

Wastewater lagoon nears completion

By Linda Schneider
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For the last council meeting of the year, the members discussed such topics as the wastewater lagoon, Bird City public pool (see related story) and bids on the Emergency Medical Service building/training room.

Mayor Troy Burr read a thank you letter from Chuck and Diane Kribb, Cheyenne County Development Corporation, for the council's financial support.

Wastewater lagoon

Chris Miller, Miller and Associates, updated the council on the progress of the wastewater lagoon.

"Are we close to completion?" asked Mayor Burr.

Mr. Miller said it is very close to being completed with basically just clean up to be done. He added that the old lift station had been torn down and the rubble needs to be removed. For the reasons mentioned, he is not asking for a pay request this month.

He told the members that the operating manual for the lagoon had been approved by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, as well as naming all the parts that were purchased for the project. There will be two copies, one to be left at the city hall and one at the site.

Mr. Miller said the well that had been dug to fill the lagoon, will be capped off; it is in the contract. All work will be completed by the first of the year.

Mr. Miller mentioned to the council that there was still \$60,000 to \$71,000 that could be used for purchasing equipment to maintain the station.

Councilman Loren White reported that he had received two bids on a tractor, loader and a mower. Motion carried to purchase the John Deere 75-horse tractor and loader from Goodland Greenline, Wheeler, for \$40,650. In addition, motion carried to purchase the Land Pride mower from Yost Farm Supply, St. Francis, for \$9,190. The equipment will be used to maintain the lagoon and surrounding area. He will get back on the stand-by generator that will be needed in case of an electrical outage.

Emergency building bids

Mort Plunkett, architect, brought three bids from contractors on building the Emergency Medical Service building/training room. The first bid came from McGilvray Farms for \$42,662 with the construction to start Dec. 10 and finish April 15. The second bid came from Shrader Construction out of Oberlin, for \$82,960 with construction to begin Jan. 21, and finish March 21. The third bid was submitted by Shamber Historical Preservation for \$63,432 with construction to begin Dec. 15 and finish April 1.

Mr. Plunkett explained to the council members that they had 30 days to accept the lowest bid or reject all of the bids and if the lowest bid was not accepted, there needs to be a reason and the city attorney needs to be present. He asked how much money was available for the building.

Mayor Burr said the city had budgeted \$60,000 from various grants and sources, such as the fire department and city funds, with \$10,000 going to a stand-by generator for the building.

The discussion that followed was about references from the contractors, would they be made available upon request? Mr. Plunkett said that he would call and get references for the members to look over.

Personnel items

The council re-addressed personal time off for city employees. At the last meeting, councilman Ray Magnani brought for consideration adding personal

leave in addition to vacation and sick leave.

Extensive discussion began concerning issues of accumulative personal time, how other agencies handle their employee personal time and how would it count against the clock.

"I personally believe we should watch how employees accumulate personal leave," said councilman Wade Carmichael.

Councilman White asked if employees could accumulate more than one day a year. Councilwoman Smith added that in the past, accumulated time had been abused and it had to be put into check. She made a motion to table the issue until the January meeting and research the employee policy. She said, "There had to be a reason for this to come up." Councilman Carmichael said that it was a matter of ethics.

"An employee did not want to take a sick day leave when this employee just wanted to do was get tags for the car," said Councilman Carmichael.

Tabetha Ketzner, city clerk, added that city employees are scrutinized more than employees of companies that do not use city funds when Councilman Frank Serrano suggested just taking the day off. No action taken.

The council approved for city employees to follow federal holidays for 2009.

Executive session was called for 10 minutes. Meeting resumed with no decisions made.

The council approved cost-of-living alliance raises of 2 percent for city employees, effective January. Mayor Burr added the reason for this is that recent raises had been given to Mrs. Ketzner, Craig White and Brad Schneider, city maintenance. Also approved were Christmas bonuses for Mr. White, \$200, Mr. Schneider, \$100, Mrs. Ketzner, \$100 and Phyllis Carson, \$100.

