

Brewster woman bound over for trial in theft

By Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News

A Brewster woman and former Dighton city clerk accused of stealing more than \$11,000 from a cemetery district and the city of Dighton has been bound over for trial in district court.

Lane County District Court documents show that Linda Pettay, 45, faces charges of embezzlement from the Lane County Cemetery District and the city before she resigned in the summer of 2003.

Her attorney says she will plead not guilty at her arraignment next month.

Linda Pettay is up against nine felonies and 15 misdemeanor theft charges for allegedly writing cemetery and city check to herself from Feb. 2 through Aug. 29, 2003.

The case was bound over for trial by Edwards County District Judge Danny Smith after a preliminary hearing Friday. Arraignment was set for 10 a.m. on Tues-

day, May 17, in district court.

Larry Tittel, Pettay's attorney, said the burden of proof in a preliminary hearing is not as great as in a trial, and judges tend to regard the state's case in a more favorable light.

He said they plan to enter a plea of not guilty at the arraignment and expect the case to go to trial.

Judge Smith heard testimony in the preliminary hearing from members of the cemetery board, Ron Connor and Norman Parker, and Dighton Mayor Leonard Herman.

Herman said Wednesday that the cemetery board was meeting only once a year when Pettay was clerk. He said to pay bills, she would bring checks for him to sign in advance every month.

The board policy is to have two of the three members sign checks, he said, so Pettay would have another member sign the

checks, too.

He said the board has a yearly operating budget of around \$35,000 to \$40,000, spent mostly on mowing the cemeteries and utilities for buildings. He said they sell lots, too.

Herman said now the board has a regular monthly meeting and reviews all checks before they are signed.

"No checks are signed until they have been approved," he said.

In the city, he said, they are trying to make sure duties involving money are split up.

"We're just trying to make take a little more precautions," he said.

The missing money was discovered in August 2003 by Pettay's successor, Rachel Tiner, who now lives in Oklahoma.

Tiner told the Harris News Service she brought the missing money to the attention of auditors, the Dighton City Council and the Kansas Bureau of Investigation. She said the council, cemetery board and mayor

had no way of knowing the money was being taken.

Pettay was deputy city clerk for Dighton from Jan. 13, 1994, to April 28, 2000, and city clerk from April 28, 2000, through Aug. 31, 2003.

Herman said the board ordered an audit just to clear the books for the new clerk.

"Unfortunately, we found things missing," he said.

Herman said he didn't want to comment on his feelings about the trial, but he thought the case was a good lesson for members of any board.

"In the small community," he said, "we trust everyone. I think that it's been a lesson well learned by all of us."

Tittel said because the board members signed the checks, they authorized Pettay to spend the money.

"The members of the board have been very forthright and candid," he said.

He said the prosecution doesn't have any solid proof that Pettay did anything wrong.

"Obviously, she was involved," he said, adding that there are three signatures on each check, one from Pettay and two from board members.

He said the checks are payable to Pettay, but with two signatures from members of the board, they were authorized.

"I have every reason to believe that Linda Pettay is going to be exonerated," Tittel said.

To mount his defense, he said, he plans to take an in-depth look at each and every one of the checks and the history of the board.

Neither District Magistrate Judge Shelly Selfridge nor County Attorney Craig Kershner could participate in the hearing because of conflicts of interest. Assistant Attorney General Lee Davidson is prosecuting the case.

Getting a drink



A father held his son over the fence to get a drink at Saturday's Mustang Invitational track meet. The water line was set up for meet participants after an event, but it was used by many of the spectators. Results are on on Page 9a.

Photo by Tom Betz / The Goodland Star-News

Students will be offered course in personal finance

By Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News

Next year's seniors will have a chance to learn how to handle their personal finances and to do better on state assessment tests as the Goodland School Board approved one new class and research on another at a meeting Monday, April 11.

High School Principal Harvey Swager brought the board a proposal for a new class to prepare students for a world of credit cards, mortgages and investments.

"I'd like your permission to offer a course at the high school next year called Financial Peace," he said.

He passed out a form explaining the curriculum to members and a list of potential costs.

"It certainly looks like it meets some of our needs," said Superintendent Marvin Selby.

The class, he said, would be a full semester course worth one-half of a credit. Board President Jane Philbrick asked if the course would count as a math credit. Swager said it would count for business.

The course, he said, would be of-

ferred only to seniors next year and it would run opposite of the government course. He said students currently have several other choices opposite the class.

Board member Dick Short said with students getting credit card offers in the mail all the time, the course would help them make good choices.

"I think we need it," he said.

"It's a good idea," said member Danny Whalen.

Swager said, the new class would not be mandatory, but they will consider making it one of three choices for a required course.

He said other schools he talked to about similar classes have enjoyed the results.

"They like what they've used so far," he said.

Two new math classes will be available in the math department to give students choices, too. Selby said the class would be aimed at students who historically have not been very successful with math and need further review.

