



City operations begin busy new year

By Casey McCormick

The Bird City Council met on Monday and began the new year with a productive meeting. Among topics that were discussed and acted upon were long range planning, the status of the water meter project, cable franchise agreement and employee wage increases.

The council also spent time with the Cheyenne County Commissioners to make a final agreement on the county wide law enforcement contract (see related story).

In the following months the council will be proposing upgrade projects

that the city will undertake with the financial assistance of Century II. One particular need is for a grinder at the sewage lift station. Currently the grates at the station must be removed twice a day and solid waste is taken off and then burned outside the building. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has been putting pressure on the city to change this situation. City employees are researching the cost and availability of a grinder and motor that would process the raw sewage and allow it to flow through the sewer system.

The other two areas that the city will

consider for long range improvements are town streets and water.

Daryl Miller reported that the water meter project is completed dollar wise. Although the replacement of each water meter in the city did come out to be \$1,682 over budget, Mr. Miller showed that the city had actually gotten more meters and system replacement parts by buying in large quantities. "We have spent more but have got a lot more than expected," said Mr. Miller. He also stated that the company providing the meters, Itron, has agreed to purchase the FCC license the city needs to operate their

remote meter readers.

Two council members again raised the question of the franchise rights that the local cable provider has. They have been asked by several unsatisfied residents who would like to have a different cable company in town. The council was doubtful that a better service would be available but agreed to look into the franchise agreement.

With the coming of a new business year the council considered granting pay increases and a cost of living increase. Before the next meeting the council members will be provided

with a breakdown of what each city employee makes before deciding upon wage increases. The federal government issued its figure for the annual rate of the cost of living increase at 2.1 percent. The council did agree to provide that increase to each city worker.

In Other Business

The council is still waiting for a budget from the Bird City Recreation Commission. They were informed that the commission does pay for the insurance required for the public swimming pool.

The council discussed the law in

place concerning the permit requirement for parking a mobile home on a residential lot. They will be contacting a party in town who has been asked to move a mobile home that is being used for residential purposes.

The 2004 holiday schedule was reviewed and the city schedule will be revised to accommodate any schedule conflicts with holiday dates.

Council member Loren White, head of the Equipment Committee, thanked Sam Beeson and Daryl Miller for their prompt and thorough job of snow removal following the weekend storm.

Weather hinders repairs

By Casey McCormick

Bone chilling temperatures did not slow down the repair of a section of Nebraska Colorado and Kansas Railroad track near Bird City. Two crews braved the sub-zero weather to replace ties and rails on Monday.

The repair was necessary after a tank car derailed at a switch a week earlier. The damaged track was just north of Highway 161 west of the Frontier Equity location. The line travels beside US 36.

The Nebraska Colorado and Kansas crews came from Curtis and Grant, Neb. Several wooden ties and lengths of steel rails were damaged.

"The weather is the biggest problem," said repairman Dan Vapinik. The cold temperatures froze the section which had to be replaced in the ground. As the job continued the five workers had to endure below-zero temperatures and a constant north wind.

Using a boom truck, they lowered the heavy steel rails from the side of the tracks and positioned them along the new ties.

The job was done by Steve Kehler and Stacy Campbell of Curtis and Mr. Vapinik, Matt Greenwood and Carl Neumiester from Grant.



WORKERS FOR THE Nebraska-Kansas-Colorado Rail Road fight the elements to repair a section of track damaged earlier by a derailed tank car. Freezing temperatures and bitter winds made the men from Nebraska earn their wages.

Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

New deputy in town

By Karen Krien

Cheyenne County has a new deputy sheriff who will be living and working in Bird City.

Jeff Moser joined the Cheyenne

County Sheriff's department, with his first day of duty being Friday. Officer Moser was hired as part of an agreement with the county and Bird City to patrol the city.



Moser

He, his wife Lariena and children have moved into Bird City and are thrilled with the small community.

