

from other pens...

# Sunshine brings infractions to light

In March 2002, a month when the birthday of James Madison, author of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, is celebrated, a group of newspaper editors in Florida decided they had done enough talking about sunshine. It was time to do something about it.

Sunshine in Government, that is. Believing the people's business should be open to the people paying for it, these newspaper editors rolled out a simultaneous editorial campaign called Sunshine Sunday. The Florida Legislature, considering a number of bills that would have moved public meetings and records behind closed doors, paused in its headlong dive into that bottomless pool of official secrecy, and reconsidered. Nearly 300 measures to close government business to the public were defeated in the next three years, melted away by the sanitizing exposure of sunshine.

From the Floridians' idea came Sunshine Week, a national recognition that President Abraham Lincoln's dream of government "of the people, by the people and for the people" requires the people to know what is going on.

Sunshine Week this year is March 12-18. Newspapers and other media around the nation will be shining the light on the need for openness in government.

Why Sunshine? The term comes from Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis' famous quote: "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman." His good counsel rings true today and even more in need of application than it was in 1933 when he wrote those words.

Our times are fraught with questions about the American experiment with openness. In the war on terrorism, we are required to re-examine openness, privacy, government secrecy and the consent given by the governed to those who govern. We do not want our enemies to harm us. Neither do we want our friends to do so — and the best of governments tends toward corruption and abuse of power when left unchecked.

Clearly while some secrets cannot be told for a time, our elected officials have not only the obligation to use the secrecy stamp sparingly, they have a direct interest in doing so. The people will not understand, nor support, what they cannot see.

Every community grapples with closed sessions by school boards and city councils, records that are withheld to protect privacy and the like. Our laws are created to enable limited uses of the secrecy stamp and the occasional discussion behind closed doors while matters that will later become public are handled. Newspapers are sometimes accused of sensationalism for saying so, but these limited powers are misused out of convenience, political expediency and sheer cussedness at times. A citizenry that allows it to happen deserves no better government than it gets.

Sunshine Week is meant to remind us all of that. There is plenty of room in the light here where this newspaper stands. Newspaper readers ought to take a minute this week to stand in it, and remember what our forefathers and the veterans of our several wars endured so that we could have the privilege. If you want to know more about Sunshine Week, visit [www.sunshineweek.org](http://www.sunshineweek.org).

*Jerry Reppert is president of the National Newspaper Association and publisher of the Anna (Ill.) Gazette-Democrat.*

## The Goodland Star-News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association  
Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association  
National Newspaper Association  
e-mail: [star-news@nwkanssas.com](mailto:star-news@nwkanssas.com)

Steve Haynes, President

Tom Betz, Editor

Erica Harlan, Copy Editor

Sharon Corcoran, Society Editor

Pat Schiefen, Reporter

Greg Stover, Sports Editor

Anne Hamilton, Advertising Sales

Sheila Smith, Office Manager

### Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen,

Judy McKnight, Betty Morris, Heather Merklin,

Jerry Kirkpatrick, Lana Westfahl, Barbara Lindsley



[nwkanssas.com](http://nwkanssas.com)

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services

([ntbetz@nwkanssas.com](mailto:ntbetz@nwkanssas.com))

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.([support@nwkanssas.com](mailto:support@nwkanssas.com))

Published every Tuesday and Friday except the days observed for New Year's Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Star-News, 1205 Main Ave., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [star-news@nwkanssas.com](mailto:star-news@nwkanssas.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [goodlandads@nwkanssas.com](mailto:goodlandads@nwkanssas.com)

The Goodland Star-News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$24; six months, \$42; 12 months, \$76. Out of area, weekly mailing of two issues: three months, \$34; six months, \$49; 12 months, \$84. Mailed individually each day: 12 months, \$119. (All tax included.)

Incorporating:

