

# Citizens speak in favor of city-county road plan

ROADS, from Page 1a

commission this year, said he disagreed with using the sales tax to raise money to fix roads.

"The sales tax is the most regressive tax there is," he said. "Raising the sales tax will mean the lowest-paid people in the city will get a pay cut."

"I do commend you for looking at the roads, but there are other important issues like water and sewer that need to be addressed. I am concerned that there needs to be a comprehensive economic development plan, and the schools need to be involved."

"I urge you to put this on hold and put together a long term plan and include the schools."

"I want to commend your plans," said Brent Wood, a broker for AIG Investment. "I believe sales tax is the fairest tax because everyone who consumes pays the tax. The state has a food sales tax rebate for the low income to help these families."

"These roads all need work. I am concerned about Main, and roads out by the highway like the stretch in front of Conoco."

"We have other infrastructure that needs attention. Are we tying our hands for the next 10 years? I do believe we will see an increase in the sales tax because of the development. I support your efforts."

Billinger said the city could not do anything about the street in front of Conoco, east of K-27, because it is a private road.

"We would like to fix that," Billinger said. "We are talking to the owner about a way to solve the problem."

"I disagree with the gentleman in the back (Walker) about sales tax," said Pete Whalen, a Goodland lawyer. "Although economists might differ, I can show you reports that show sales tax as being the fairest and most beneficial way to pay for these improvements."

"I am strongly in favor of what you are doing. It is up to you to study the details and present them to the people."

"I don't want to debate about

sales tax," Walker replied. "I want to be sure we are doing the right thing, because this is the last taxing authority the city has when we raise the sales tax."

Rasure said the plan at this time is to raise the county sales tax, and that has to be approved by the state Legislature in Topeka before it is voted on the by county citizens. He said that would not interfere with the city's ability to raise the sales tax.

Billinger said the sales tax increase would have a sunset clause, which would mean it would be taken off when the cost of the total project has been paid. He said that could be less than 10 years if collection increase.

Todd Quenzer, a farmer near Brewster, asked when the last work was done on old U.S. 24, and if county plans a better repair job than was done back then.

Curt Way, county public works manager, said the work done in 1999 consisted of a chip seal on most of the 33 miles and some hot in-place recycling near Edson. The surface of the chip seal is breaking up in places after six years. He said this time, the county plans to mill off about three inches of old asphalt and lay a new overlay along the whole highway.

"On the pessimistic side, what happens if the sales tax doesn't increase," Quenzer said.

Billinger said the city and county had looked at the past five years of sales tax, and it looks to be pretty steady. Rasure said the sales tax had been staying the same, but had a large increase last year.

Another question was the impact of a new Wal-Mart Super Center under construction in Colby.

Dechant said a new Wal-Mart in Colby would not mean any change in the one in Goodland. He said he felt most of the customers come from the west and would not drive to Colby.

Ryan Hageman, manager of Wendy's, said he agreed with the importance of the roads. He asked if the sales tax money would be used for other projects besides the roads,

and wondered what happens if there is an emergency?

Billinger said the money would be used to pay for the bonds, and could not be used for anything else without another vote of the people. He said in case of an emergency, the county might have to raise property taxes, but the city would have more flexibility with the user fees for electric, water and sewer bills.

"My business needs these roads to do better," Hageman said. "You need to educate the people my age on the issues. Otherwise they will vote against it."

Daniels said the city was looking at other issues, but the roads were the major project, a starting point. He said the city has been trying to work on the sewer and water issues and had taken the first step on the sewer system by setting up a rate structure to be able to pay for a new treatment plant.

Darin Neufeld, of Evans, Bierly, Hutchison and Associates, the city's engineers, said he had been in Goodland for seven years. In that time, he said, the city has adopted long-term plans on water, sewer, streets and the airport. He said the city looks at water and sewer rates each year to see that money is set aside for future projects.

Neufeld said the city has been getting money from grants to help with some projects, such as the replacement of the brick intersections at Sixth, Seventh and Eighth with Main. He said the city is in the design phase on replacement of the intersections at 11th and 12th, and had received approval for the next phase, which will replace the intersections at Ninth, 10th and 13th.

In closing statements, the commissioners thanked those who had come, and asked them to share the information about the plans.

"We ask you to be open minded," Billinger said. "We will probably have another open meeting."

"It is good to see people involved," Rasure said. "We want to hear from you whether it is good or bad, because you may be thinking about something we had not thought of."

## Estimated cost of joint road plan

COSTS, from Page 1a

street and upgrade storm sewer.

**Total City Streets** — \$3.2 million  
**COUNTY ROADS**

**County Road 64/64.2 (old U.S. 24)** — \$5.2 million, all 33 miles across the county, mill three inches and do a three-inch asphalt overlay. Some sections would require subbase work or deeper milling.

