

City names member to advisory group

By Casey McCormick

The Bird City Council met Monday to discuss town operations and meet with the new deputy sheriff. Several topics were discussed including the appointment of a new member to the county advisory commission.

Doug Mason was chosen to fill the vacancy left by Nancy Semler on the Cheyenne County Advisory Commission, which is a branch of the Resource, Conservation and Development Corporation.

The Cheyenne County Deputy Sheriff, Jeff Moser, came before the council to report on the sheriff's department activities for the month of January (see related story).

City manager, Sam Beeson, reported that the cost of a grinder for the city sewer lift station would be \$20,000. This is much higher than the price the city had originally been quoted. No decision was made to move forward with the purchase.

Mayor Dave Hickert voiced concern about

the high cost of heating the old city shop. The city paid over \$600 last month is gas alone to operate the shop. Efforts will be made to make the building more energy efficient.

The mayor also said he would like to hire an architect from Hill City to come up with plans to put a training room in the firehouse. He hopes that the room could also be used for community meetings.

In Other Business

In other business:

• Building permits were approved for Dick Boswell (remodel of a garage and the addition of a deck) and Larry Henry (ramp).

• A resident who is unhappy with a neighbor's trees that block the view when the individual backs out of the driveway brought their concern to the council for a second time. The city manager had looked into the complaint and reported before that it was a "neighbor issue." The council again agreed that it was not a city matter and will send a letter to

the individual stating so.

• A citizen made a complaint about the sidewalk in front of the city hall building. When the weather gets warmer the city will patch the area in question.

• More discussion was made about the city ordinance concerning mobile homes in town and how long they can be parked. Further thought will be given to the matter.

• The city council is considering getting two more recycling bins from St. Francis.

County seeks fire truck funds

By Karen Krien

The Cheyenne County Commissioners, on Friday, agreed to apply for a grant in order to have enough money to purchase fire trucks for the county.

Attending the meeting were Susan Hobrock, Cheyenne County Development Corporation coordinator; Dave Hickert, Bird City fire chief; and George Harper, St. Francis fire chief. The county applied for a Community Development Block Grant last year and was granted \$97,488 to remodel the St. Francis clinic basement into the county health office. At that time, all areas of Cheyenne County with the exception of the city of St. Francis (it had been surveyed earlier) were surveyed and found to be in the low to moderately-low income status. The survey results, which are difficult to gather, are still good for this year and the county has been looking at getting new fire trucks for several years.

Chief Hickert reported that Bird

City needed one fire truck but Chief Harper said St. Francis really needed two trucks. Each truck was estimated to cost around \$100,000. The commissioners wanted to get the process started so it would not be "last-minute" with everyone scrambling to get facts together. They asked that they gather the truck and other associated equipment prices together and give to Mrs. Hobrock.

Chief Hickert said the Bird City Emergency Medical Service and fireman meeting and training room still needed to be finished and he was interested in seeing if a Community Development Block Grant could be requested for this project. Mrs. Hobrock said that the meeting/training room could be submitted as a separate city application. The county is allowed two grant applications and each city is allowed one.

The fire chiefs will work Mrs. Hobrock and with Amy Griffey, who writes the Community Development Block Grants.



SAFETY PATROL— Wendy Richmeier makes sure that Cheylin Elementary students cross 6th Street safely. Other volunteers are still needed for cross walk duty before and after school. The kids can use your help! Crossing are Joey McCormick and Gordon Richmeier.

Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

County commissioners table ambulance billing issues for later date once more

By Karen Krien

For the last three months, the county commissioners have been discussing who will do the ambulance billing for the county. At the Friday commissioners' meeting, they once again tabled the billing issue, this time for two months.

The problem began when patients were upset because their ambulance costs had been rejected by Medicare as they were deemed "not necessary." Dr. Mary Beth Miller informed the commissioners that those ambulance runs were neces-

sary and listed some of the reasons. However, the runs had been turned into Medicare as the technician had coded them which, when the technician had filled out the ambulance form and not being a physician, had listed the patient's comments and obvious pain.

Les Lacy, hospital administrator, had offered the hospital's services in working and turning in ambulance runs to Medicare, Medicaid and insurance companies for \$6 per run. Since the hospital staff works in this area day after day, the com-

missioners considered the administrator's offer as an alternative. However, they felt that they needed to study the matter further by contacting other county emergency medical service directors and officials as well as working with the county's ambulance department bookkeeper Janelle Bowers.