## The Goodland Daily News

1932-2003

## The Sherman County Herald

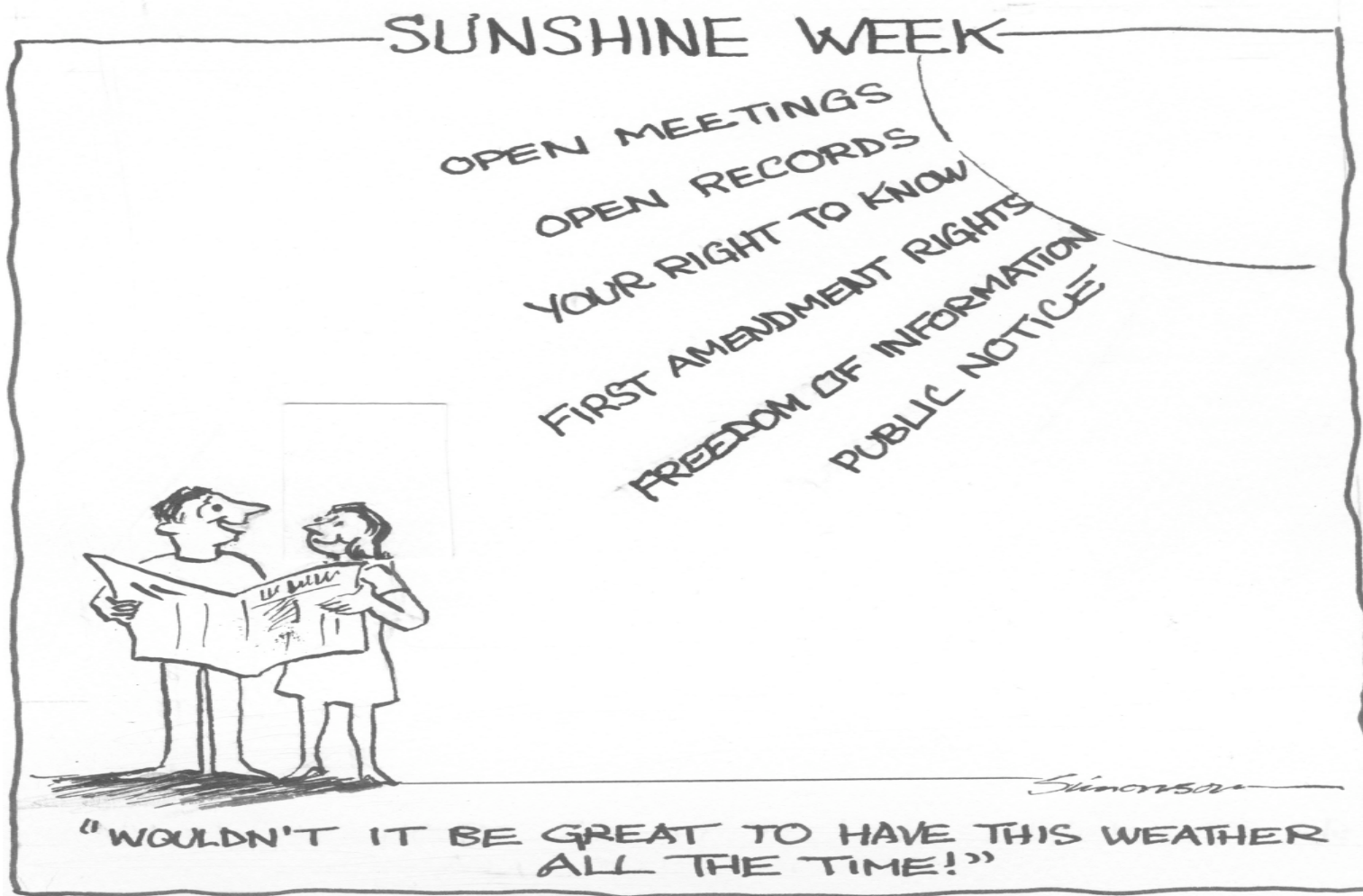
Founded by Thomas McCants  
1935-1989

## THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and  
Roxie Yonkey  
1994-2001

## Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



# Great news signal of economic upturn

Thursday started off as a good day, with a light layer of snow showing moisture can appear here, and got better with a call from Topeka announcing approval of an air permit for Goodland Energy Resources' coal-fired power plant.

The smiles on the faces of employees at the main offices of the Goodland Energy Center were reflected everywhere the news had spread.

"Fantastic, great news," was the word from Ron Pickman, chief operating officer of Goodland Energy Resources, when we took him a copy of the permit e-mail by Sharon Watson, communications director of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

Watson's call saying the permit had been signed brightened the day and changed the design of our front page for Friday.

Getting the air permit now allows the firm to begin construction on the powerplant, which Mark Justus, managing partner of ReNewable Energy Resources, said will take about a year and bring in a construction crew of about 210 working three shifts around the clock.

In a few weeks, crews will begin laying the foundation and footings for the turbine and boiler. Announcements are expected about plans



## tom betz

• t, t & o

for an adjacent biodiesel plant and ethanol plant.

Another piece of good news Friday was that Chuck Lutters of ReNewable said the wind generators for a "farm" southwest of town have been shipped from Europe.

The wind generators will provide supplemental power to the city once erected, and work on that site should begin soon.

The good news kept coming, as Dr. Rolfe Mandel of the Kansas Geological Survey at the University of Kansas, said he and a group of archeologists will be back at the Kanorado site this summer to continue searching for more evidence of Clovis and Folsom people who inhabited the area over 11,500 years ago.

A historic preservation grant from the state Historical Society will help pay for Mandel's work, and he said the objective this summer will be to define the boundaries of the site as a step to nominating it as a National Register district.

