

Power users warned to brace for higher bills

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News
City power customers should brace themselves for higher bills in June, because Sunflower Electric shut down the Holcomb plant Friday for maintenance and the city will be buying some expensive power.

Rod Blake, superintendent of electric production, said the maintenance shutdown is scheduled to last three weeks. He said the city pays Sunflower \$51 per megawatt on peak. Replacement power for the three weeks could be as high as \$82 per megawatt.

Blake said the city has negotiated with the Municipal Energy Agency of Nebraska, a division of Nebraska Municipal Public Power, to purchase 23 megawatts per day in the \$50 range, but the delivery depends on available transmission capacity. The Kansas Municipal Energy Agency was contacted as well, but Blake said the Kansas City, Kansas, Nearman plant will go down for maintenance on Friday, April 22. That makes it more difficult for the

city to purchase power from the eastern part of the state.

"As for running our own generators," he said, "it is not cost effective at this time because of the higher natural gas prices. Plant generation costs would be well into the \$80 to \$90 range per megawatt.

"We feel our citizens need to be aware of the increase they may see on their June bill.

"We suggest everyone conserve as best they can to keep their bill as low as possible. The city electric department is doing everything possible to keep costs down, but situations such as this can't be helped, and we will deal with them as best we can."

"We have seen these spikes before," City Manager Ron Pickman said. "We hope they are not as high as the one a couple of years ago, but want the customers to know that higher fuel costs will mean higher bills."

The city has been working with Renewable Energy Resources to erect a small wind farm near town to help provide some of its power needs. Mark Justus, manager for the

wind company, said last week they have been working with the city to find a location.

"They wanted to locate the towers on city property if possible," Justus said, "but we have not been able to find one that will work."

The firm plans to erect five towers on a site about one-half mile south of I-70 and near County Road 17. The site would allow the power to connect with the city lines west of town. If that works out, another five towers could be added.

There is no cost to the city for the building of the wind farm, but the city will have an option to purchase the equipment later.

Justus said the firm hopes to begin pouring pads for the first five in May, and have the system operating by September.

Five wind generators will provide about one megawatt of power to the city, which should ease some of the cost of having to buy peak power from Sunflower or Nebraska, he said.

Renewable Energy Resources has opened an office at Main and 12th.

Stacking paint cans



William McKnight and Daryl West stacked paint cans on the scale Saturday morning as part of the Sherman County Household Hazardous Waste collection. Kenny Griffith and Lynn Abbott also were on the crew, which kept busy for four hours. Griffith, rural fire chief, said the effort brought in 7,300 pounds of material. He said the next collection will be on Saturday, July 16, with the collection facility open from 7-11 a.m.
Photo by Tom Betz / The Goodland Star-News

Visitors bureau revotes on \$2,000 raise for director

By Sharon Corcoran
The Goodland Star-News
The Sherman County Convention and Visitors Bureau had to go back and vote again on a raise for its director after county commissioners pointed out the board had made the decision behind closed doors in January.

Chairman Dale Neill told the board he had received a letter from commissioners saying the bureau had not complied with the Kansas Open Meetings Act in handling a closed session at the January meeting.

The commissioners said the board didn't properly disclose why it was going into an executive session at the meeting, Neill said, and after the session was held to discuss giving Director Donna Price a raise, the board was required to say how much of a raise was being voted on.

Neill said he had talked at length with Commissioner Kevin Rasure and had been assured the board had not handled the matter properly and needed to fix it. Any action taken in a closed session can be declared void under the law.

The board approved a \$2,000-a-year raise for Price in January, making her salary for this year \$30,000, but members had to vote again Wednesday to approve the raise and disclose the amount in public session.

During discussion, members disputed whether they should have to say the amount of the raise in open session when the figures on the fi-

nancial reports would show the amount to anyone who asked for them.

The commissioners each receive a copy of the board's meeting minutes, Neill said, adding that when the commissioners reviewed January's minutes, they felt the raise hadn't been properly disclosed.

Board member Brenda McCants, director of patient relations at Goodland Regional Medical Center, made a motion to approve the raise, and member Ryan Hageman, manager of Wendy's, seconded.

Then Hageman wanted to amend the motion. Neill and others tried to explain to him that he couldn't amend it unless he retracted his second, but Hageman misunderstood what he needed to do and let his second stand.

After the motion carried, Hageman asked again about amending and was told he couldn't amend the motion after it was approved, but had to make a new motion. Hageman made a motion to approve a \$2,000 "cost-of-living" raise. The motion was seconded and carried.

Pointing out figures on the December 2003 financial report, Neill said Price's salary was \$25,000 that year and has increased by only \$5,000 in the past two years, not \$10,000 as he said has been rumored. The bureau has not exceeding its travel budget in the last three years, he said, adding that board members need to discuss their opin-

ions at meetings rather than bickering through rumors.

"If we have someone who is not happy with the decisions of the board," McCants said, "they need to bring it up here. We can't promote travel and tourism if we undermine the board's purpose."

"We need to conduct business as business," said Lincoln Wilson, owner of the Howard Johnson Hotel.

The presence of a reporter makes it difficult to discuss things openly, Neill said. Only the end result should be printed, Wilson said, not how we got there.

The state Open Meetings Act requires all meetings of public board to be open to the public, including reporters. Public bodies must provide notice of the time, date and place of all regular or special meetings to anyone who requests it. All decisions must be made in open session, though discussions may be closed for specified reasons, such as personnel matters.

Boards may go into closed session, sometimes called executive session, only when a formal motion is made, seconded and passed. The motion must state the justification for the closed session, the subject being discussed and the time and place the board will return to open session.

A public body is not allowed to take any binding action behind closed doors, and there are guidelines about what subjects can be discussed.

Town needs new logo, slogan

By Sharon Corcoran
The Goodland Star-News
Will you be the one to decide how Goodland is represented to the rest of the world? Do you have creative ideas to market the town to outsiders?

If so, the Sherman County Convention and Visitors Bureau hopes you enter its contest to find a logo and slogan for Goodland. The Sherman County Community Foundation has provided a \$100 cash prize for the winner or winners.

The bureau, foundation, the Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce and the Sherman County Economic Development Council are all participating in the logo plan, said Lincoln Wilson, owner of the Howard Johnson Hotel and a bureau board member. The city and county commissions may also participate, he said.

Anyone in Sherman County is invited to develop a logo and slogan for the town, Wilson said, and mail them to Box 126, Goodland, Kan. 67735.

The last day to enter is Tuesday, May 31, Wilson said, and the target date to select a winner is June 8. A committee with members from each of the boards will select the winner, he said. The \$100 prize can be split, he said, if the selection committee likes one person's logo and another person's tag line.

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