Both commissioners Tim Raile and Ron Krien had been to the ambulance barn to talk to Mrs. Bowers and Commissioner Raile had made numerous calls to different counties. Commissioner Jane

Brubaker had illness and several deaths in her family making it impossible to make the visit so felt that, at this time, she was unable to make any decision on the bookkeeping matter.

"I want to spend time with Janelle and see how her days at the office are spent and how much time is spent in each area," she said.

The commissioners agreed to wait for two months and see how the collection of ambulance fund money was going before making

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CHEYENNE COUNTY DEPUTY SHERIFF JEFF MOSER addresses the Bird City Council. Deputy Moser's primary duty is to provide law enforcement to Bird City.

Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

Sheriff's deputy settles into duties

By Casey McCormick

Bird City has seen its share of law men over the years. Now Cheyenne County deputy sheriff Jeff Moser will have his opportunity to "serve and protect" the citizens of this northwest Kansas town.

At Monday's city council meeting Officer Moser assumed one of his duties by presenting the city with his first police report. He spoke for several minutes with an in-depth report of his activities as deputy sheriff for the month of January.

The first issue he addressed was the problem of animal control in Bird City, in particular, dogs running loose and without tags. Deputy Moser has notified one dog owner of their dog being unleashed. He requested that the city

provide him with a complete definition of the city ordinance relating to animal control.

Next he described an incident concerning a parking violation and stated that he thought the current ordinance was written vaguely. Deputy Moser presented the council with an example of the city of Denver's regulation which the city attorney will look over.

Finally he noted that he had been stopping drivers along U.S. 36 who were speeding through the newly changed section of road. The Kansas Department of Transportation recently extended the part of the Highway that drops from 65 miles per hour to 40 coming into town to the east. The deputy is giving warnings, for the time being, while motorists become aware of the change.

Federal funds could be on way to airport

By Karen Krien

Two members of the Cheyenne County Airport Authority Board along with two airport managers and the county road and bridge supervisor talked to the commissioners about a special offer of funding for airport equipment and apron (parking) pad when the commissioners met on Friday. The commissioners agreed to see about the Federal funding, noting that the commissioners could halt the purchases whenever they wanted to. They also agreed that more than two Airport Authority Board members meet and further discuss the opportunities.

Dave Yost and Rodney Bracelin, Airport Authority Board, Robert Grace and Richard Grace, airport managers, and Dave Flemming, supervisor, made the presentation with Robert Grace as spokesman. In short, Mr. Grace said that an error had been made in money distribution to small airports in Kansas while others in the Central Region were benefiting. Congressman Jerry Moran had gone directly to Federal Aviation Administration and small Kansas airports were then contacted that there was money available. In fact, in the next four years, small airports could receive up to \$500,000.

However, to receive the money, the Federal Aviation Administration officials needed to know the county's answer by Friday. A special meeting was held but, unfortu-

nately, only two Authority members showed up but, because of the need to let the Federal Aviation Administration know that day, those two voted "yes" to apply for the funding if the commissioners agreed. The money which the county could receive this year is around \$170,000 and would cost the county \$8,500. The Airport Authority had that much money in its budget but the money was earmarked for runway repairs.

Mr. Grace said that receiving this amount of money with only a 95/5 match was probably a one-time opportunity for the county's airport. There were three suggested projects: a beacon, a master plan and an expanded runway apron which would be used as a parking area for incoming planes.

The present beacon is around 60 years old and, while it could last for another 10 years, it could go out tomorrow. The present apron is extremely small and if more than one aircraft comes in, they are forced to go out on the sod and, if there is snow, it cannot be bladed off of the sod without tearing up the sod. A master plan, when drawn up, will outline the future for the airport. A master plan is required if the Airport Authority would want to apply for any additional Federal funding. With the \$170,000 funding, the Federal Aviation Administration is willing to have the master plan costs

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THE KANSAS DEPARTMENT of Transportation moved the reduced speed zone farther to the east of town.

Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

Speed limit extended along U.S. 36 to east

Sheriff Eddie Dankenbring reported that the Bird City speed limit on U.S. 36 has been extended.