# House to debate major issues this week

Several issues that will define the session are coming closer to their day before the Kansas House of Representatives.

The House has approved Jessica's Law, which creates longer prison sentences for sex offenders, requires tracking predators after prison, mandates tougher registration requirements and makes background checks in schools mandatory; cut taxes on machinery and equipment and raised the age of marital consent; but there are other major issues set for debate. Among them are phasing out the franchise tax, eminent domain, workman's compensation and concealed carry, all of which are likely to face floor action in the coming week.

### Eminent Domain

A proposed constitutional amendment, House Bill (HB) 5025, limiting the government's power of eminent domain was referred out of the Federal and State Affairs Committee last week.

Proponents included landowners, or previous landowners, who were hurt by the government taking their land. In opposition were local governments that insisted there is a need for this power. They said limits would result in businesses going outside of Kansas due to the burdensome regulations that may slow or halt the process of land acquisition.

The arguments hinge on the interpretation of "necessary" governmental use of eminent domain. Those who sought to limit the power feel it should be restricted to of utilities, roads and similar infrastructure needs. Opponents would continue to allow acquisition for economic development and for clearing blighted areas.

### Workman's Compensation

Thursday, the House Commerce and Labor Committee finished hearings on Senate Bill (SB) 461 that made changes to rules regarding preexisting conditions, permanent partial dis-



## jim morrison

• capitol review

ability and supplemental functional disability compensation sections of the workman's compensation statutes. The bill is expected on the House floor this week.

### Concealed Carry

Senate Bill 418, allowing licensed Kansas residents to carry a concealed firearm, passed favorably out of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee Wednesday. Committee amendments added libraries, churches and temples to the list of prohibited places for weapons. The Senate list included courthouses, jails, prisons, schools, state office buildings and mental health centers. The House is expected to hear the bill this week.

### Franchise Tax

A bill to phase out the Kansas franchise tax is out of committee and should be heard by the

The Kanorado site proves ancient paleo-Indians were here, and Dr. Mandel will be bringing anthropologists to continue the investigation of the site.

This week marks the anniversary of the arrival of Adronics/Elrob Manufacturing a year ago, and the company has grown to 40 employees in the first year. It is wonderful to drive by the Ed Wolak Building at 1006 Center, and see a double row of employees' cars.

The long-awaited Steakhouse Diner has arrived and is getting ready to open south of Taco Johns, and foundation work continues at the new Holiday Inn Express where the old Apple Trail truck stop was.

Coming up is a special election on Tuesday, March 28, to raise the sales tax to improve the entrance roads to the city and across the county. This \$12 million project will rebuild major streets and roads, plus aid the development of the Energy Center with the help of an \$800,000 economic development grant from the state.

The topper for the month would be a healthy dose of moisture from Mother Nature. We kidded once that the First Baptist Church opening on Main could bring moisture, and we got a nice snowstorm. Could it happen twice?

House soon. The bill, HB 2548, would eliminate the tax over a three-year period. This should encourage more businesses to establish operations in Kansas.

### Medicare Consumer Alert

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are warning seniors and people with disabilities about a scheme asking Medicare beneficiaries for money and checking account information to help them enroll in a prescription drug plan. Complaints have been filed in several states. The caller attempts to convince the beneficiary to allow them to withdraw \$299 to pay for a non-existent prescription drug program. If you have been solicited for this or a similar offer, call the police or 1-877-7SAFERX (877) 772-3379 to report the incident.

*If you have any additional information or if you would like to offer your opinions or suggestions, I want to hear from you. Please contact my office by phone at (785) 296-7676, by mail at 300 SW 10th St., State Capitol Building, Room 143-N, Topeka, KS 66612, or by e-mail at [jmorrison@ink.org](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org) during the session.*

## where to write

**U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; web address — [roberts.senate.gov](http://roberts.senate.gov)

**U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; web e-mail address — [brownback.senate.gov/CMEmail.me](mailto:brownback.senate.gov/CMEmail.me)

**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; Fax (202) 225-5124 e-mail address — [jerry.moran@mail.house.gov](mailto:jerry.moran@mail.house.gov)

**State Rep. Jim Morrison**, State Capitol Building Rm. 124-N, Topeka, KS 66612. (785) 296-7676; e-mail address — [jmorrison@ink.org](mailto:jmorrison@ink.org)

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, Rm. 128-S, 300 SW 10th, Topeka, Kan. 66612. (785) 296-7399; e-mail address — [ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us)

**Kansas Attorney General Phil Kline**, 301 S.W. 10th, Lower Level, Topeka, KS 66612-1597 (785) 296-3751 Fax (785) 291-3699 TTY: (785) 291-3767

## garfield