"We love Bird City. The people are so nice — they accept us and talk to us — we are happy to be here," Officer Moser said.

Officer Moser said he had always wanted to be a law officer, despite the fact that the majority of his family are teachers and professors.

Born in Wheatridge, Colo., he went to school in Northglenn, attended Parks College in Thornton, majoring in the paralegal field, and graduated in 1994. Following graduation from Parks College, he worked for the Reliance Security

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County-wide law enforcement operating through sheriff

By Casey McCormick

After several months of planning, Bird City and the Cheyenne County Commissioners came together with an agreement for county-wide law enforcement. Under the new contract, a Cheyenne County Sheriff's deputy will be stationed in Bird City to provide law enforcement services.

At Monday evening's meeting of the Bird City Council, all three county commissioners were present. Both parties expressed concerns about the final contract. Jane Brubaker stated the commissioners were "shocked" when they received a revised copy of the previously agreed upon contract.

"We're concerned that if the agreement falls through, in a short time, then Bird City comes out on the losing end," Bird City Mayor David Hickert, said.

The contract is based on a one-

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Contract concerns commissioners

The Law Enforcement Agreement between Bird City and the county which would provide law enforcement coverage for the city was reviewed by the Cheyenne County Commissioners at the Wednesday meeting and they did not approve of how the agreement now read. At the end of the discussion, they agreed to sign the original agreement before the changes of equipment had been made.

Attorney Kevin Berens had itemized the changes made in the agreement and the commissioners were disturbed that the changes were not the changes they had

agreed on when part of the Bird City City Council had met with the commissioners on Dec. 15.

Attorney Berens explained that the City Council had held a meeting following that meeting and had reservations about giving the city's law enforcement equipment (which was itemized) including a car with 97,000 miles, a bullet-proof vest which fit the previous city officer, a shotgun, pair of handcuffs and keys (there were other miscellaneous items). The city's attorney Leslie Beims said the council noted that elections

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AIN'T NO MAD COWS HERE! This herd enjoys the remnants of a corn field west of Bird City.

Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

Commissioners end year with a lot of business activity

By Karen Krien

The Cheyenne County Commissioners ended the year on Wednesday in a long, grueling meeting where decisions were made about year-end bonuses, distributing funds and accepting funds to pay for state mandated equipment. However, the general contractor and architect for the hospital remodeling project were denied payments and the original agreement with Bird City for law enforcement was signed.

At the beginning of 2003, the commissioners agreed that, if at the end of the year, there was money leftover in the budget, the county employees would receive a bonus. The commissioners had allowed \$50 a month raises for employees but when the state started pulling back funds which had originally been planned for, the commissioners agreed to hold the raises.

As the commissioners looked over where the county budget stood at the Wednesday meeting, they agreed that the carry-over funding was already half of what had been planned for and there was no way they could give the bonuses.

The commissioners had found the money to give Christmas bonuses of Chamber scrip money but noted that funds were so tight, they postponed the Christmas dinner usually held at Big Ed's in Bird City.

The commissioners noted that the county has very dependable employees and they hated not to give the bonus but would plan to budget in raises for this year. Larry Gabel, emergency medical service director, presented a proposal to the commissioners, noting that the Ambulance Service had brought in \$6,000 over budget. He asked that emergency medical tech-

nicians each be given a bonus ranging from \$25 to \$50, depending upon service to the department with total amount being \$980.

The commissioners agreed to give the bonuses in Chamber scrip but Commissioner Tim Raile stressed that he was agreeing to the bonuses, not because the department was \$6,000 over budget which, he said, was taxpayer's dollars, but because the department was under its set budget for the year.

Commissioner Jane Brubaker brought up the fact that firemen were also volunteers for the county but until the fire chiefs asked for a bonus, they would not consider it at that meeting. There would also be the matter of money in that particular budget.

