

## City workers busy replacing thin pipes

By Norma Martinez  
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The typical summer has begun for city maintenance employees Brad Schneider, Russell Jackson and the summer helper Robert Glass. They have been busy replacing the original thin wall three-quarter-inch blue pipes with thick-wall pipes in water lines as breaks appear. The most recent one was spotted in front of the senior center on Friday, June 1.

Mr. Schneider normally calls Roy Shrader to assist the maintenance workers in using his backhoe to dig the hole and to help make these repairs. But this time Mr. Shrader was not available so on June 6, Schneider contacted Mike Pochop from Atwood to help city workers with the leak.

Once the hole was opened in front of the Senior Center, workers found that the one-inch thin-wall polyester pipe they had replaced in September 2010 had burst.

On Saturday morning, after replacing the pipe again, workers found a second leak. This line supplies water from the main line in front of the center across the street to Don and Darlene Holliman's home.

Monday morning workers replaced the original three-quarter inch blue line thin-walled pipe with two inch thick-walled polyester pipe and installed a new meter barrel outside the building.

On Tuesday morning City employees and Mike Pochop opened a second hole in front of Don and Darlene Holliman's home next to the Post office. Workers bore through the line from the main line to Holliman's residence to open up the line. The line was then replaced with one-inch thick-wall polyester pipe.

By Wednesday afternoon both holes were finally filled and the water truck was parked in front of the center, slowly running water on the dirt for packing the mud down in the holes. Once the dirt is packed, city workers will resurface the spots with asphalt.

### Resident complaints

After city employees relocated the Holliman's meter from inside their home to outside, the residents discovered the problem of a flooded basement and all of their water lines being clogged by mud. As a result the lines within their home had to be "blown out and sanitized."

The intersection on Bressler and First streets was very congested from the piles of dirt from the two holes, Pochop's back-hoe and the city's skid steer parked on the cor-

ner. All this caused difficulty for those driving to and from businesses on Bressler Ave.

Sonia Weeden, Bird City postmaster, reported she did not hear any complaints about people having problems with picking up their mail. Her only comment was, "I am glad they are done".

It did cause a great deal of inconvenience for the seniors going into the center as there was a lack of parking spaces during the birthday get together on Monday.

A lot of the residents have expressed concern with the amount of water waste from line breaks and the amount of time it takes before anything is done to repair them. A few residents also said they felt misled by what they were told during a public meeting held by the city at the Legion Hall last year. At that time, the mayor and council members explained that a raise in water rates was inevitable. They suggested the increase may be approximately 40 percent, a difference of \$10 to \$15 per bill. Instead, council members increased the base water rate by 85 percent and the sewer charge by 40 percent in October 2011, causing the minimum bill for each household to increase by at least \$25.

### City members comments

"The people need to realize what we city workers have to put up with. We are short-handed and with just Russell Jackson, me (Brad) and Robert Glass, temporary summer employee, it's not an easy job to do," said Mr. Schneider.

"Before we can even get to the leak we have to knock out the concrete in the gutter area, remove the asphalt; dig an 8-foot deep hole, and then work in mud that is knee deep.

"We are sorry for all the inconvenience caused to the residents by having to turn their water off and tearing up and tying up the streets." With what we have to work with, we are doing the best we can."

Phyllis Carson, city treasurer, explained to council members that as breaks occur, the extra cost of having to hire outside help to bring in a backhoe and assist city employees, is depleting available city funds.

Within the last year and a half, the City has paid approximately \$11,000 to outside contractors for digging and water line repairs alone, not including charges for the most recent leak.

Councilman Hal Sager, Streets Committee, defended the leak response time as routine. "Before



WATER breaks in front of the senior center last week inconvenienced Bird City residents and businesses.

Times staff photos by Norma Martinez

we can ever start to dig we have to contact the Kansas One-Call to make sure we are not going to be hitting any underground lines, such as gas or telephone wires."

As to the concerns expressed by Mr. Holliman, Sager said the problem arose from moving the water meter from inside their house prior to replacing the full line.

### Solution

The city of Bird City has been actively seeking solutions to the aging water line problem. A grant application was recently submitted to Kansas Public Water Supply Loan Fund. (KPWSLF) for the amount of \$620,000.

The city's main focus is to resolve the problem of high water loss from the distribution system. Employees have been unable to locate all the mainline valves and those that have been found are not functional. This makes it impossible for the city to isolate sections of the distribution system for leak detection, and to avoid interrupting water service to the entire town when a leak occurs and is repaired.

