

City water rates expected to climb

By Norma Martinez

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Thirteen concerned Bird City residents attended the Monday evening public forum at the American Legion hall.

Mayor Burr, four of the five Bird City councilmen, city clerk DeAnza Ambrosier, city treasurer Phyllis Carson, city maintenance supervisor Brad Schneider, maintenance employee Russell Jackson and David Blau, Miller and Associates, were also in attendance to answer questions.

Mr. Burr began by giving a background history of when the present Bird City water works were installed. Somewhere in the 1920s the Bird City installed the present water system and main water tower. In the late 70s, some steel pipelines were replaced with thin walled plastic, which is weaker material to the C-900 PVC that is primarily used today.

Since 2008 city employees have repaired approximately 25 water leaks. Mayor Burr pointed out that every one of these repairs have been made to service lines, i.e., the lines extending from the water main to the water meter of homes and businesses. So far, the city has not experienced a main line break.

The city sewer system is estimated to have been installed sometime prior to 1956. But, due to the lack of adequate records, there is no way of knowing exactly when.

The present sewer system, explained Mayor Burr, appears to be in pretty good shape, therefore, is not a present concern.

Considering inflation and the cost associated with each broken line repair the Water & Sewer Fund have had a short fall over the last two years.

"The time has come when we need to address this short fall before it becomes a serious problem," Mayor Burr said. "It's time we address the issue and receive some input from the community and give them an understanding of what's going on."

He went on to explain that it's not only the age of the system that is a consideration but also the ever-increasing cost of labor, materials, repairs, and the need to hire contractors with more advanced equipment. Also, every time city employees have to dig up a street there is the additional cost of repairing the asphalt as well.

Despite the rising cost of maintaining a compliant water system for its residents, the city has not increased water and sewer rates since 2006.

"We (the city) don't get any breaks. The cost is the same to us," Mr. Burr said, "The water fund is self generated, meaning it has to pay for itself, there is no subsidizing."

The city has been covering the shortfall by using reserve funds.

"We are at a point where these funds are almost gone and the question is; what do we need to do about this," Mr. Burr said.

Miller and Associates, Consulting Engineers, has contracted with Bird City to analyze the water works situation and compile an engineering report which will aid the city in obtaining grant funds.

David Blau spoke to the audience about the steps Miller and Associates has taken to determine the best options for the city and its residents. The main focus at this point is to locate and isolate the shut-off valves. Once this is accomplished, they will be able to determine the worst problem areas. Detailed records



ONLY 13 PEOPLE attended the city water meeting held Monday night at the Legion hall in Bird City. Pictured, back row, left to right, are Charles Coleman, Valeria Coleman, Wanda Dowdy, Hollis DaPron and John DaPron. Phyllis Carson is in the front row.

Times staff photo by Norma Martinez

have either not been maintained or have been misplaced throughout the years.

Robyn Raile, Bird City business owner, was concerned as to why this was not done?

"Was it because someone was irresponsible or were the records just lost?" he asked.

"It doesn't make any difference what it was," replied Mayor Burr. "Either way, we are in the same situation now."

The plan is a two-step project. The first step is to increase revenue enough to maintain the current system and cover current expenditures. To accomplish this, the city must increase water and sewer rates 40 percent.

The second step will be to gather all information together to determine the best way of financing a project. Mr. Blau explained that most funding options, including the Community Development Block

Grant (CDBG), require that a city's water rates meet or exceed this level before applying.

At this time, there have been no changes in rates. That will be determined at a later city council meeting.

As the forum concluded, Councilman Hal Sager added, "Be sure to talk about this with your neighbors. We need to talk about this and be aware of what is happening."

Mayor Burr thanked every-

one for coming.

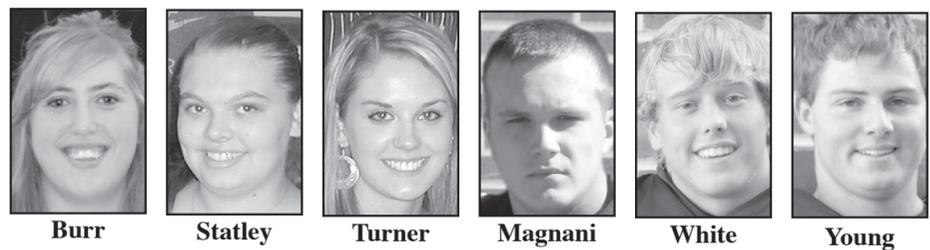
"I wanted to call this meeting so everyone had the opportunity to address their concerns. This is something that has to be done and we didn't want to just do it and hit everyone in that way".

If you missed the forum but would like to express your opinion, you are always welcome to attend a council meeting. Meetings are held at 7 p.m., the first Monday of each month at city hall.



CHEYLIN CHEERLEADERS were excited about the game Friday evening. Pictured, left to right, back row: Kayla Statley, Manda Barnett, Stephanie Busse; center: Kalin Ritchey, Mary Anne Orton; front: Cassie Rucker, Ellie Pochop, Allie Frisbie.

Times photo by Norma Martinez



Burr

Statley

Turner

Magnani

White

Young

Cheylin students show spirit during homecoming week

This week, Bird City students have been showing their spirit by dressing up.