Ambulance write-offs

Director Gabel and Janelle Bowers, ambulance bookkeeper, presented

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Hospital payments denied

By Karen Krien

At the Wednesday meeting of the Cheyenne County Commissioners, they went over the hospital's budget with the administrator and board president, and then they began discussing a major problem with the new addition to the hospital in St. Francis.

The commissioners had been informed that the new floor in the hospital addition was at least 1.5 inches lower than the floor in the old part. When asked, both administrator Les Lacy and president Rubeen Schultz agreed that this was a fact.

The commissioners asked how the contractor and architect planned to correct the problem. It was suggested that additional cement be run all over the floor to bring it up with the other floor but the administrator said that if this were done, the doors would not fit. There was 8 feet to run cement to taper it off but this would be a "steep" taper but, there could not be a drop in the floor.

Commissioner Tim Raile noted that 1.5 inches slope could make a difference to a person in a wheelchair.

The commissioners took a break in the meeting and made a

visit to the hospital. When they returned, they agreed to hold the proposed pay of \$16,501 to the architect, and \$223,053 to the contractor until there were some plans of how they planned to correct the problem. The commissioners also felt there should be some compensation from the architect/contractor for allowing a mistake of this size to happen.

The commissioners plan to attend the next hospital builder meeting on Jan. 15 to further discuss the matter with the architect, contractor, hospital board and administrator.

Congressman to hold town hall meeting on Monday

Congressman Jerry Moran will be in St. Francis from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Monday at the Windmill Restaurant, West U.S. 36.

This is part of the Congressman's eighth annual "Big First" Listening Tour. During the tour, Congressman Moran will travel more than 5,000 miles and meet with thousands of Kansans while visiting all 69 counties in the First Congressional District.

"The tour allows me to meet with Kansans to get their thoughts and

concerns, which will help me to be a better representative for Kansans in Congress," Congressman Moran said. "The town hall setting has been a useful way to meet with as many Kansans as possible, while getting suggestions to take back to Washington."

Prior to coming to St. Francis, he will be in Goodland from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. mountain standard time, at the Western State Bank, 815 Center Ave.; and in Colby from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Senior Progress

Center, 156 Fike Park.

Those missing the Congressman in St. Francis may want to visit with him in Atwood from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. on Feb. 17 at My Place Cafe, 305 Grant Street; or in Oberlin from 10 to 11 a.m. at the county courthouse, 120 East Hall Street.

The town meeting is open to the public.

For more information, contact Congressman Moran at (202) 225-2715 or visit his web page at www.house.gov/moranks01/.

Cheyenne

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presented the write-off amount of \$989, which insurance and Medicare/Medicaid would not accept. Mrs. Bowers was questioned about how much time was spent filling out forms and billing which she replied "some 20 minutes, others could take all day."

The county's auditor is concerned with the amount of past due billing and said he would like a "patient aging sheet" showing current bills, collections and past-due bills. Mrs. Bowers said she will begin supplying the sheet.

The commissioners again discussed what to do about the ambulance billing. The hospital administrator, at a previous meeting, had offered to have the hospital's billing department take over the ambulance billing for \$6 per run. Commissioner Raile asked that he be given more time to do some investigating before the final decision be made.

State-mandated purchase

Attorney Kevin Berens said the Diversion Fund had accumulated \$11,592 and he wanted to transfer the money to the Clerk of the District Court's fund so there would be sufficient money to purchase the state-mandated computer equipment.

The purchase of the equipment, \$13,000, was presenting a hardship on the county's budget. The Clerk of the District Court's Fund had \$6,000 which could be put toward the purchase price but the commissioners did not know where the rest was going to come from. The Diversion Fund money would cover the costs after the Clerk of the District Court's Fund had been depleted.

Hospital/county-wide law agreement

The matters of the hospital construction problems and the county-wide law agreement are found elsewhere in this issue.

Road and bridge report

Dave Flemming, road and bridge supervisor, reported that in 2003, the county crew had graveled 140 miles of county roads. The supervisor said that K-161 between Bird City and Benkelman, will be close this summer for highway construction. Traffic will be diverted near Benkelman and Bird City but the supervisor said there would be others taking other routes on country roads.

