Jim Bacus, were doing some work on an irrigation well for farmer Jon Voth. Around 3 p.m., Smith and Backus had backed the truck up to pick up a gear head when the boom touched the overhead power lines.

Smith was on the back of the truck raising the boom and Backus was standing on the

ground, reaching into the back of the truck to grab a chain when the electricity from the power line hit them. Smith says he wasn't really hurt.

"I got jolted pretty good," he said. "Jim got hit a lot worse than I did. The voltage went in through Jim's hand and then out his foot. He spent the night in the hospital in Tribune, where staff and physicians kept an eye on him."

Immediately after the accident, Smith used his cell phone to call mechanic Steve Williams. Smith said Williams had done some work for him before and so he had Williams' phone number on speed dial. Williams in turn called the Wallace County Sheriff's Department and the fire department.

Smith gives credit to Williams for getting things rolling. The call from Williams came in to the sheriff's department at 3:19 p.m.

"He (Williams) did really good as far as get-

ting us help," Smith said. "We got help fast!"

Smith says he couldn't praise the Wallace County ambulance crew and fire department enough.

"The EMTs are crackerjack at their job," he said. "Heck, they must have taken my blood pressure five or six times just on the way to the hospital."

Smith said the electricity coming through his truck put on quite a show. He said it looked like lightning bolts were coming out of the bottom of the truck until the right front tire blew out, and the boom moved away from the power line.

Smith estimated his loss of vehicle, tools and equipment between \$25,000 to \$30,000. The loss hasn't stopped him, however. He said he would have a new truck in a day or two and be back to work.

Hospital to renegotiate grant writer contract

By Sharon Corcoran
The Goodland Star-News

With two of the four agencies already out and the other voting the same evening, the Goodland Regional Medical Center board voted to renegotiate the contract for the grant writer program.

Last month, the Goodland City Commission and the Sherman County commissioners both decided to drop the current contract,

which expires in June.

The board talked about the decision in closed session before voting Monday, March 28.

The Goodland School Board also voted Monday to drop the program. If the hospital board had not voted to end the contract, it could have been stuck for the entire cost. Each agency helps pay a \$36,000-a-year salary for Penny Nemecek, who has been the grant writer since the

program began in 2002. The agencies say they want a new deal, though.

The hospital planned its share of the program in the budget, said Administrator Jay Jolly said, but not to pay for the whole thing.

The hospital, like the other agencies, is still interested in the program, he said, and hopes to reach a new agreement.

"I think we can come up with a

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