

weather report

88°

noon Thursday

Today
• Sunset, 7:07 p.m.
Saturday
• Sunrise, 6:23 a.m.
• Sunset, 7:05 p.m.

Midday Conditions
• Soil temperature 75 degrees
• Humidity 37 percent
• Sky mostly sunny
• Winds south southwest 10 mph
• Barometer 30.10 inches and falling

• Record High today 102° (1931)
• Record Low today 36° (1941)

Last 24 Hours*

High Wednesday 82°
Low Wednesday 62°

Precipitation —
This month .30
Year to date 12.82 (-3.89)

The Topside Forecast

Today: Windy, increasing clouds. High lower 90s, low lower 60s. South winds 10-15 increasing to 20-30 in the afternoon. Saturday: Partly cloudy, isolated thunderstorms in afternoon. High around 90. Saturday night: Partly Cloudy, 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. Low lower 60s.

Extended Forecast

Sunday: Breezy, partly cloudy, 20 percent thunderstorms in afternoon. High upper 80s, low lower 60s. Monday: Partly cloudy, 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. High upper 80s, low mid 50s.

(National Weather Service)
Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.
* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

Sales tax ballot meeting Monday

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

The city and county commissions will meet at noon on Monday to approve the wording for a ballot issue on a sales tax to pay for road improvements, but one stretch of gravel may have to be dropped from the plan.

Plans are to hold a special city election on Oct. 18 to approve a one-cent sales tax to pay for the projects.

Monday, commissioners will meet with Kevin Cowan, a bond attorney from Gilmore and Bell of Wichita.

City Attorney Jeff Mason told the city commission on Tuesday he was part of a conference call with Cowan last week to discuss the sales tax ballot. He said a review of state law turned up the fact that the roads must be main traffic routes.

"The law says the roads must be arterial and secondary arterial," Mason said. "One road in the list may not fit into the legal definition. We may not be able to legally fit that road (County Road 16) in the financing scheme."

He said the road, which connects old U.S. 24 and west Eighth Streets west of town, is not a major arterial.

"We did not want to surprise anyone," Mason said. "The roads have to fit in the parameters."

He said Cowan will be at the meeting on Monday, and will have proposed ballot wording for the special election. The sales tax will be on the books for up to 10 years to repair

the roads listed in the project. Mason said the one-cent tax would end when the projects are paid off.

He said would be is no penalty if the bonds from the sales tax are paid off early, and no charge from Gilmore and Bell if the sales tax is not approved.

Mayor Rick Billinger asked about increasing the county sales tax instead, and Mason said that was on the back burner because of the timing and potential for increased sales tax collections before a county sales tax could be approved. That would require a bill in the Legislature to change state law, which could delay the projects for a year or more.

The joint road project is estimated to cost \$11 million to repair major city streets plus county roads leading to the city. Work would include:

- City street projects estimated at \$3,169,000, including Caldwell from Eighth Street north to the bridge near the city airport (\$1,277,687); Eighth Street from Cattletrail east to D'Lao Drive (\$220,437); and 17th Street from the railroad crossing at Cherry to Main (\$1,670,878).

- Thirty-three miles of County Road 63, known as old U.S. 24, about \$5.2 million to remove the top three inches of asphalt and apply a three-inch overlay.

