

Chamber back in black, looking for new members

By Pat Schiefen
The Goodland Star-News
President Brian Linin of the Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce told members at the annual meeting Thursday night that the Chamber was out of debt and focused on new goals for the next year.

Linin said the board ended the practice of using the next year's dues to pay the previous year's expenses, leaving the Chamber in the hole to start the year. He said they want to help business, not do festivals. They need to work closely with Sherman County Economic Development and the Convention and Visitor's Bureau. The board wrote a new mission statement and a new vision for the Chamber.

Terry Woodbury, president of Kansas Communities LLC, a consulting firm, was the guest speaker. Woodbury said the Chamber mission was courageous and the vision audacious. Above all he said the Chamber needs to listen.

The crowd munched on a roast beef dinner and listened to the Xpressos, the Goodland High School show choir.

Linin, who works at Frontier Equity Co-op, opened the business meeting with an overview of what happened to the Chamber in 2005 and where the board wants to go.

One of first things the new board did when they reorganized last fall, Linin said, was write the new mission and new vision. The board includes Ken Clouse, president of Northwest Kansas Technical College; Darren Kannady, vice presi-

dent of First National Bank; Trevor Linton, assistant vice president of First National and a financial consultant; Steve Criswell, building inspector for the city; Darrick Leiker, owner of High Plains Office Supply; Debbie Reed, office manager at Hayden Inc.; Karen Ginther, vice president of Western State Bank; and Sandy Trachsel, owner of Trachsel A&B LLC.

The new mission is "The Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce dynamically represents the community of Goodland through continual improvement to promote growth, development and a positive business atmosphere."

Linin said this vision includes a desire to be a role model for other Chambers, wants to promote ties in government that help get favorable decisions, wants recognition for its success, receives community backing with money and work and wants to give leadership to the community.

Chamber activities for 2005, he said, included the annual meeting and banquet in February, the Farm-City Banquet in March, the Tracey Lawrence concert and Freedom Fest in July, the Flatlander Fall Festival and a Christmas promotion.

In 2003, he said, the Chamber ended the year with a \$17,600 deficit and in 2004 it ended the year \$13,200 in the hole. The Chamber had been using the next year's dues to pay the bills from the year before, he said, and they were focusing on events like Flatlanders and the Freedom Fest.

In August, the board reorganized, looked at the finances and asked for help to get out of debt. The Cham-

ber asked the Sherman County Economic Development Council for \$8,000 to help pay the old bills and for help with office expenses. Chamber members were asked to make an additional donation plus their dues for the next year, which raised \$7,500 to pay the bills, he said.

After the departure of the paid manager, Linin said, volunteers kept the office open, including Betty Barkley, Doug Jackson, Linda Knott, Chet Ross, Wanda Schneider, Margaret Waugh, Faye Paxton, Fern Heckman, Etta Mae Keirns, Pat Lohr, Marcia Smith and Connie Soellner.

Activities the chamber wants to do in 2006, he said, include monthly visits to businesses, promotion of Ambassador activities, be represented on different boards, promote beautification activities, be involved in communities events, do a job referral services, have an annual meeting and continue a business alert hot line, which alerts for fraudulent salesman, scams, bad checks and counterfeit money.

Linin said the Chamber ended the year \$100 to the good. All bills are paid and the Chamber has received \$16,300 in dues for 2006. The average amount of dues collected is \$21,000 per year, he said, so there is still a ways to go.

Linin said the board's goal is to double membership in the next six months to a year. They plan to operate with volunteers for the next six months and make monthly visits to businesses.

The board wants to work closely with the Convention and Visitor's Bureau and Economic Development Council and represent all



The women of the Xpressos were singing "How will I Know" to Larry McCants who was picked from the audience. Singing were (standing) Lea Shores, Ashley Cebula, Kerri Bellamy, Jordan Frazier, Andrea Grieve, (kneeling) Jena McCall and Jillian Parker.

Photo by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News

commerce and businesses, he said. They want to pursue a joint directorship with the other two groups to better coordinate efforts to promote the city and county.

Ginther reported on plans to present a Citizen of the Year award at next year's annual meeting. The nominations are due in the fall, she said.

Clouse talked about the city wide clean-up in April, with two community cleanup weekends and one weekend to clean the entrances to

town. The city, county, trash contractor In the Can LLC and Rasure Lumber Co. all supported the effort, he said.

This year's cleanup weekend will be April 8. Clouse said he hopes again to have a barbecue for workers after it's over.