Mrs. Ketzner requested and received approval for some time off to visit with family during the week of Dec. 22 through Dec. 24. It is uncertain if the office will be open all day during this time.

Lebow Manor

Councilwoman Smith, representing Housing Authority, asked if sprinkler water bill payments could be suspended at this time due to a \$472 credit with the city.

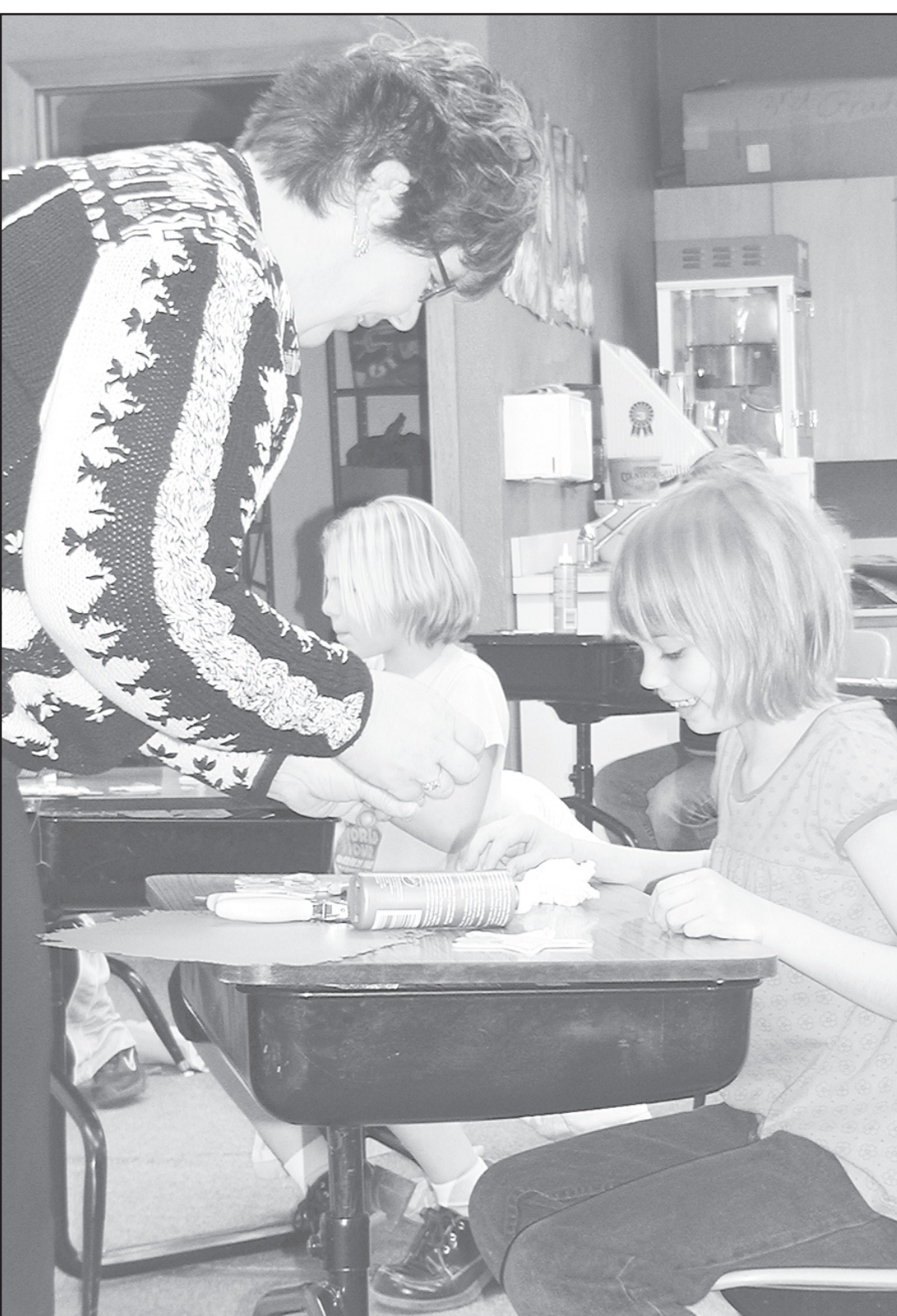
"We are ahead at this time and would like to resume in March or April, or until the \$472 is gone," said Councilwoman Smith.

