

# Leadership class visit commissioners at meeting

By Tom Betz

*The Goodland Star-News*  
Members of the Leadership Sherman County attended the first hour of the County Commission meeting Wednesday as part of the class's day learning about county government.

Class leader Josh Dechant, a city commissioner and Leadership graduate, introduced the class, saying the meeting was the first stop for the day, and they would be visiting the sheriff, register of deeds and other offices in the courthouse.

Commissioner Chairman Chuck Thomas talked briefly about some of the things the commissioners handle. The commissioners were reviewing the twice-monthly list of bills when the class arrived.

Commissioner Mitch Tiede said over the years, he sees many of the same vendors, and looks to see what each department is buying.

"The big items stick out," Tiede said, "and we can ask questions about bills we are not familiar with."

Commissioner Kevin Rasure, who was in Denver and attended the meeting by speaker phone, said one of the things the county gets to pay for is legal fees for public defenders and coroner charges for an autopsy.

Tiede said the legal costs come back to the county, and that once in a while there are some strange bills they check out. One of the bills on the list for end of January was from Prairieland Animal Clinic.

County Clerk Janet Rumpel said the county pays to prosecute those charged with crimes, and pays for their defense. Tiede said the county pays to house them in the Bastille, and sometimes gets to pay for medical costs while the person is in jail.

The commissioners approved the list of bills totaling \$507,793.

One of the leadership class members, Cara Daise, asked if that was a normal amount.

Rumpel said this was higher than usual because of payments from the county to other taxing districts, which are made twice a year. She said the first half of these was to be paid on Jan. 20.

She said the Goodland Regional Medical Center receives over \$300,000 a year, and that in the bills approved by the commissioners was one for \$221,000 for the hospital.

Rumpel showed the class a distribution log where she keeps track of the payments to each of the "oddball" funds. One she mentioned was the money split between

the cemeteries in the county. She said 80 percent of the month goes to Goodland, with Kanorado and Brewster each getting 10 percent.

A class member asked why Brewster cemetery is getting money from Sherman County.

Rumpel said Brewster's cemetery is in Sherman County, and the resolution says the county will contribute to all cemeteries in the county. She said this is the first year Brewster is being included.

Another one of the funds Rumpel explained is the Health Care Services, which comes from the one-quarter cent sales tax voted on by the citizens over 10 years ago.

"The sales tax keeps the property tax down," she said, "and provides money for the hospital, senior services, Good Samaritan and county health department."

A leadership class member asked if it was true that departments had to spend all the money each year or lose it.

Rumpel said that is a myth, at least at the local level, because any money not spent in a year is part of the carryover for the next year. She said the departments are good about keeping spending down.

Rumpel showed the class members a map of the taxing units in the

county and explained the levy sheet, which shows how much of the taxes collected go to each unit.

Several class members were surprised to hear that a jagged piece of the east side of the county is part of the Brewster School District.

Rumpel said that when the Edson school closed, people were given a choice of going with the Goodland or Brewster school districts.

A question was raised about voting for commissioners countywide rather than by districts.

Rasure said the Kansas Association of Counties has agreed to sup-

port Sherman County's effort to get a bill passed in the Legislature that would allow county voters to decide that issue, and whether to have the commissioners live in districts or anywhere in the county.

Tiede and Thomas said they supported the change.

Rumpel was asked about the strangest request she had gotten in the years she has been in the clerk's office.

"I had a call from a coroner who asked what to do with the frozen hands," she replied. "I thought he was kidding, but he said he had a

pair of hands from a plane crash that had been in his custody until after the identification was finished. He wanted to know what to do with them.

"I asked him where they were and he said they were in his deep freeze."

Brian Linin, a class member, asked what she told the coroner.

"I found out that county health had a freezer so they could keep..." Rumpel said.

"You can really say give me a hand," Linin said, getting a laugh from those in the room.

## County cuts employee deductible

COUNTY, from Page 1

He said the county has grown a little this year, with 67 covered, four more than the 63 last year. The expected cost for the self-funded plan for last year was \$594,205.

The premium for the first option for the 67 would be \$572,334, and that would be 3.7 percent less (\$21,871) than last year.

"Some of this is going to fall on the employees," Krull said. "There is a second option that is the same plan, but the shared pay is \$750 rather than the \$1,500. The total premium would be \$610,453, about 6.4 percent higher."

Commissioner Mitch Tiede said it would be good for the employees if the county went with the lower deductible. Commissioner Chairman Chuck Thomas said with the increased cost to the employees for

the drugs, the total would probably be a wash.

Krull said the cost to the county would average \$759 per employee per month. The new plan has a four-tier rate for those who are single, married with a spouse, married with spouse and children and married with children and no spouse. The single plan costs \$697 per month and the family costs \$1,100 per month.

"We can afford it right now," Rasure said about going with the lower deductible. "We have budgeted for it now, but might have to change down the road if the costs increase."

"That is something for next year," Thomas said.

The commissioners unanimously agreed to go with the lower deductible for the county insurance.

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