In other business

In other business:

- The commissioners approved (2 to 1) to give the Bird City Community Club \$1,096 for park benches. Commissioner Raile asked Commissioner Brubaker, who is a member of the Community Club, why, when Bird City had so much money in the Century II Funds, did they think it was necessary to take the funds from the county's Drug and Alcohol Fund? She countered that if it was St. Francis asking for the funds, would he think it was ok. He said "yes."

- After discussion, the commissioners voted, 2 to 1, to not allow the Food Pantry to use the Social Rehabilitation Service rooms which were officially vacated the first of the year. Reva Pownell, Food Pantry coordinator, had previously asked to use the rooms located on the basement level if only for just a year until a county attorney would be elected and the rooms would be needed for this use. Commissioner Brubaker was in favor of Mrs. Pownell using the space because it would be easier to load and unload boxes of food. Commissioner Ron Krien thought that, once the Pantry was in the rooms, it might be hard to get them to leave. After some thought, Commissioner Raile agreed with Commissioner Krien.

- The commissioners agreed to treat the undersheriff's overtime hours the same as the county's road and bridge department employees as the overtime was worked during a week where a holiday occurred. The hours will be treated as "straight" time.
- Resolutions to transfer funds from Rural Fire, Road and Bridge Special Equipment and Ambulance funds

were approved. Commissioners also agreed to the Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas Agreement apportionment of \$7,804.

- The heating and air conditioning bids for the ambulance barn were tabled until the commissioners talked further to the director.

- The sheriff introduced the new deputy and also asked for two breathalyzers for the department. Attorney Berens said that, while the breathalyzers didn't substitute for a blood draw in cases where alcohol might be in question, he felt like it was a "good asset out in the field." The amount of \$996 was approved for

both breathalyzers.

Sheriff Eddie Dankenbring also said undersheriff Cliff Flock and the drug dog had been certified again.

- Ben Smull was appointed, along with Director Gabel, as the official representative to the Region I Emergency Medical Service meetings, replacing Beth Gabel.

Next meeting

The first commissioners' meeting of the year is always held the second Monday in January so the next meeting will be held at 8 a.m. on Monday in the commissioners' room in the courthouse.

Law

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year period and will only be renewed with the approval of the Cheyenne County Sheriff and the Bird City Council. The main concern for Bird City is that this is an election year and if the current sheriff, Eddie Dankenbring were not reelected, there is uncertainty that a different sheriff would keep the status quo.

Also the council brought up transferring all of the Bird City police equipment to the county especially the three service firearms. If Bird City did need to replace them, the estimated cost would be close to \$1,500.

"It is a liability concern and that the county must have ownership in the case of an accident or unexpected circumstance involving a county employee," Tim Raile, commissioner, said. "The transfer of equipment also shows a commitment (of good faith) to the county."

He also felt that the cost to the county would be over the \$25,000 that Bird City will pay each year for county-wide law enforcement.

Sheriff Dankenbring and the new

deputy officer, Jeff Moser, were at the meeting. Sheriff Dankenbring emphasized that the county has already moved forward and that \$1,000 had been spent outfitting Deputy Moser with uniforms, a service revolver holster and baton.

"The council understands the commissioners' concern but having another officer is a major investment to the county and that an officer at the eastern half of the county would be an added asset," Mayor Hickert said.

Both sides agreed that the time constraint of each party receiving the contract and having to make a "yes" or "no" decision quickly added to the confusion between the commissioner and city council.

After their discussion the Bird City Council agreed to accept the previously written proposal from the Cheyenne County Commissioners to provide for county-wide law enforcement.

County

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would be held in 2004 and, if the present sheriff was not reelected, the council might not want to continue with the agreement. If this was the case, they would not have any equipment to re-establish a city law enforcement.