The speaker for the night was Woodbury, a consultant who lives part of the time near Leoti and the rest of the time in Kansas City. Woodbury said he went to college at Sterling with Larry Minner and

attended Princeton Seminary.

He said you find out who the leaders are in a community when things are bad. He said he thought the Chamber's mission statement was courageous and the vision audacious.

"Behave as if a 12 year-old is watching you for a role model," Woodbury said.

Above all, he said, the chamber need to listen to its customers, keep focused on the mission and work for the common good.

City closes out Aircraft Seal and Gasket development grant

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News
Questions about Aircraft Seal and Gasket Corp. slipped into obscurity a year ago when Adronics moved into the Ed Wolak Building and began to hire people and produce automotive radio antennas.

The City Commission had to relive some of that story at their meeting on Feb. 3, with a hearing to close out a \$200,000 state economic development grant.

Michele Kippes, business finance officer from the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission of Hill City, was at a special city commission meeting Friday morning to explain the grant closeout and answer questions.

The development grant had been arranged in December 2003 through the city to help Aircraft Seal and Gasket open a manufacturing and assembly plant here. The move

had been the idea of Herb Menold, who had a plant in California and wanted to relocate it to Kansas.

City efforts to help the California company included spending about \$500,000 to remodel the fire-damaged building, which had housed Mosburg IGA before it closed. The city bought the building and parking lot with plans to relocate the police department. However, when Aircraft Seal and Gasket wanted a building, the commission approved remodeling the building as an economic development effort.

As part of the assistance to Aircraft Seal and Gasket, the city applied for an economic development grant through the Kansas Department of Commerce. The grant was approved for \$300,000, with the company putting up \$100,000 and grant providing \$200,000.

Through the spring and summer of 2004, there were spurts of activ-

ity at the plant, but there were never more than about four employees at any time. Things looked bleak, but again in the fall Menold seemed to get things going, and there was activity at the plant. By the end of that year, though, the building was dark, and there was talk of Aircraft Seal and Gasket going bankrupt.

The city commission had begun to question the owner when it learned there was no insurance on the contents or the building as required in the lease. Last February, the city commission reached an agreement with Aircraft Seal and Gasket to end the lease and move out of the building to allow Adronics to move in.

Injured woman found by her son after accident

Injured woman found by her son after accident north of Ruleton
A Sherman County woman was lucky her son was following her home north of Ruleton Thursday evening when her car slid sideways and rolled, ejecting the driver into the chilly night.

Sheriff's Deputy Brad Parker said Amanda Persky, 43, 925 County Road 77, was driving a 2001 Chevy Impala about 10 miles north of Ruleton on County Road 10 at 9:45 p.m. when she apparently veered across the road about half a mile north of County Road 74. He said she overcorrected, sending the car sideways into the ditch, and it rolled. Persky was thrown out.

Kippes told the city commission that Aircraft Seal had filed for bankruptcy, and that the state wanted to close out the grant to clear its books.

She said while the total of the grant approved was \$300,000, the total spent had been \$155,888. She said the firm had spent \$55,994, and the state had put in \$99,894 from the development grant.

A breakdown of what was spent included \$53,739 for working capital, \$17,890 for inventory \$77,959 for machinery and equipment and \$6,300 for administration of the grant.

Mayor Rick Billinger asked how much the company would owe.

Kippes said the equipment is

She was conscious when she was found.

"Fortunately, she was found by her son, Nick Gary, who was following in a separate car. He found her in the ditch," Deputy Parker said. "She was not dressed for the cold weather, and certainly could have died from exposure, because there is not a lot of traffic on that road."

Parker said Steve Duell, who lives a couple of miles south on Road 10, brought blankets to cover Persky until an ambulance arrived.

She was taken to Goodland Regional Medical Center with a pos-

sible head injury, pain in her left arm and suffering from hypothermia. The temperature was about 20 degrees at the time of the accident, but the winds were from the north at 6 mph.

Parker said Persky had recently moved out to the country from Goodland. Persky operates Groomingdales dog grooming through Prairieland Veterinary Clinic.

Persky was treated at Goodland Regional Medical Center and transferred Thursday night to a hospital in Denver.

corrections

An obituary for Sally B. Ketter in the Friday, Feb. 10, edition of *The Goodland Star-News* omitted the name of a surviving sister, Pam Parsons of Goodland. This was a reporting error.

The date when Jayci Stone of New Mexico State University scored her season-high of 12 points against Utah State University was reported incorrectly on Page 12a of the same edition. The date should

have been Feb. 2, not Feb. 12. This was a typing error.

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