She mentioned that during the winter months, the sprinklers will not be used and there is no reason to be paying the set amount of \$250 per month. In addition, asking that future payments stopped when they are not being used December through March. It was mentioned to pay as the water is being used at the Manor instead of the set amount of \$250. Mayor Burr told her that the city should not be keeping money that belongs to the Housing Authority. Councilwoman Smith will take the suggestion of paying for water as needed to the Authority and get back to the City Council.

Miscellaneous items

Other items on the agenda the council addressed:

- Approval of license renewal for cereal malt beverage for Home-town Market.
 - The Cheyenne County Sheriff Department annual contract renewed with increase from \$30,000 to \$31,500.
 - Approval of a purchasing and bidding policy effective Jan. 1.
- Next meeting is Jan. 5



MAKING ORNAMENTS TOGETHER. Anita Pochop, teacher aide, and Ken Hankins third grade class are, making the ornaments for the Senior Citizens' Christmas Dinner that will be held on Wednesday. Pictured with Mrs. Pochop are (L) Tasha Ritchey and Dominique Johnston.

Times staff photo by Linda Schnieder

Recreation Commission asks City to take over public pool

By Linda Schneider
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During the December Bird City Council meeting, Laurie Leonard, representing the Recreation Commission, said the Commission would not be renewing the public pool lease.

Mayor Toy Burr asked if the Commission had compiled an operating budget for the pool. Mrs. Leonard submitted a total expenditure over 5 years of \$22,500 per year. With admissions taken in at an average of \$5,145. Average cost per year was over \$17,000.

"Why don't you want to continue," asked Mayor Burr.

Mrs. Leonard mentioned that there were several reasons, the most important being that the members of the Commission were not knowledgeable concerning the needs of the pool. She said many times she, or one of the members, would get a phone call about a mechanical problem and would not have any idea on how to address the issue.

She said that after talking to Brad Schneider, city maintenance, that he knew how to maintain the chemicals and repairs, and had a lot of expertise on how the pool should be maintained. With that in mind,

she said that it makes more sense for the city to take it over.

Mrs. Leonard added that both Bird City and the Recreation Commission are carrying insurance policies on the pool according to the agreement. In addition, the Commission is paying on the average \$400 to \$500 yearly for lawn care, which could be incorporated with park city maintenance and be more efficient.

"Where are the additional \$17,000 funds coming from?" asked Councilman White.

Mrs. Leonard said they come from a mill levy from the schools. Furthermore, she continued by saying that for the next year, the Commission would turn over 67 percent, which is the 5-year average operating cost, to Bird City for operating the pool.

Amy Hendricks, Recreation Commission member, added that the pool takes up a lot of the Commission's time and if they did not have the pool, it would leave more opportunities for other sport benefits. The consensus among the Recreation Commission members was that the city could run the pool more efficiently.

"What about the swim team?" asked Councilwoman Deb

Smith.

Mrs. Leonard said the Commission would hire the coach to manage the swim team. She said, "We want to take a proactive approach to managing the pool."

Councilman Wade Carmichael told the Commission the council was aware of the fact, "The public pool had been run into the ground and has been addressing the issues slowly over the last several meetings. And there has always been a grey area about who pays for repairs."