The commissioners agreed that most of the equipment, within a year, would probably not be worth much (this remark was directed mostly at the vehicle) and there was the issue of liability with the city owning the equipment and the officer being hired by the county. They also noted that the commissioners had lowered the price for the county-wide agreement to \$25,000 if the equipment were given to the county. If the city was going to keep the equipment, the price for the agreement would need to be raised.

Another issue was the fact that the commissioners and county attorney had given the sheriff approval to hire a deputy for the city and purchase another vehicle under the assumption that, since the city council members had basically approved the agreement at the Dec. 15 meeting, there were no problems.

Sheriff Eddie Dankenbring introduced Jeff Moser, deputy for the city, at the Wednesday meeting. The new deputy had already quit his former job and had moved his family to Bird City in anticipation of starting the new job on Jan. 2.

The commissioners agreed to attend the Monday meeting of the Bird City City Council to see if something could be worked out. However, they had signed the original agreement so it would not be necessary to call a special meeting.

Deputy

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Patrol and Range Tech. He then started his own company, Great Plains Community Patrol, and had offices in Denver and Wichita. During this time, he was also attending Aurora Community College in the Law Enforcement Academy but his family was growing and a shortage of funds caused him to quit.

In September, he and Mrs. Moser decided it was time to move their children out of the Aurora school system. Their oldest son, Bryce was 9, Cordell was 8, Dalton, 6 and Alicia, 5.

Bryce and Cordell both wanted to become members of the baseball team but there were so many kids that Bryce was the only one selected for the team and Officer Moser was the coach.

The Mosers moved to Goodland where they had family and friends. Officer Moser took a job at Wal-Mart but continued looking for a law enforcement position. When he heard about the Cheyenne County position, he applied and was hired.

"We are looking forward to working with Jeff and think he will be an asset to the department as well as bring a nice family to Bird City," Sheriff Eddie Dankenbring said.

"We think Bird City is a beautiful town — it has everything we could want in a small town," Officer Moser said. "We are impressed with the school and just looking around, we can tell that the people take pride in their school and town."

"The kids think the baby-back ribs at the Blue Bird Junction are the best and everyone at the grocery store calls us by name and talks to us."

Mrs. Moser is a housewife but for a number of years worked in the media area with Channel 12 in Denver. She may be looking into some type of employment or business in the near future, especially since Alicia will now be in school.

Officer Moser will be attending the Kansas Law Enforcement Academy in the near future where he will be certified.



LANNY BEVINGTON was led into the county courthouse on Dec. 31 followed by Deputy Terry T. Smith. Bevington is charged with murder in the death of his wife.

Staff photo by Greg Stover

Woman killed in accidental shooting

A 27-year-old woman was killed by what her husband said was an accidental gunshot Sunday morning at their home south of Brewster.



Bevington

Sherman County Sheriff Doug Whitson said Lanny Bevington, 33, told officers his wife, Kerrie A. Bevington, was shot while he was removing a gun from the pickup she was sitting in. He said dispatch got the report of a gunshot victim at 7 a.m. on Sunday.

The Bevington home is 3 1/2

miles southwest of Brewster on County Road 37 in Sherman County. Whitson said the couple had moved to the county in August.

County Attorney Bonnie Selby said the Kansas Bureau of Investigation was investigating. A search warrant was issued on Sunday for three agents to check the scene.

Bevington was pronounced dead at the scene, and her body was taken to Bateman Funeral Home. It later was moved to Topeka for an autopsy.

Funeral arrangements were pending with Kersenbrock Funeral Chapel of Colby.

Student News

Kansas Wesleyan University

Kansas Wesleyan University has announced the names of 142 students who were named to the dean's honor roll for the 2003 fall semester. Students who have a semester grade point average of 3.25-3.74

and who have no incompletes are listed on the dean's honor roll at the end of each semester.

Among those receiving academic honors was Patricia Hengen of Bird City.

Town & Country Siding
3x10.5 all papers
85% in GSN

