

# Visitors board offers to help chamber

By Sharon Corcoran

The Sherman County Convention and Visitors Bureau's board decided Thursday to extend a hand to the floundering Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce.

Goodland Star-News Editor Tom Betz went to the meeting Thursday afternoon expecting the Chamber board to make a presentation as they had made to the county Economic Development Council on Tuesday.

No one from the Chamber was there, but Betz told the board about the Chamber's plea for help with its \$22,000 debt. Visitor's bureau board members talked about whether they could share office space and possibly allow the Chamber free rent for a few months.

Members talked about conflicts that occurred when the Chamber and

visitors bureau shared an office before going their separate ways a few years ago and whether the Chamber is being responsible with its money.

Board members agreed some matters would have to be hammered out before a move could be made, such as how incoming phone calls would be answered and who would be responsible to man the office. They were concerned about the Chamber's supposed refusal to release some financial information, especially relating to the Tracy Lawrence concert held as part of the Freedom Fest.

Nonetheless, board members agreed the Chamber is important, and they should offer to help if the Chamber will work out an agreement.

"We need a Chamber of Commerce," said Dale Neill, chairman of the visitors bureau board. "We

need to forget the past and make an offer, offer the olive branches."

If the two agencies split the rent at the visitor's bureau office, Neill said, it would be \$160-170 per month each. He asked if the board would be willing to subsidize the Chambers' half for, say, six months.

"It's easy for us as a board to say what we want," said board member Brenda McCants, "but the people who are going to deal with it are Donna (Price, visitors bureau manager) and Courtney (Warden, chamber manager)."

They need to meet, McCants said, and both entities need to get their expectations down on paper, have a business model in place.

Board member Lincoln Wilson, owner of the Howard Johnson Hotel, said he had been told by one person the Chamber made its bud-

get for the Tracy Lawrence concert and by another that it hadn't and then was told it wasn't his business if he's not a Chamber member.

"I'm not comfortable going in with them," he said.

Board member Ryan Hageman, manager of Wendy's, said even though he is a member of the Chamber, he was told he couldn't have information about the concert's finances.

"My concern," he said, "is if you baby them along, you end up continuing to baby them along."

Hageman said he pays his Chamber dues even though he doesn't attend the meetings and doesn't even know when they are.

"We need a Chamber," he said.

"I don't have a problem with lending a hand or a desk," Wilson said, "but we can't force it on them."

# Sealed bids solicited for red tour bus

By Sharon Corcoran

The Goodland Star-News

What would you do with a big, red 1990 London-type Ford bus that says "Topside of Kansas" on the side?

Since the Sherman County Convention and Visitors Bureau decided at its meeting Thursday to sell it by sealed bids, you can now think about what you'd do with it.

Bureau Director Donna Price said the bus may need some expensive repairs. It had been used for tours, she said, but the insurance was costly, and the repairs could be expensive, too.

The insurance was high for the bus to carry passengers, Price said, and the bureau didn't charge for the tours. Now, she said, the bureau has a walking tour and a driving tour. When tour buses come, she said, there are volunteers who will step on the bus to give the tour.

"We can accomplish the same thing in other ways," she said.

Board members suggested asking the Northwest Kansas Technical College about making the repairs before selling the bus and the possibility of using it as an information booth at the Flatlander Fall Festival.

But the board decided to advertise to sell it by sealed bid. It was bought with tax dollars, Price said, so it should be sold in a public manner.

In other business:

• Board member Lincoln Wilson talked about plans for the Flatlander Fall Festival. Flyers are out, he said, 20 events are planned so far, and entertainment is planned.

• Wilson told the board he had received an e-mail with complaints about a lack of cleanliness at the Economy 9 motel. After discussing the contents and the possibility that the problem could reflect badly on Goodland, especially if the motel is listed in tourist information, the board voted to pass the information on to the County Commission with a request they find out if the motel pays guest tax and see if the Health Department can do anything about the situation.

• The board voted to spend about \$1,500 on 116 "welcome" flags, 36 poles and needed brackets to replace the damaged flags on Main Ave. between Eighth and 17th and to extend the welcome down Cherry Ave. past Pioneer Park.

• Price said the state Travel Information Center at Kanorado will charge \$250 per year to stock the visitor's guides. A lot of communities are talking about boycotting the centers, she said. The board needs to keep on top of the situation and decide whether to participate if there is a boycott.

# Council approves business tax, incentives policy

POLICY, from Page 1a

competitive with Colorado and other states," said Harlan House, a council member and area farmer and cattleman.

Timm said the scale of tax exemptions was not set at 100 percent, but that the council could change the figures before approving the draft to be sent to the county commissioners for approval.

"I don't like free lunches," Timm said. "People have to pay some of their way."

"The application has to be ap-

proved by the (state) Board of Tax Appeals," House said. "There has to be a cost-benefit analysis as part of the application which shows how much increase in sales tax and employment the new business or expansion would benefit the city and county."

Council Chairman John Garcia, owner of Garcia's Furniture and Appliance and a city commissioner, said he agreed with Timm that the tax exemption should not be 100 percent.

"The applicant has to show a benefit to the community," Timm said, "and the application has to go

through several steps and includes a public hearing before the county approval and then goes to the state for review."

"We need to adopt this and take it to the county," House said. "With the county approval, it would become policy. This program gives us a formal base to encourage business development."

"Looks great," said Steve West, a council member and president of Western State Bank. "I think it will be a real opportunity to expand economic development in the county."

House asked Rasure if he liked

the figures in the tax exemption policy or if he would rather have them be changed to 100 percent.

"I like the figures the way they are," Rasure said.

City Commissioner Dave Daniels asked if the county could come back and change the policy.

Timm and Rasure said changes could be made each year, more often if necessary.

The council unanimously approved the policy. Timm and other council members planned to be at the county commission meeting today to present the policy.

# Friday night good time to gaze at the red planet

MARS, from Page 1a

Beach article. The August issue of "Astronomy" says it will be at its largest the night of Nov. 7. The same article says 87 percent of the circle of Mars will be visible by the end of August, so now is the time to start watching.

"I think this is what the community needs," Thompson said.

The Hale-Bopp comet got people interested in astronomy in 1993, he said, but the trend was short-lived. Astronomy is God's glory, he said, and you don't necessarily have to be

religious to enjoy it; it's there whether you like it or not.

"There's no way we're the only ones in the universe," Thompson added. "It's arrogant to think we're the only intelligent creatures."

Thompson said his interest in astronomy developed when he was an aircraft mechanic in the Air Force. He was a crew chief for an SR-71 spy plane, a plane that is called Black Bird by the English. The plane has a camera that locks in the North Star, Thompson said, adding that he was fascinated that stars can guide people.

Thompson said he worked for United Airlines in San Francisco for 10 years and Piedmont Airlines before traveling through Goodland on his way to a job in Tennessee. When he stopped at a Goodland truck stop for dinner, he met Bonnie, who became his wife in 1999 and was his reason for moving to Sherman County.

Thompson is a dealer for The Sky Six computer software programs that show the locations of stars and planets and tracks their movements, predicting future locations.

He also is a dealer for Meade telescopes and for Sky Shed, which makes observatories with roll-off roofs.

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