The speed limit through the city zone is 40 miles per hour and, when coming from the west, begins shortly after the K-161 and U.S. 36 intersection and has ended at about 200 hundred feet from Bird Avenue, the main intersection. Now, the signs have been set

and the 40 mile per hour speed limit extends around the curve and to Road 29 or better known as the Thresher Showground Road.

"We plan to issue tickets to those not obeying the speed limit through Bird City," Jeff Moser, new deputy sheriff, said. "However, until people get used to the change, we will be issuing warnings."



ANDREA CARPENTER AND KYLIE DIXSON loosen up before their dance team performs at the McDonald Gym. Times staff photo by Casey McCormick

Dangers of radon gas in homes

High levels of radon have been found in homes in every Kansas county including Cheyenne County. These finds have raised concerns about the dangers of human exposure to this often undetected hazard.

Stephanie Schafer, Extension office professional, reported that the county Extension office has home test kits available and several have already been picked up. Those having questions about radon should contact the Kansas Radon Hotline at 1-800-693-5343 or the National Radon Hotline at 1-00-SOS-RADON.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas found throughout the United States which seeps up from the earth's crust into the atmosphere and becomes a health hazard when it is concentrated inside an occupied building such as a home, school or

business. It is odorless, tasteless and invisible and can go undetected for years, placing the health of those exposed to it at significant risk for cancer.

"Indoor radon may contribute to as many as 200 lung cancer deaths per year in Kansas and chronic radon exposure is considered the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States," said Secretary of health and Environment Roderick Bremby. "In addition, being exposed to radon can also compound the risk of lung cancer associated with smoking."

Governor Kathleen Sebelius proclaimed January as Kansas Radon Action Month to encourage people to take the steps needed to minimize that risk, including home testing.

The only way to know a home's radon level is to test. A typical radon

home test kit costs about \$5 to \$10 and is simple to use. The kit collects radon gas from within a building and is sent to a lab for analysis. The results are then reported to the purchaser. Companies will also perform radon tests and may use electronic instruments to determine radon levels in buildings.

"Nearly four out of 10 home tests completed in Kansas exceed EPA levels," Mr. Bremby added. "The Kansas Department of Health and Environment recommends that homeowners talk with a certified radon contractor of levels above 4 pCi/l are consistently detected."

The higher the concentration within a home and the more time residents spend there, the greater their health risk.

County

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any decision.

The commissioners had reviewed \$10,790 in contractual obligations (previously referred to as write-offs) but \$322 in the obligations was a bankruptcy amount.

It should be noted that contractual obligations are not necessarily money lost to the county. A bill is sent to Medicare, Medicaid and/or insurance companies. Often Medicare and Medicaid will pay only a portion and the rest is billed to the insurance companies. What the insurance companies do not pay is considered a contractual obligation and the ambulance service is forced to settle for the amount received.

The hospital is also forced to settle for contractual obligations.

Look for more information on contractual obligations in the near future.

Long-time employees compensated

An employee had asked that the commissioners consider an incentive for long-time employees. After discussion, they agreed that employees working 15 years or more, one more personal day; 20 years or more, two more personal days; and 25 years or more, three more personal days. The new ruling will be added to the Employee's Handbook.

The commissioners talked about employees not using county computers for personal use because one of the computers had acquired a virus. After discussion and checking in the handbook, they agreed that the rule is already stated in the handbook. However, the commissioners asked that Terry Miller, county clerk, send memos to all department heads asking that they follow the rules in the handbook and not use the computers for personal use.

Road and bridge report

Dave Flemming, county road and bridge supervisor, presented his monthly budget report and showed the commissioners a map where road work had been done. Dan Stephens asked that 1 mile of road south of St. Francis be officially closed. The supervisor said the road is not maintained nor is it used. The commissioners gave permission for Supervisor Flemming to start the process of contacting landowners so the road can be closed.

The supervisor reported, that in the last six years, it had taken \$65,308 to dig out sand and gravel for county roads. He proposed that the county

purchase an excavator instead of hiring or renting the sand and gravel removed. However, after reviewing the cost of a used excavators from \$79,000 to \$128,000, the commissioners felt the money would be better spent on the purchase of a road grader or other equipment.

In other business

In other business:

- Two Airport Authority members, airport managers and county supervisor talked to the commissioners about Federal money which the airport may be eligible for to make improvements at the airport. (See related articles.)