The school plans to look into eliminating prealgebra and offering a Standards I and Standards II class for incoming freshmen and other students next year.

Swager explained that the new classes would be offered along with all other existing math classes including, geometry, algebra I, algebra II, trigonometry, precalculus, calculus, applied math I and applied math II.

"I really think we have a need for it next fall," he said.

He said the course will cover all of the areas tested in the Kansas State Assessments, including geometry and algebra.

"This will prepare kids to do well on the Kansas Assessments," he said.

Starting with next year's freshman class, students will be required to take three math credits to graduate. Selby said he worries some students won't be able to make it with the increased requirements. He said if a student fails math in his freshman year, he may not be able to make up the credit.

Swager said he talked to the high school math teachers, and Jackie Elliott seemed interested in designing and teaching the course.

He said the curriculum is basically just what is currently tested on the assessments.

"The curriculum is already set," added Central Elementary principal Sharon Gregory.

Both courses will be full year, and students would be ready to go into Algebra I after Standards II.

"We could always give it a try," said Philbrick.

"I think the concept is great," said board member Ron Schilling. "The only suggestion I would make is that you involve your junior high teachers, too."

Campbell agreed that someone should be making sure students are getting good counseling for which math class they should take.

"I think the last couple of years, the junior high has been doing a good job for us," said Swager.

Tractor-trailer rig overturns

A tractor-trailer rig overturned about 10 miles west of Goodland on I-70, near the curves at the rest area, about 2 p.m. Saturday, sending the driver to the hospital here.

Kansas Highway Patrol troopers reported that Ralf Edward Jones, 43, Carrollton, Texas, was west-bound in the 2003 Freightliner.

Trooper Bryon Wilson reported that the truck was in the right lane and moved into the left lane. He said the driver pulled the truck back onto the right shoulder, which caused the truck to overturn in the north ditch, coming to rest on the passenger side. Jones was taken to Goodland Regional Medical Center, where he was treated and released.

Schools seek bid on cooling

By Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News

The Goodland School Board agreed Monday, April 11, to seek bids to install air conditioning units at West Elementary.

After considering an air conditioning feasibility study from an engineer and Glen Strait, owner of Strait Associates Architects in Colby, the board agreed that was the way to go.

Superintendent Marvin Selby said in previous meetings, he hadn't noticed that the air conditioning units will heat the building also.

"We're getting a two for one thing right here," he said.

The board decided earlier to go with the units because the engineer said the other option wouldn't work.

Since the engineer said the 35-year-old heating system is near the end of its life, Selby said, it might be smart to install air conditioning units that could replace the heaters, too.

"We could shut the boiler down and use this," he said.

The boilers they have right now, Selby said, cost about \$25,000 each, and the engineer had some problems with the entire system.

"The pipes are the things I worry about," said board President Jane

Philbrick.

"I like the idea that it's heating," said board member Danny Whalen.

Selby said the engineer was concerned that the school wasn't circulating enough fresh air. The new units circulate cooled or heated air, and can be used for ventilation only.

Board member Mike Campbell asked Selby if the system burns natural gas.

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student of the week



Name: Matt Rohr
Parents: Tom and Coleen Rohr
Grade: Junior
Age: 17

We've nominated this student because: He is always prepared, does excellent work and sets a high standard in the classroom.

Student Comment: Having a good set of friends is what I will remember most about Goodland high School. My best liked subject is band.

Activities involved in at school: Science Olympiad, FCCLA, Math Relays, band, jazz band, STUCO and National Honor Society.

My choice of movies, books, and games: I enjoy action and comedy movies. I listen to music of all kinds, but I mostly enjoy rock. My favorite book is "Of Mice and Men". Halo 2 on X-box is my favorite game.

After I leave Goodland High School I intend to: Study to become an engineer. I have not decided on a school.

And 10 years from now, I think I'll be: Have a successful job, starting a family and trying to relax.

Favorite Quote: "Never let the future disturb you. You will meet it, if you have to with the same weapons of reason which today arm you against the present." Marcus Aurelius Antonius

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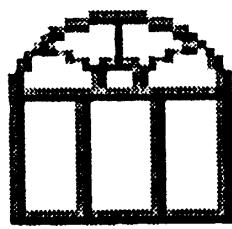
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The Goodland Regional Medical Center Staff and Employees would like to say "Thank You" to all of our volunteers! Our volunteers deserve gratitude and applause for the selfless gift they give. The time, energy, skills and talents they lend again and again are priceless. The GRMC Auxiliary and the Junior Volunteers are to be commended. Your efforts and dedication make our organization better, our community stronger and our world brighter!

Goodland Regional Medical Staff and Employees

To join the volunteer organization at Goodland regional Medical Center contact Faye Paxton, President, GRMC Auxiliary at 890-3850 or Brenda McCants, CAVS, Director of Volunteer Services at 890-6036.

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