**County Road 65 (Eighth Street west of city)** — \$2.7 million for five miles of Road 65 and one mile south on County Road 14 past Northern Sun at Caruso to old U.S. 24. Estimate includes seven-inch milling and overlay to handle increased truck traffic for economic development. It would be less cost for a three or four-inch overlay.

**County Road 16** — \$321,000, one mile between County Road 64 and 65 past golf course. This would resurface the dirt road with a five- or six-inch asphalt surface and include build up of subbase and drainage.

**Total County Roads** — \$8.25 million  
**Total combined projects** — \$11.4 million

### SALES TAX REVENUE

A one-cent countywide sales tax would raise about \$1.2 million per year, based on the average total collections of the past three years.

The city and county plan to issue bonds to do the joint road projects over a two- to three-year period. Sales tax revenues would pay off the bonds in 10 to 12 years. The one-cent sales tax would sunset when enough money has been collected to pay off the bond issue.

Based on the past three years of sales tax collections by the city and county, an average Sherman County household (2,758 homes in the 2000 census) pays \$441 per year for the current one-cent sales tax. Based on a population of 6,277 for the county, as certified by the state in 2004, each person pays \$194 in sales tax to the city and county.

(These figures do not include the statewide sales tax of 5.3 cents.)

## Turnaround hailed at Goodland hospital

HOSPITAL, from Page 1a

ing off through 2014.

Total operating revenue went up from \$8,219,300 in 2003 to \$9,555,178 in 2004. Expenses are up, which is normal, Johnson said, but there was also the addition of the clinic's expenses.

Johnson gave the board members numbers comparing the Goodland hospital to five other critical access hospitals. Goodland has \$1 million in working capital compared to \$1.8 million at the other facilities, he said, but there have been some lean

years here. The others had a loss from operations last year, he said, while Goodland had net income.

Board member Doug Irvin said he thought the hospital looked bad last year until he compared it with the others.

The other hospitals converted to critical access in 2004, Johnson said, so the same hospitals could be used in the comparison because they were all still similar. They all had better years with the new status.

Hospital officials called Slice of Life a success and thanked all who were involved. The event brought

in \$98,000 gross, said Brenda McCants, director of patient relations, with the auction raising \$58,000. The golf tournament raised \$21,000, said Dale Schields, head of human resources.

There were donations from some people who didn't buy at the auction, McCants said, and about \$5,000 in things were traded or donated.

"The community involvement just blew me away," said Larry McCants, a board member. "All this amid drought and population decline."

## matters of record

### District Traffic

The following fines were paid in the Sherman County District Court:

**May 17** — Eric A. Graves, 31, Goodland, \$187 for speeding.  
Gerard D. Guidice, 45, Orlando, Fla., \$159 for speeding.

**May 18** — Phillip A. Randall, 25, Littleton, Colo., \$204 for speeding.  
Brian H. Meeks, 39, Aurora, Colo., \$168 for speeding.

Dennis W. Neihart, 52, Lapine, Okla., \$136.50 for over weight limit on wheels and axles.

Angela M. Bumb, 22, Post Falls, Idaho, \$90 for speeding.

Beverly M. England, 36, Aurora, Colo., \$168 for speeding.

Russ W. Skabel, 43, Murphy-shore, Ill., \$210 for over weight limits on wheels and axles.

## Splashing begins on Saturday

SWIMMING, from Page 1a

along the north side of the pool to separate the area where the new pipe had been laid.

He told the commissioners that a new manhole would be installed on Wednesday, and most of the trenches closed by Friday. He said work would remain on the manhole, but it would be outside the main fences of the water park.

Mayor Rick Billinger asked acting City Manager Tom Armour and Chuck Lutters, public works director, if they were comfortable with the precautions.

Armour said he was satisfied as long as the trenches were closed. Lutters said he felt the staff had made the area as safe as possible, and that the pools could open Saturday. The others present agreed.

Once the opening had been agreed to, Daniels made a motion to

have the city excavate around the kiddie pool, which is being replaced under a contract mediation agreement, and make sure the ground is compacted properly. It was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m. The city commission will meet at 5 p.m. on Monday, with choosing the top candidates for city manager on the agenda. Once the commission selects the top five candidates, interviews will be conducted next Friday and Saturday, and on Monday and Tuesday June 27 and 28, to avoid the July 4 holiday.

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## Second Annual Coed Mud Volleyball Tournament

Sponsored by First National Bank of Goodland's Relay for Life Team

# Saturday, July 2, 2005

## 9:00 a.m. MST

Old State Highway Building  
1201 W. Highway 24

Entry Fee: \$60/team register on or before June 24  
Pick up registration forms at First National Bank, Goodland Chamber of Commerce Office or contact:  
Kris Armatys at Armatys@fnb.com, 890-3385  
Teams up to eight member are accepted...register early as spots are limited! Concessions available.



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