- The commissioners once again read the bill from Infinitec which is the internet company were the clerk of the court's computer is connected. While reading the letter from the Judicial Administration, the commissioners found that, while the computer is a mandated purchase which they approved to pay, the Judicial Department was required to take care of the upkeep and maintenance. The commissioners agreed that the Judicial Department's responsibility includes paying the internet company costs.

- Kevin Berens, county attorney, reported that the commissioners were to pay the autopsy costs questioned at the last meeting. He said the law states that the county where the death took place pays for the autopsy expenses. The warrant for \$396 was approved.

- Clerk Miller had called the Northwest Kansas Local Environmental Protection Group personnel and, after talking to several individuals, he was told that the service would bill the county when a well or water check was made and the county would bill the individual. Commissioner Brubaker said the commissioners from Rawlins County were contesting the Local Environmental Protection Group because they feel that there should be no charge for services made in counties - that the program is Federally funded.

- Commissioner Brubaker said Rawlins County Commissioners had found out that each county is paying the Kansas Bureau of Investigation \$200 a month for a service which they are required to cover even if the \$200 fee is not paid. Commissioner Ron Krien reported at the last meeting that he had heard something similar.

- County attorney Kevin Berens was asked to find out more information about Harvest Energy, a com-

pany which owes back taxes to the county. The commissioners want to start foreclosure procedures if possible.

- Mary Morrow was given permission to have some Register of Deeds volumes rebound for a cost of \$750 plus shipping and handling. She also noted that she will be putting up a shade in the vault to protect the volumes from the sun.

- The commissioners agreed to pay the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development dues of \$1,797.50. They also approved for the following people to attend workshops, classes and certifications: Dolores Jenik to attend a treasurer meeting and certification class; Carol Gamblin attend a Criminal Justice Information System class; Dan Schittenhardt, the annual county weed directors meeting where he will be certified in the control of prairie dogs.

- The commissioners signed employee wage agreements giving each employee a cost-of-living raise of \$25 per month plus employees were given merit pay raises ranging from \$0 to \$25 depending on their evaluation made by the department head.

- Mr. Schlittenhardt asked about purchasing a product to control prairie dogs from a company outside the county. In the past, the product has been purchased from the St. Francis Equity and it was cheaper from the other company. The commissioners said that there wasn't enough difference in the price and that the money needed to be spent in the county whenever possible.

- Kurt Bucholtz, Lampe Hardware, talked to the commissioners about where emergency lighting would be placed in the courthouse. The emergency lighting is a fire marshal requirement.

- The sheriff's vouchers were reviewed and the sheriff agreed that he wouldn't charge for any gas or mileage used when he picked up a person at Larned as he was already at another meeting. The undersheriff said that he would take care of the cell phone bill of \$635 before the next meeting.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the commissioners has been set for 8 a.m. on Feb. 13. The meeting would have ordinarily met on Feb. 16 because the 15th falls on Sunday. However, Feb. 16 is Presidents' Day and the courthouse is closed.

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Airport

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taken out of the suggested funding. Mr. Grace said that master plans are expensive, often costing from \$40,000 to \$60,000 which makes it almost prohibitive for any small airport to have the plan.

The Authority estimated that the beacon will cost \$25,000, the master plan, \$45,000 and the apron, \$105,000. Other projects which the money could be used for included purchasing and installing runway lights. The present lights are around 20 years old and the new lights better direct the pilot on to the runway.

State funding

Mike Armour with the Kansas director of Aviation is also suggesting the Airport Authority apply for funds which could require 90/10 matching funds. These funds would be used to purchase a weather reporting system. State funds helped pave the airport runway several years ago.

The approved weather reporting equipment would allow air taxi and hospital flights to better utilize the instrument approach.

All of the surrounding airports including Burlington, Colby and Goodland have installed this equipment and Atwood is in the process of installing it.

The cost of the equipment is \$76,000 and the county could pay around \$7,600 (which some of that cost could be cut by using the county crew to do some of the ground work).

Commissioner will call

Jane Brubaker, commissioner, said she would personally call each Airport Authority member, urging them to come to the next meeting which the Authority will set in the near future. At the meeting, the grants will be further discussed and voted on. She also encouraged each of the commissioners to be at the meeting.