As the Commission members left, Councilwoman Smith thanked them for their hard work and dedication to the pool for the last 10 years. Mrs. Leonard told the council if there was any more information needed, she would be made available to them. Mrs. Leonard also mentioned that Ann Burr had done a great job and had to learn it all on her own.

Mayor Burr concluded the discussion by saying that there were still a lot of questions to be answered before deciding on this issue. Councilwoman Smith added that more research needs to be done and Kari Gilliland, city attorney, needs to be contacted. No action was taken.

Learn about grants

The Kansas Department of Commerce will host seven informational sessions throughout western Kansas to provide agriculture-based entrepreneurs an overview of assistance offered through the Department's Rural Development Division and its statewide partners.

The sessions will summarize the various forms of financial and technical aid such as universities, conservation offices, extensions and local governments. Attendees will learn about grants, loans and educational opportunities, as well as value-added topics such as niche marketing, specialty livestock production and agritourism. Commerce programs to be discussed include:

- Simply Kansas Trademark Program
- Agritourism Attraction Development Loan Program
- Diversified Farm and Specialty Production Loan Program
- Agriculture Value Added Loan Program and more

The sessions are free and open to the public. Snacks and beverages will be served at most sessions.

"It's crucial that Kansas farmers, ranchers and other value-added producers find new ways to process and market their products," said Carole Jordan, Rural Development Division director. "That's what value-added agriculture is all about."

The sessions mark the second wave of meetings Commerce has sponsored this year. Sessions were also held this spring in various eastern Kansas communities.

For more information, contact Becki Rhoades with the Rural Development Division at (785) 296-1847 or brhoades@kansasccommerce.com.

The schedule for some of the sessions follows:

Thursday, Dec. 11, Hays, Fort Hays State University, Robbins Center, Dreiling Board Room, 600 Park St., 10 a.m.

Thursday, Dec. 11, Oberlin, Gateway Civic Center, No. 1 Morgan Drive, 2 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 12, Goodland, 4-H Building, 301 N. Main, 9 a.m.

Meeting planned Dec. 11

A Farm Bill Informational meeting is planned for 9 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 11, at the building at the Cheyenne County Fairgrounds.

"This is an opportunity for local farmers and ranchers to learn more about new programs in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill)," said Angie Berens, county executive director of the county's Farm Service Agency. "Come and plan to spend the morning with us."

The Farm Bill contains new legislation for commodity, livestock, price support, conservation, and disaster programs. In addition, there are new eligibility criteria that will affect all producers.

People with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this meeting should contact Mrs. Berens at (785) 332-2183 or e-mail angie.berens@ks.usda.gov by Dec. 10.

Weather

By Troy Burr

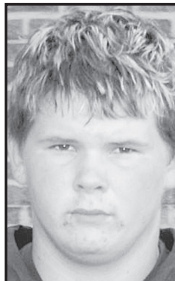
For the month of November, the minimum temperature was 15 degrees on Nov. 21, and maximum temperature was 78 degrees on Nov. 18.

Total precipitation for the month was 0.57-inch with maximum in a 24-hour period 0.48 inch on Nov. 11, and maximum snowfall in a 24-hour period 3 inches on Nov. 11.

Maximum wind gust was 57-miles per hour on Nov. 6, minimum wind chill factor 2 degrees on Nov. 21, and maximum heat index was 76 degrees on Nov. 18.



Cahoj



Hewitt



Hengen



White



Sager

Cheylin athletes receive honors

Cheylin Head Coaches, Max Keltz (football) and Kendal Cahoj (volleyball), traveled to Oakley on Monday, to meet with other league coaches to vote on the Western Kansas Liberty League honors for both

football and volleyball.

The Cheylin Cougars who received honors were: Jacob White (senior) who was named first team return specialist, Jayden Cahoj (senior) was named second team defen-

sive line, Max Hengen (junior) was named honorable mention center, Jay Hewitt (senior) was named honorable mention kicker/punter, and Tia Sager (senior) was named All -League Volleyball.