

Consolidation good idea

CONSOLIDATION, from Page 1

two areas. I think we need to do it." "We may have a problem because some of the people don't want to give up their turf," said County Commissioner Chuck Thomas.

"I don't think it will get rid of a lot of people," Rasure said, "but it would streamline and help coordinate efforts that should lead to some savings."

"Some cities have contracted law enforcement with the county," said City Manager Ron Pickman.

"Might be more of a problem with an elected sheriff," said County Commissioner Mitch Tiede.

"Riley County doesn't have a sheriff," Pickman said. "They have a county police chief and Riley County Police Department. There is a board appointed by the city and county to oversee the department."

Rasure said a vote of the people would not be required if the city contracted with the county for law enforcement, but consolidation of the two departments would require a vote.

City Commissioner John Garcia said there was a bill in the Legislature to streamline the process, but he was not sure it passed.

Pickman said the proposal would have allowed cities and counties to consolidate services without a bill in the Legislature.

"I think if we do a financially prudent study," Garcia said, "and educate the people about the benefits, it would be approved."

The two commissions agreed they need more information. Some

Prior county sales tax ended in May 2002

Saving the pavement on old U.S. 24, which runs 35 miles across Sherman County, was the object of a special one-quarter percent sales tax proposed in the fall of 1997 and approved by the voters in August 1998.

In a joint meeting, city and county commissions agreed to allow the county to ask for a sales tax without having to split it with the cities of Goodland or Kanorado.

Later, a dispute developed over whether the county had agreed to help with a short section of the highway in the east part of the city. It connects the old highway to Business U.S. 24, which is maintained by the state. In the end, the county did help the city with the connecting section.

The sales tax was approved through the state Legislature in

early 1998, and placed on the primary election ballot in August.

County commissioners and then County Attorney Mike Irvin spent several months selling the program to organizations around the county.

The sales tax was approved in August and went into effect in October. It was scheduled to last until the project was completed, and was taken off in May 2002.

The county had a contractor come in and do an in-place recycle of several miles near Edson and do a milling of other sections of the highway, beginning with the 17 miles east of Goodland. The second year, the county worked on the 17 miles to the west of Goodland.

Each section was chip sealed using the sales tax money to buy the rock and pay for the contract.

suggested they could get voters involved in the consolidation issues.

Pickman said one thing to watch in talking about consolidation of fire and emergency services is not to harm the fire insurance rating of the cities or the county.

"The idea is to improve fire ratings and get the insurance cost to go down," he said.

"I think we have two really good ideas to start with," Tiede said.

On another issue, Thomas men-

tioned the water contamination problems at the old city dump, and Pickman said several wells in the city show increased levels of nitrates which could require a central treatment system. That would be pricey, he said.

"Our wells are old," he said, "and we don't have places in the city to drill new wells. We tried to buy water rights and ran into a quality issues."

Roads top joint meeting issue

ROADS, from Page 1

then do a bond issue to pay for these," said City Manager Ron Pickman, "then do a sales tax to pay for the bonds, and both agree to use all the sales tax revenue to pay for the bonds."

"You could do a review after the bonds are paid off, and ask the voters to approve another list of projects."

Rasure said the city and county could identify the main areas and get cost estimates.

"We could do the projects in a progressive manner," he said. "We have to have a unified vote of the commissions."

Rasure said it will take quite a bit of time to get a sales tax plan ready to go to the voters. He said if the plan is ready, the proposal can go to the Legislature at the beginning of the next session in January. If approved, the issue could be put on the August pri-

mary election, or a special election could be held.

"I think we need to get some figures together," Tiede said. "The total will probably scare us to death."

Tiede said the projects could be designed and contracts let to begin construction by the next spring or summer.

"The sales tax is the only thing we have to do these projects," Rasure said, "except the property tax, and we don't feel that is the best way to pay for roads we all use."

"I thought that last sales tax went very well," Billinger said. "I didn't hear a lot of complaints, and I think people will support it if they know what we are planning to do."

"It was good that it went off," Rasure said. "Some people didn't know it had gone off, but that was because the state came in and raised the sales tax double what we had."

Tree ceremony honors local hero

TREE, from Page 1

students in the audience. He thanked him for defending our country in war.

Pickman said Lutters liked to climb trees and enjoy Goodland's parks, making the tree a special honor.

The planting ceremony included a time capsule filled with items from the students.

Before the students added mementos, Lutters' family included some of the soldier's items. His parents, his sister, Genevieve Gibson, and his cousin, Jeff House, added items also.

The ceremony started with Christy Rasure, chairman of the Shade Tree Commission, introduc-

ing Billinger to read the Arbor Day proclamation.

Rasure introduced tree board members Ed Carlton, Gary Coon, Dale Ellison, Judy McKee and Lou Spinney.

Jim Strine, district forester with the Kansas Forest Service, presented the group with a Tree City USA flag.

He said Goodland has been a tree city for the past 26 years, meeting the criteria of planting trees and educating the community.

He told students that trees are important and members of the tree board work hard to keep up forestry in the area.

Strine said trees are important to keeping people cool in the summer and adding beauty to the town.

Dale Hayden, a member of the tree board for 12 years, got a plaque to recognize his service.

Next Pickman asked students in the crowd what trees are good for. "Climbing like a monkey," said one student.

"Building a tree house," said another.

"They give us air," said one student.

Almost everyone raised their hands to say they had climbed a tree and nearly as many claimed to have fallen out of one.

After the talk, Kevin Zimmerman, of Zimmerman Tree Service, lowered the American linden tree into the ground using a mechanical tree spad. The machine, which had been used to dig the hole, released the tree into the ground.

Zimmerman then filled the hole with dirt and Goodland parks department workers helped him water it.

Rasure said Linden trees are beautiful, with little white flowers in the spring.

Pickman said years from now, the students can tell their children about how they watched when the tree was planted. He said when they pass by, they should keep Lutters in their thoughts, too.

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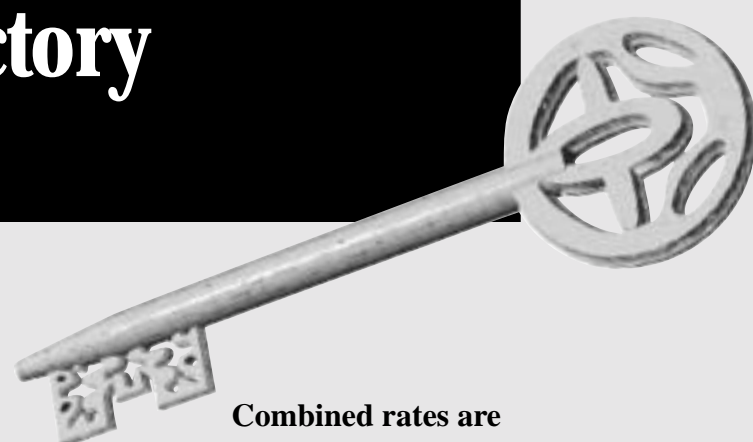
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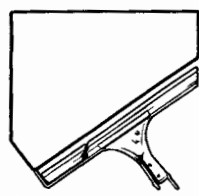


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