

Town meetings to discuss community strategic plan

The Bird City community held a set of town hall meetings to update its community strategic plan that was established in 2006. The 2011 meetings were organized by Troy Burr, mayor of Bird City, Hal Antholz, president of the Cheylin Board of Education, Cathy Domsch, executive director of Bird City Century II Development Foundation, and James Foster, Kansas Department of Commerce Office of Rural Opportunity facilitated.

At the March 15, meeting the community was presented a slide show of successes the past five years, narrated by Mayor Burr. Some of the successes include renovation of VanDoren Park, 5th Street Apartments owned and managed by Northwest Kansas Housing Inc., approval of a Kansas Department of Commerce Community Development Block Grant to demolish or rehabilitate homes, establishment of a preschool program in Cheylin Schools, and the opening of Bird City Dairy, Monty's Smoked Jerky, 2nd Beginnings Thrift Store and Bird City Diner. During this time Bird City has also become a Network Kansas E-Community and has become home to the Fort Hays State University Kansas Small Business Development Center Outreach Office. Beautification projects include a new sign, flagpoles and landscaping at the Bird City entrance and demolition of the old lumber yard.

Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University, presented the community with a First Impressions of Bird City "Revisited" slide show. He conducted a First Impressions visit five years ago, and another this winter to give a comparison report. The First Impressions program is designed to bring outside community leaders to a community they are not familiar with to experience their "First Impression" of that community.

The on-line First Impression of the Bird City community received very positive comments. The website (www.birdcity.com) is attractive, helpful, and easy to navigate. The website was "pretty much" all-inclusive of the community and information was mostly current. A



TOWN HALL MEETING — Hal Antholz and Jan Busse help lead the discussion in the Social Environment group which covered topics such as Education and Health Care.

Times photo by Darci Shields

closer look at those items will be taken and changes and enhancements made to make it even better!

Overall, signage has improved along the highway compared to the previous First Impressions visit, and the appearance of Bird City is positive at first reaction with neat and clean entrances. There are areas of poorly maintained buildings, as in every community, however, the overall report was very positive! Great job, Bird City!

To end the first evening, the participants divided into three groups according to their interests in the community. The groups consist of Physical Environment (streets, sidewalks, water system, public buildings, housing), Social Environment (education, emergency medical service/police services, health care, recreation), and Economic Environment (business finance, industrial buildings, retail/commercial opportunities, lodging opportunities).

March 22 meeting

On March 22, the second town hall meeting, participants formed into their groups to establish and prioritize goals in the "Environments." The top six goals of the Physical Environment included: 1) Replacement of City Water System, 2) Street Repair/Sidewalk Replacement, 3) Senior Housing, 4) Recycling Education and Increased Availability, 5) Safety Issue at U.S. 36 and Bird Avenue, and 6) Community Center.

The top five goals of the Social Environment included: 1) Financial Sustainability of Cheylin Schools, 2) Community Wellness Center, 3) Senior Center Facility, 4) Historic Preservation, and 5) Increase Availability of health care services.

The top six goals of the Economic Environment included: 1) Increase Availability of Blue Collar Service Industries, 2) Increase Availability of Financing for Start-Up Businesses and Business Expansion, 3) Increase Quality of Economic Development Program for Bird City, 4) Increase Retail and Commercial Business Opportunities, 5) Increase Availability of Hotel/Lodging, and 6) Suitability of Industrial Buildings.

During the first meeting of each individual group, participants identified Projected Outcomes and Strategy/Tasks for each goal. The groups will continue to meet until each identified goal has a complete list of Projected Outcomes, Strategies, and a Timeline. It is presumed that if all the Projected Outcomes are accomplished for a goal, then the goal will be achieved.

Those who would like to participate in one of the individual groups should contact the Bird City Century II Development Foundation office at 785-734-2556 for meeting notifications.



THREE STUDENTS, Ty Carmichael, Mary Anne Orten and Wil Orten won at the Cheylin Entrepreneurship Fair. They traveled to Atwood where Wil (pictured) took third place at the Regional E-Fair, winning \$250. He was also the \$150 winner of the Social Entrepreneurship award. The name of his booth was Wilhelm's Custom Reload.

Times photo by Darci Shields

Special meeting called to enforce county burn ban

By Karen Krien

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The emergency manager called a special meeting on Monday afternoon to put in place a burn ban for Cheyenne County. The ban will take effect after it is printed in *The Saint Francis Herald* and *Bird City Times* on Thursday.

Loren White, Bird City fire chief; Dale Patton, commissioner; Terry Miller, county clerk; and Cody Beeson, sheriff's deputy, met in the office of Ryan Murray, emergency manager.

As of Monday, the conditions were dry to moderately dry. The wind had blown all of Sunday with gusts reaching 35 miles per hour. The Sherman County Commissioners had put on a burn ban in Sherman County at their last meeting.

