

Farmer questions ditch cleaning

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News
A Kanorado farmer was at the Sherman County commission meeting last Tuesday to talk about the ditch cleaning and the weed-mowing program.

Tom Billenwillms, who lives in Kanorado and farms about seven miles south, told the commissioners he was concerned about the road and bridge department's plans to clean the barrow ditches along County Road 57, and wondered about the weed mowing program.

Billenwillms said he didn't have a problem with the county cleaning the ditches with a grader, but he was concerned about having a high berm along his field because he installed a new electric fence along the stretch between County Road 3 and 5.

"I am worried that if they build up the size of berm I have seen on the sections to the east," he said, "it will play heck with my new electric fence. I think they are picking a bad time of the year, because they will not be putting gravel on it."

He said a gas line was buried along the road during the 1960s, but he was not sure exactly where it is and the owner, Aquila, had been unable to locate it.

Commissioner Mitch Tiede asked Billenwillms to talk to Curt Way, director of public works, about the electric fence, and to let him know about the gas line.

Commissioner Chuck Thomas said he would be in the area on Wednesday, and offered to meet with Billenwillms to look

at the road.

Billenwillms said road workers from Kit Carson County in Colorado are coming into Kansas about a quarter mile and grading the road.

"Since I am here," he added, "I think you need to work on your weed mower people. It seemed strange to see them dragging the mowers through the snowdrifts after the last snowstorm. The weeds hadn't been mowed since May."

Tiede said the contract calls for mowing the weeds twice a year, one in the spring and one in the fall.

Billenwillms said that was not the way it was on County Road 55 and 57 south to the county line.

"He mowed ours the first in May," he said, "and had not been back on everything from Road 8 west and south of old U.S. 24."

Tiede said the contractor, Darrel Schrader, is to hit all areas at least twice, and they might talk about having him start earlier.

Schrader said Thursday he felt the mowing program went "supper smooth" this year, except for the snowstorm the last of November.

"Everyone I talked to thought it went well," he said. "There are over 7,000 miles of roads we mow, and we have had to haul through snow drifts more than once. We do the best we can do."

Tiede said the first time, the mower is supposed to do the inter-sections and do one pass on each road. The second round the mowers are supposed to mow the full 30 feet of the ditches.

"We will talk to him about it," Tiede said.

Pickup crashes into church



Police and emergency medical technicians rushed to 109 Willow Road about 11 a.m. Saturday, where a pickup had driven into the corner of the Goodland Bible Church. Police Chief Ray Smee said the driver, Bud Wilkinson, 61, was on his way to pick up a prescription when he apparently had a heart attack. Workers gave Wilkinson cardiopulmonary resuscitation at the scene,

then rushed him to Goodland Regional Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead. Smee said there was not much damage to the church. He said police are treating the case as an injury accident while waiting on an autopsy for an official cause of death. Wilkinson was a heavy equipment operator for the city before he retired in December.

Photo by Sheila Smith/The Goodland Star-News

Health insurance costs for county employees to rise nearly 5 percent

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News
Health insurance costs for Sherman County employees should rise about 4.4 percent this year, commissioners learned last Tuesday as they approved a new contract for the coming year.

Charles Krull, area representative for Blue Cross and Blue Shield, presented the commissioners with a certificate for 18 years in the insurance program, then explained the new agreement.

Leaving the benefits the same as last year, he said, the county should see a 9.3 percent increase in insurance claims, but that would translate into a 4.4 or 4.5 percent rise in total costs. He said this is a bit less than the trend elsewhere, which is more like 10-11 percent increase on anticipated claims.

Krull said Sherman County has been a member of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield "family" for at least one and one-half years longer that he has, adding that he now covers three territories in Kansas for the insurance company.

"Your self-funded change, which we did a few years ago, has been successful," he said. "The plan gives you more control and information about your claims. It is not always cheaper, but does keep your benefits pretty stable."

"That is what most groups are looking for, to get the best benefits for the cost. There are things we took for granted a few years ago, like the drug copay. It started out a \$1-3 and the average was \$20. Now that is up to \$73 for an average."

As a self funded insurance program Sherman County pays claims

up to \$15,000 per contract. The county has a non-deductible plan, and Krull said every claim is paid at 50 percent until the total reaches \$15,000, when the stop loss policy takes over and pays 100 percent.

He said the good news is that the fees paid to Blue Cross for administration and the additional insurance will do down about 1.5 percent.

The monthly rate for a single person will be \$175 and the family monthly cost will be \$388. The expected total cost to the county for the year will be \$594,945. The county pays all the monthly cost as part of the employee benefits, which means \$2,100 annually for a single and \$4,656 annually for a family.

These payments cover the fixed costs every month, Krull said, then

there is the expected costs of the claims, but those do not happen until the people actually use the service.

The basic health plan has no deductible, he said, but there is an out-of-pocket cost of \$1,500 for an individual and \$3,000 per family.

