



FRIDAY'S BURST OF SUNSHINE brought Rob Jensen his neighbor, Ray Martinez to hold off his manpower with out to take some alfalfa to his cattle and he stopped to tell shoveling until he could return with his tractor.

Block grant funding denied for water lines

By Norma Martinez
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During the last Bird City Council meeting, DeAnza Ambrosier, clerk, issued council members a copy of an e-mail from Corina Cox on the Community Development Block Grant funding denial.

David Blau, Miller and Associates, was present to discuss options regarding the city's water line project. He explained that out of the 20 applications there were only enough funds for 12 grants to be awarded at this time. These cities were requesting grants needed due to water contamination issues.

Bird City was next in line as to rating, and a request for additional funds from the federal government has been made.

"We should know as soon as the federal budget is passed," he said, "and that will probably be sometime in April." He said the city can wait to see on these funds becoming available, or move ahead with other options.

In discussing these options Mr. Blau informed council members that, if they should proceed to move ahead and the scope of their original plans are changed in any way the city would no longer be eligible for the 2013 grant funding.

If we were to continue to advance without this grant, Mayor Troy Burr asked, how would that change our costs? Without the grant the cost of the meters would change to approximately \$8 - \$9 per water meter, Mr. Blau said.

Mayor Burr asked what he thought would be the most urgent part of the water project if they were to scale back? Mr. Blau said

he thought the most important part would be the installation of valves. "Once these valves are installed," Mr. Blau said, "we can do some pressure testing to help with identifying service leaks and areas in need of replacement." His estimation of this project would be \$75,000.

Councilman Carmichael's question was: If the city could fund the valve project with a matching grant from Century II Foundation?

"I am thinking," Mayor Burr said, "if we do part of the project on our own, it would lower the cost of the project." He also said this would give the city a better standing in applying for a 2014 grant.

Carmichael said he would check with Century II on the possibility of a matching grant, and Mr. Blau said he would put some specifications together to present to Century II with a more accurate cost of installing these new water valves.

Councilman Frank Serrano asked if they could work on changing the water main valves one at a time, as funds become available?

"We are not even sure that the installation of new valves will even work to identify the issue of where the water loss is," Councilman Sager said, "and by installing them all at once we can establish an isolation system."

Mayor Burr thought it would be more expensive to change the system one valve at a time rather than to do it all at once. By having this portion of the project complete, he said, this would help them in applying for future grants.

Papers may be late

Because of changes in the Postal Service system, some copies of today's paper may be delivered one to three days later than you're used to, especially those outside of St. Francis and Bird City.

Because the service planned to close the Colby mail-sorting "plant" Tuesday, mail from the 677 Zip code is being trucked to North Platte, Neb., and either sent on its way or sent back a day or two later.

We are working with postal officials to minimize the impact of

this change, said Publisher Karen Krien, but the bottom line is some papers may reach readers later than normal.

If your delivery changes, please let us know when you were getting the paper and when it came this week. Where possible, we'll make adjustments.

Contact *The St. Francis Herald* at (785) 332-3162 or email karen.k@nwkansas.com, or Circulation Manager Sheila Smith at (785) 899-2338 or s.smith@nwkansas.com.

Snow storm brings needed moisture

By Norma Martinez
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Last week's storm brought rejoicing for the much needed moisture, but it wasn't anywhere near as much as the eastern parts of Kansas. They are still getting heavily hit, and still canceling school and events. In spite of the wind that came with the first good snow the snow has remained on the fields instead of ending up where it wasn't needed. The temperatures during the day are allowing it to absorb into the fields where it is much needed.

Bird City did not get the predicted foot of snow, but they did get enough to stop the rural mail delivery on Thursday, cancel Fridays events and allow Cheylin students a couple of snow days. Most people were happy for a chance to stay at home and out of the wind and cold.

On Friday Rob Jensen stopped when he saw his neighbor hand digging the snow. Unless you enjoy doing all that digging, he said, if I can get it to start, I will be back with my tractor to dig you out.

The blowing snow was bad enough on Thursday that Jensen didn't even try to weather the storm to feed his cattle. After the snow stopped falling the wind had died down and the sun was out raising the temperature to 20 degrees, Mr.

Jensen was turning his work into play with his truck he purchased in December with a bale loader on it. He was having fun loading three-quarter ton loads of alfalfa to spread out on the snow as feed for his cattle.

If the roads were clear enough for them to get through the next day, he had a grinder coming to grind his bales of milo to mix with corn silage.

This, he said, should keep the cattle happy until they can get back to the corn. The grinder did not show up until 10 that evening. They were working away in the night until a bearing went out on the machine and almost caused a fire, causing them to stop short of a few bales.

Then the truck got stuck and they ended up pushing it to get it back up the hill to head home.

It was all worth it to Rob Jensen to know his cows were happy and did not have to dig for their feed. Since the second predicted blizzard did not hit and was only a light snow, he is ready for feeding the cattle if we get additional moisture before spring hits.

As for his neighbors, the Martinez's, they were happy to have a good neighbor that took time to set them free from being homebound and they could enjoy all the beauty of the snow and snowdrifts.



FRIDAYS SNOW was not as deep as predicted, but drifted enough to close off the chicken coop.

Times staff photos by Norma Martinez

Gas leak in alley causes emergency hospital evacuation

By Karen Krien

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On Tuesday at 11:52, 911 dispatch alerted firemen that there was a gas leak near the hospital and patients were being evacuated.

Ryan Murray, emergency manager, reported a semi truck delivering supplies to the hospital had backed into a gas meter in the alley. The gas leak had allowed gas to enter the hospital building through the ventilation system.

Because of the active gas flow leak, said Shawna Blanka, public information officer, all patients had to be evacuated.

Within minutes, three patients and a patient receiving out-patient care were outside of the hospital and loaded into ambulances.

The patients, wrapped in blankets and with intravenous equipment attached, were unloaded in the high school gym. The thermostat had been turned up so patients would not be cold.

A temporary chart table was set up, hospital and clinic staff along with emergency medical technicians were getting patients settled and bringing in necessary equipment

including cots. Students were busy bringing in chairs and tables in case they were needed, and were going on errands. The kitchen staff had also prepared lunch for patients and others gathered in the gym.

In the meantime, the firemen had arrived at the alleyway of the hospital. Travis Jensen with Midwest Gas Company, had turned off the gas but the smell of the gas was in the air.

Firemen and gas company officials surveyed the hospital and surrounding homes, Mr. Murray said. By 12:30 p.m., the area had been cleared of any danger and patients were returned to the hospital. All gas service had been restored to the hospital and homes.

The emergency evacuation happened when the weather was relatively mild, around 35 degrees, and when there were only a few patients in the hospital. Had it happened several weeks ago, the hospital beds were full and the weather was bitterly cold.

Firemen and emergency medical technicians, along with the medical staff were on top of the emergency.



EMERGENCY PERSONNEL and medical staff removed patients from the Cheyenne County Hospital Tuesday around noon when a gas leak was discovered. Patients were moved to

the St. Francis high school gym until the scene was safe for them to return.

Times staff photo by Karen Krien