The funds requested will allow the city to complete Phase I of the proposed water project which will include: Installation of valves within the distribution system at certain locations, the



ONCE THE HOLES were filled, the water truck was parked with water slowly running to pack the dirt down before blacktopping the area.

replacement of subsequent distribution lines, complete recommended repairs to the water tower to bring it into compliance and for interior and exterior painting, and replacement/upgrade of water meters. The city is hoping that water main-lines can then be prioritized and completed in additional project phases.

Excessive power consumption

has been observed at the city's water wells and grant funds will also be used to install variable frequency drives on each motor in hopes of reducing the increased power consumption. The variable frequency drives will allow the motors to operate at different speeds, subsequently saving money on electrical consumption costs. The electricity cost of run-

ning Well 6 increased by approximately \$6,000 in 2011.

City council members and employees are hoping the grant application will be approved so that work can begin to make proper replacements to the water lines. In the mean time they are asking that city residents please be patient with them and realize they are working to resolve the problem.



DISHMAN Harvesting was in the fields on Road 33, last Wednesday. They have been coming from Wichita Falls, Texas to Bird City for 40 years.

Times staff photo by Norma Martinez

## County wheat harvest is in full swing

By Tim Burr  
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The wheat harvest in Cheyenne County has been progressing since the first load was delivered on June 9. Rain, which fell Friday evening, stopped the combines for about a day, but by Sunday afternoon machines and trucks were running, and wheat was again being delivered to grain facilities across the county. The annual lineup of trucks waiting to get on the scale and dump their loads at the grain elevators indicated that harvest was in full swing.

Producers who have been contact-

ed have stated that the quality of the crop has remained quite good, even after the rain. Test weights are consistently averaging over 60 pounds, and moistures are good. Protein levels are yet to be determined.

Those producers who have talked about yields say they have been pleased. There had been some concern that the dry spring would effect yield, but reports are that yields have been good. Grain prices, which can vary greatly within a few days, or even within the same daily market, seem to have been somewhat stable for the past couple of weeks.

Weather forecasts for the remainder of the week indicate very warm and dry conditions, which will be ideal for the crews to get the harvest out of the fields. Hot and dry weather, abundant stubble, and a lot of vehicles and equipment in the fields also set up conditions favorable for field fires.

There have been a number of fires reported in the area over the last few days. Rural fire crews from Bird City and St. Francis worked a fire just northwest of St. Francis on Monday afternoon, after the St. Francis crew had been called back

from assisting Yuma county on a fire near the Three Corners area of extreme North-west Cheyenne county earlier that morning. The fire was in a field that was partially harvested, and the fire crews were able to contain the fire to that field. There were no reports of damage to equipment or vehicles as a result of the fire.

At the pace harvest can progress with large and efficient equipment and crews, and if the weather holds, by the end of the week a large portion of the 2012 wheat harvest is expected to be completed.

## Hearing held for final review of community block grant is received

By Norma Martinez  
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The Monday, June 4, Bird City, City Council meeting began with a public hearing for a final review of the Community Development Block Grant received by the city in 2009.

Mayor Troy Burr opened the floor to public questions or comments. Ralph Chumley, Bird City resident and grant recipient, said he is well-pleased with the rehabilitation of his home. He said the contractor, Randall Construction, did a great job.

Council members approved an application submitted by Shad and Penny Sheldon of Goodland, for the Housing Development Program. Mr. and Mrs. Sheldon presented their plan of developing two duplexes (four living units) on the empty lot directly in back of the thrift store on Third and Demick streets. Mr. Sheldon explained that building homes for seniors will enable citizens of Bird City and Cheyenne County to not leave the county for

senior housing in search of affordable housing. Also, the county and city of Bird City will benefit from their tax dollars and that they will do business locally.

These apartment units will have hardwood floors, ceramic tile, all on one level, garages large enough for a car and room enough to maintain a freezer. They will also provide handrails and 3-foot doors in the bathrooms to accommodate wheelchairs. Each unit will have two bedrooms, and total living space of around 1,350 square feet. All appliances will be included. The owners will provide upkeep on all appliances, mowing and snow removal, and the apartments. Walls will be well insulated. The Sheldon's expressed interest in providing a community garden, gazebo and barbecue grill.

Rent for each unit will be \$800-\$900 plus utilities.

The Sheldons are hoping construction can begin in July 2012.