A controlled burn on March 17 had gotten out of control and burned over 2,000 acres of grassland southwest of St. Francis. It is a time when farmers are burning the Conservation Reserve Program land. However, it is also a time when commissioners and fire chiefs are concerned about these fires getting out of control.

While all the commissioners were not present, both Ernie Ketzner and Andy Beikman had voted by phone to pass the burn ban. Mr. Patton signed the resolution.

At the Cheyenne County Commissioner meeting on Thursday, they had talked about a burn ban but had decided to table the matter to see what the weather would bring.

Mr. Murray had also been at the meeting. He said he was not in favor of having the commissioners sign a resolution for a burn ban at that time because there was still a chance of rain and having a burn ban in place meant that no one could burn — not even a to light a barbecue grill.

They had discussed Conservation Reserve Program burning and noted that, if there is no wind, it

can generally be controlled. However, during the last fire, the National Weather Service issued a red flag warning that afternoon after the fire had been started. A red flag warning is where the humidity drops and the conditions are not favorable for burning.

Mr. Murray thought that, if the county's policy were to read that if there is a red flag warning, burning will not be allowed. Dispatchers could then make the determination as to whether there could or could not be a controlled burn.

It was also suggested that, when a controlled burn is called in, the burn should be reported by radio to

the firemen. Kari Gilliland, county attorney, will revise the policy and present it at the next commissioners' meeting.

Burn ban restrictions

Bans on open burning include the banning of any outdoor fire including trash, fields, pasture, fence rows, grassland or ditches, campfires, warning fires and charcoal grill fires. The resolution does not apply to those living within the city limits.

Anyone found guilty of burning when the ban is in place can be fined up to \$500 and/or confined to the county jail for up to one month.

Echoes Across the Plains

By Dorothy L. Mast

The Bird City area was once considered a part of the great American desert, where only the Indians could survive. In 1873, the Legislature created counties out of the western half of the state of Kansas. About the same time, an enterprising young man from the Denver area started on a journey by horseback across this so-called desert and continued across the western part of Cheyenne County. There were very few trees, but to his astonishment, the plains were alive with prairie grasses.

As he crossed the Republican River, he envisioned the possibility of a great cattle ranch. A few years later, with the interest and support of his family, this became a reality, with the headquarters on the north-west side of the Republican River.

In the 1880s, it is not known exactly how two wealthy merchants (Mottle and Wheeler) from St. Joseph, Mo., became aware of the

richness of these prairie grasses. However, they soon formed the Northwest Cattle Co., and sent Benjamin Bird (who lived with his family at that time in St. Joseph) as manager, to Cheyenne County, who established ranching headquarters on the northeast side of the Republican River.

By 1882, Benjamin Bird soon had cattle grazing from the upper Republican River to the Smoky Hill River. This was a productive enterprise, even with the encroachment of the homesteaders, until the blizzard of 1886. Benjamin Bird and his cowhands were completely unprepared for a blizzard on the plains with the driving winds and freezing temperatures. The loss of men and cattle devastated the enterprise, and eventually bankrupted the Northwest Cattle Company.

Sources - *The Benkelman Post, Early Courthouse Records, Early Newspapers and the Bird Family Records.*

Club Clip

Red Hat Mamas

Ten Red Hat Mamas from Bird City and McDonald departed west-bound with Cheyenne Manor, St. Francis being their destination. The Classy Classics of St. Francis greeted the travelers with an elaborately decorated room with an enticing potluck.

This being St. Patrick's Day, all the details including the food carried out the theme of the day. Classy

Classics Queen, Raedell Winston, welcomed the group with several bits of wisdom and stories of good nature. The doxology was led by Laura Pugh and the candlelit meal followed.

Concluding the eventful gathering, renowned cowgirl poet, Helene Landenberger delivered her trademark "Oh, The Wild Rose" poem as well as an assemblage for the day's

event and four other poems. Next Laura Pugh entertained with an illustrated story, "The Relationship of the Man and His Cowboy Hat."

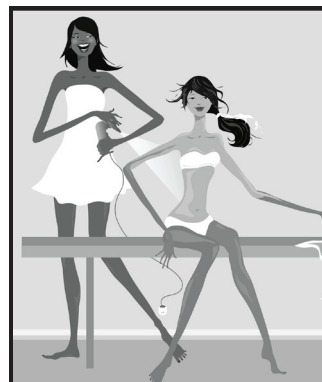
Classy Classics attending were: Rose Mary Bierig, Neva DeGood, Barbara Ewing, Phyllis Hemsler, Helene Landenberger, Kathy McBride, Nancy McCumber, Laura Pugh, Joyce Russ, Arlene Walz, Sally Wiecek, Dolores Wiley, Betty Jean Winston, Raedell Winston and Donna Zimbelman.

Red Hat Mamas attending were: Ana Antholz, Linda Carroll, Bev Higgins, Iris McIntosh, Carol Mears, Edna Roensner, Margaret Voorhies, LaVina Waters, Phyllis Wingfield and Marlene Young.



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