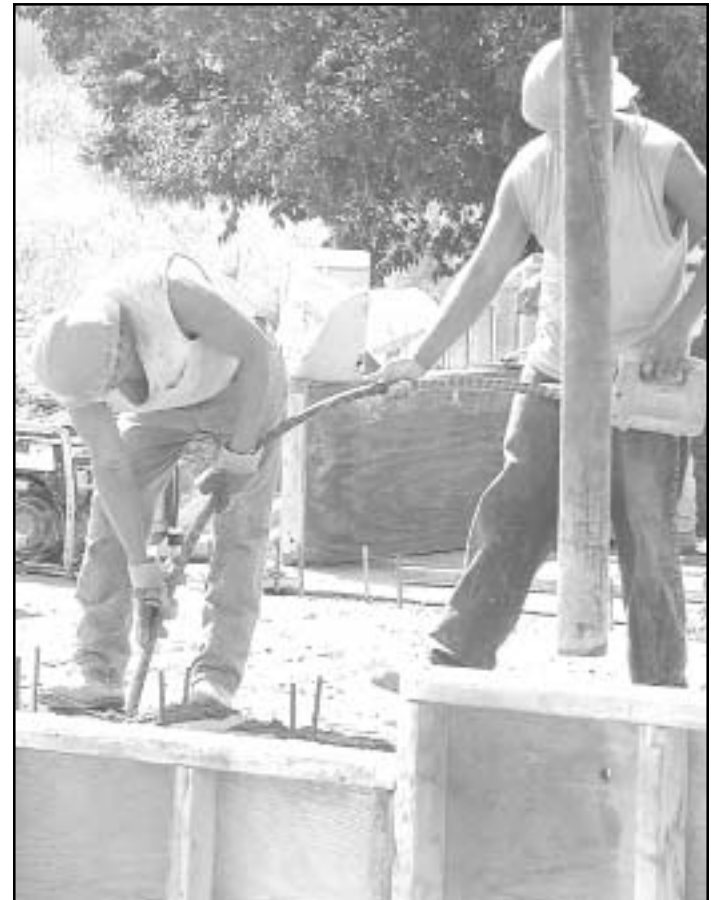
- Eight Street (County Road 65) west to County Road 14, then south to old U.S. 24 at Caruso, \$2.7 million. A state economic development grant might pay for part of the Road 14 project.



New bridge abutments are poured

Tuesday afternoon, workers from Reece Construction of Scandia (above) erected the final piece of concrete form on the east abutment of the new bridge on County Road 65 three and a half miles west of the city. Wednesday, workers (right) were using a vibrating tool to eliminate air pockets in the concrete poured for the bridge. The project is expected to be completed in October at a cost of \$176,457. Sherman County's share is \$38,940. Curt Way, county public works director, said the cost of the asphalt might be higher because of oil prices.

Photos by Tom Betz, Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News



Secretary sets forum for Kansas State Fair

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns will bring his farm bill road show to Kansas on Monday with a Farm Bill Forum at the Kansas State Fair.

Secretary Johanns will conduct the forum from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Central Time) at Dillon Hall in the Encampment Building on the state fair grounds in Hutchison.

Admission to the fair Monday is \$1.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for Kansas farmers, ranchers and agricultural organizations to offer comments on farm bill policy," said Bill R. Fuller, state executive director of the U.S. Farm Service Agency. "We encourage those affected by department policy to attend this event and have a voice in the development of the next farm bill."

So the secretary can hear from a large number of guests and a broad range of issues, each speaker will be limited to two minutes. Participants are asked to prepare their comments

to respond to one or more of six questions:

- How should farm policy address any unintended consequences and ensure that such consequences do not discourage new farmers and the next generation of farmers from entering production agriculture?

- How should farm policy be designed to maximize U.S. competitiveness in global markets?

- How should farm policy be designed to fairly distribute assistance to farmers and ranchers?

- How can farm policy best achieve conservation and environmental goals?

- How can federal rural and farm programs provide best help rural areas?

- How should agricultural product development, marketing and research-related issues be addressed?

The public also can submit comments via the Farm Bill Forums website at www.usda.gov/farmbill.

Washington contractor to build plant

Goodland Energy Resources has hired a Washington firm to be the main contractor and engineer to build the power plant planned for the new energy center west of town.

Chemithon Constructors of Everett, Wash., has been hired to build the coal-fired power plant. The company is a power and chemical plant contracting firm, and has done projects all over the U.S. and the world.

Chemithon does new-plant construction, alteration projects, retrofit and maintenance services, with a background in projects in power generation, mining and minerals, petrochemicals and pulp and paper.

Chemithon Enterprises Inc. is a group of technology companies offering development, engineering, equipment manufacturing and construction.