On Monday students and teachers spent the day looking like they just got out of bed and came to school in their pajamas and robes.

The streets were painted as the custom of spirit week always says,

Tuesday everyone dressed in miss-matched colors, some of them had different colored socks and shoes, as well as many different colors that clashed.

Wednesday was a little more sporty as everyone wore their fa-

vorite college attire. Some chose the college their parents or siblings graduated from, and some the college they plan to attend. There were hats, T-shirts, and jerseys with college logo.

On Thursday everyone will become Rock Stars dressed in blue and white for "Wanna Rock Day," and they will rock on with the Cougars on Thursday night!

Everyone is urged to join the rockers at the free barbecue sponsored by First National Bank and Peoples bank in the cafeteria, and at 7, join them for the coronation of the king and

queen at the Cougar Field.

The candidates are: Ethan Young, Jeremiah White, Dalton Magnani, Jessica Turner, Forrest Burr and Kayla Statley.

Following will be a community pep rally and Spirit Fest under the direction of Tammi Carmichael.

Friday at 7 everyone will be pepped up for the homecoming game with Golden Plains. The candidates will be presented during half time.

Saturday everyone will be dressed in their finest dress and attend the homecoming dance at the cafeteria from 8 to 11 p.m.

Benefit dinner planned to help with expenses

People are urged to stop by the St. Francis high school cafeteria from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Sunday to enjoy a fried chicken dinner and help Linda Elfers. Those who can't attend can also order a home delivery but those reservations need to be made on or before Friday by calling Dolores Jenik, 332-3471 (home), 332-6129 (cell) or 332-8810 (office).

Linda was recently diagnosed with cancer and has been un-

dergoing chemo treatments. She needs help with medical bills.

The 4-H groups will also be holding a bake sale in the school hallway.

Linda is the agent assistant for Cheyenne County Extension office and has been involved in 4-H, fair and many other activities in the community and county. The community, along with Thrivent for Lutherans and friends, have banned together to help her.

All proceeds from the dinner

and bake sale will go for Linda's medical expenses. Thrivent for Lutherans will provide supplemental funds. Donation checks need to be made payable to Thrivent. Those unable to attend may also send checks to Miriam Yonkey, 145 Clinton Ave., Wheeler, KS 67756.

For additional information on this benefit, call Shirley Zwegardt, 332-2286 (home) or 332-2113 (work).

Report given on Aug. 23 asphalt oil spill in city

At the Sept. 6 Bird City City Council meeting, Brad Schneider, city maintenance man, was asked to give a report on the asphalt oil spill which had occurred on Aug. 23.

Mr. Schneider read from his written incident report, noting that the asphalt oil was accidentally spilled due to confusion of the contents. The cleanup took Russell Jackson 16 hours and Mr. Schneider, 24 hours. The cleanup was completed on Sept. 1.

Mayor Troy Burr asked that Mr. Schneider elaborate on why the incident happened as well as events that led up to the spill.

Mr. Schneider said he was trying to get things done and items moved out of the way. He said he was given permission from the council to get rid of the tanks.

The mayor stated he did not have council permission to give away the tanks. Councilmen Wade Carmichael and Hal Sager interjected by stating he was given permission and that the council had discussed and okayed it when Mr. Schneider

reported that someone wanted the tanks.

Mayor Burr read an excerpt from the approved Feb. 1, 2010, council minutes: "Mr. Schneider would like to see the old tanks being stored behind the city shop (Mayor Burr acknowledged it should have read 'County' shop) removed. He said he had been contacted by an interested person willing to move and dispose of the contents. Kevin Berens, city attorney, explained that the city could be liable for the waste if it is not disposed of properly. He said he will contact the Kansas Department of Health and Environment for guidance on how to safely dispose of the tanks' contents."

Mr. Schneider replied that Mr. Berens had then later informed him that it was okay to dispose of the tanks. Mr. Berens denied that he had any further discussion with Mr. Schneider concerning the tanks.

Mr. Schneider said he was under the impression he had authority to get rid of the tanks. He also said he thought the tank was empty. He had

given Russell Jackson permission to remove the tank. He said that Mr. Jackson attempted to remove the valve but it was stuck. So, the valve was broken off the tank, causing the contents to spill out. Councilman Shannon Ambrosier asked why it was necessary to remove the valve if they were just planning on placing the tank on a trailer to be moved.

Councilman Sager stated that although this was an accident, it has proved beneficial to the city. He said the asphalt oil, once mixed with sand and gravel, will create many loads of asphalt that can be used for street patching. Mr. Schneider added that there is enough asphalt oil to generate asphalt to last the city for years.

Discussion turned to what the city should now do with the empty tank. Mayor Burr instructed the clerk to place an ad on Nex-Tech classifieds requesting bids for the tank and its stand. There was no further discussion.

Church celebrates 100 years

St. John Lutheran Church, Bird City, will celebrate its 100th anniversary as a congregation. People are urged to come celebrate with the congregation with an open house from 2 to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 8, at the church with refreshments, viewing history and fellowship time.

Sunday morning, Oct. 9, an anniversary worship will begin at 10:45 a.m. A noon meal will follow worship. Time will be spent visiting, listening to the stories and memories of past pastors and community members.