"Everyone receives some benefit," Krull said. "The plan pays 50 percent of the doctor visits, even if you only go once a year."

The coverage includes a dental plan, which pays half of most fees, with the exception of some orthodontic services. He said there is no dollar maximum or deductible on this part of the plan.

The county has 18 single members and 45 families this year, Krull said, compared to 17 singles and 44 families last year.

County Clerk Janet Rumpel said

there is money in the budget to cover the total cost.

Krull said the county should come in with some reserve left from last year, and that the reserve is building up to where the county is prepared for a year when claims increase and the costs are higher.

Rumpel said there is \$140,000 in the reserve, but that includes all the employee benefits. She said it would be up to the commissioners to decide, but if the amount gets up to \$200,000, they might be able to put some back into the general fund.

She said the reserve started out at \$14,000, and has built up over the years. Krull said the industry standard is to have at least three or four months of claims payments available.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure said Krull and Blue Cross has treated the county fairly and the

rates are something the budget can deal with.

"We are not looking to change," he said.

Chairman Chuck Thomas asked about the possibility of having a health program that would help employees track their diets over a six-month period. Krull said the company has a wellness program on its web site that employees can get into, as well as a health risk assessment.

"It won't lower the premium, but could have the same impact if the claims are less," Krull said. "We are talking about a lifetime change, not a six-month trial. With most physical fitness programs, you can do it for a while, but it takes longer to get in the habit."

The commissioners approved the new contract unanimously.

Book of Leviticus contains regulations for Levitical priesthood, laws for Israelites

For those who are following the schedule to read the Bible in a year that was in the Tuesday, Dec. 27, issue of *The Goodland Star-News*, it will be time to start the book of Leviticus on Feb. 1.

Anyone who got behind or missed the beginning, can jump in anytime and continue to read through the year and then catch up at the beginning of next year. If you start now in Leviticus, then finish Genesis and Exodus next January, you still will have read the Bible in a year.

The name "Leviticus" comes from "Leuitikon" of the Greek Septuagint by way of the Latin Vulgate's "Leviticus." It is a fitting name, even though the Levites are only mentioned at Leviticus 25:32, 33, because the book contains the regulations of the Levitical priesthood and the laws that the priests taught the people.

The book, recorded by Moses, contains the laws from God that provided direction for the new nation of Israel that was traveling to the Promised Land.

What good are these ancient laws



sharon corcoran

• use it or lose it

to us today? The laws directed the Israelites on how to remain separate from the ungodly world around them. Leviticus 11:44 says, "For I am your God; and you must sanctify yourselves and you must prove yourselves holy, because I am holy. So you must not make your souls unclean by any swarming creature that moves upon the earth."

Many of the laws in Leviticus directed the people on how to remain clean, physically, morally and spiritually.

The apostle Peter told Christians in the first century: "In accord with the Holy One who called you, do you also become holy yourselves in all your conduct, because it is written: 'You must be holy, because I am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:1, 16)

Though Christians are not under the law's covenant, we can learn a

lot about what God approves of and doesn't from the laws He gave the nation of Israel.

Leviticus 19:9, 10 says, "And when you people reap the harvest of your land, you must not reap the edge of your field completely, and the gleanings of your harvest you must not pick up. Also, you must not gather the leftovers of your vineyard, and you must not pick up the scattered grapes of your vineyard. For the afflicted one and the alien resident you should leave them. I am your God."

Verses 11, 12 and 14 in the same chapter say: "You people must not steal, and you must not deceive, and you must not deal falsely anyone with his associate. And you must not swear in my name to a lie, so that

you do profane the name of your God. You must not call down evil upon a deaf man, and before a blind man you must not put an obstacle; and you must be in fear of your God."

Chapters 1-7 contain details of the sacrifices the Israelites were required to offer. Burnt offerings consisted of a young bull, ram, goat or pigeon or turtledove, depending on the financial means of the offerer. Communion sacrifices could be either a male or female of the cattle or sheep. A sin offering was required for unintentional sins and guilt offerings for personal guilt due to unfaithfulness, deception or robbery.

As you read the detailed requirements for giving these sacrifices, imagine how much time and effort you would need to devote to these practices if they

were required today.

Thinking about these sacrifices can make us truly appreciate the reason they are not required of Christians: "For since the Law has a shadow of the good things to come, but not the very substance of the things, men can never with the same sacrifices from year to year which they offer continually make those who approach perfect. By the said 'will' we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time." (Hebrews 10:1, 10)

Since Jesus' sacrifice is such a blessing for us, should we not show enough appreciation to not take for granted God's forgiveness?

Hebrews 10:26, 27 says, "For if we practice sin willfully after having received the accurate knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins left, but there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and there is a fiery jealousy that is going to consume those in opposition."

Appreciation for Christ's sacrifice should move us to avoid sin as much as possible, rather than feel we can do whatever we want without penalty. The laws in Leviticus help us to see which practices must be avoided at all costs because of how detestable they are to God, and they mention many things God finds pleasing.

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