City dealing with stinky pest problems

By Kathryn Burke

The Goodland Star-News

They may not speak French like Peppy Le Pew, but those black-and-white-striped vermin have been pestering people around Goodland lately.

Skunks have moved into neighborhoods all over town and are posing a stinky threat to residents.

Leslie Knitig, animal control officer for the city, said there have been several calls lately about the animals. Normally, she said, the nocturnal critters aren't spotted all that often.

Mike Hopper, the state game warden for this area, said he get calls fairly regularly about skunks, and has seen an increase the past couple of weeks. He said people are starting to move things around to get ready for winter, stirring the skunks.

Hopper said skunk problems are usually caused by habitat. Tall weeds, wood, tire and weed piles and abandoned houses, cars and sheds make great homes for skunks.

If more people adhered to city ordinances and helped their elderly or disabled neighbors keep yards

clean and wood piles stacked, Hopper said, it would help keep the pests away.

Skunks can be kept from making homes under houses and sheds if open holes are plugged with rocks or dirt.

"The best way to handle skunks is don't invite them into your neighborhood," Hopper said.

Food left out for pets or for stray cats attracts skunks and smaller animals that skunks like to eat, he said. If you must feed animals outside, he said, food should be left out only during daylight.

Food can be placed on a high platform with an angle bar to prevent animals other than cats from reaching it.

"Feed only your cats," Hopper advised, warning that stray and feral cats pose a greater threat than most skunks.

Making sure trash stays in dumpsters will help keep skunks away, too, he said.

Some people want to use traps to remove the skunks, Hopper said, but if the habitat remains, the animals will come back.

While skunks have a smelly reputation, the animals don't pose a significant health risk.

Knitig said skunks are not mean animals and Hopper said they are naturally afraid of humans.

"I don't get too excited about skunks," he said.

Skunks are, however, one of the major carriers of rabies and carry distemper and other diseases.

Hopper said the skunks search for grubs in grass and applying a grub killer on your yard can help deter them.

The 4 to 9 pound animals hibernate from mid December to early March, Hopper said, but they will come out occasionally to find food.

People who set traps to remove the pests, Hopper said, are responsible for taking care of any animal they catch. Hopper will help elderly and physically challenged people catch skunks.

He said traps must be checked daily under Kansas law.

Anyone who catches a skunk should be careful with the animal. While it's not like handling a stick

of dynamite, he said, people have to be patient with skunks.

"I've only been sprayed one time," he said, adding that he has removed over 100 skunks in his 4 1/2 years on the job here.

It's not hard to get sprayed while out walking, he said, advising people to remain conspicuous to make sure they don't sneak up on a skunk.

Hopper said he doesn't encourage people to shoot skunks because it doesn't solve the problem of removing the habitat. He said people shouldn't poison skunks either, because the chemicals can kill other animals.

"It's non discriminatory on what it kills," he said.

Hopper said the recent sightings are probably not an outbreak. He gets on average anywhere from three to 15 calls per month on skunks.

Anyone having skunk trouble can call Goodland Police at 899-4570, Hopper at 899-5199 or the Sherman County Sheriff's Department at 899-4835.

local markets

Noon
Wheat — \$3.08 bushel
Posted county price — \$3.02
Loan deficiency pmt. — 0¢
Corn — \$1.71 bushel
Posted county price — \$1.54
Loan deficiency pmt. — 40¢
Milo — \$1.50 bushel
Soybeans — \$5.27 bushel
Posted county price — \$5.32
Loan deficiency pmt. — 0¢
Millet — \$6.25 hundredweight
Sunflowers
Oil current crop — \$9.80 cwt.
NuSun — \$11.05 sept.
Confection — call.
Pinto beans — \$20 (new crop)
(Markets by Mueller Grain, Sigco Sun, Frontier Equity Co-op and 21st Century Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

inside today

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Cowgirls take second

Sophomore Eryn Topliff prepared to chip onto the green at hole No. 9 during the Goodland Invitational on Tuesday at Sugar Hills Golf Club. The Cowgirls finished second. Story, photo on Page 9a.