

**weather
report****22°**noon
Thursday**Today**

• Sunset, 5:15 p.m.

Saturday

• Sunrise, 6:45 a.m.

• Sunset, 5:17 p.m.

Midday Conditions

- Soil temperature 31 degrees
- Humidity 92 percent
- Sky cloudy, fog in area.
- Winds southeast at 15 mph.
- Barometer 30.13 inches and falling
- Record High today 78° (1976)
- Record Low today -22° (1933)

Last 24 Hours*

- High Wednesday 30°
- Low Thursday 20°
- Precipitation —
- This month .01
- Year to date .55
- Above Normal .05 of an inch

The Topside Forecast

Today: Patchy fog, cloudy, high near 31, a 20 percent chance snow, low around 22.

Extended Forecast

Saturday: Cloudy, high near 37, low around 17. Sunday: Mostly cloudy, high near 36, a 20 percent chance snow, low around 22. Monday: A 20 percent chance snow, high near 35, low around 21. Tuesday: Partly cloudy, high near 40, low around 17.

(National Weather Service)

Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.

* Readings taken at 7 a.m.

**local
markets****Noon**

- Wheat — \$4.27 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$4.35
 - Loan deficiency pmt. — 0¢
 - Corn — \$3.78 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$3.57
 - Loan deficiency pmt. — 0¢
 - Milo — \$3.55 bushel
 - Soybeans — \$6.51 bushel
 - Posted county price — \$6.54
 - Loan deficiency pmt. — 0¢
 - Millet — \$7 hundredweight
 - Sunflowers
 - NuSun crop — \$15.35
 - Pinto beans — \$19 (new crop)
- (Markets by Mueller Grain, Sigco Sun, Frontier Equity Co-op and 21st Century Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

**inside
today**

More local news and views from your Goodland Star-News

**Cowboys
beat Indians**

Senior A. J. Stephens won his match by decision, 9-3, against St. Francis' Jesse Pacheco at a league dual last Friday. The Cowboys face Oakley at 5:30 p.m. tonight at Max Jones Fieldhouse. See photo, story on Page 12.

County may buy health building

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

The Sherman County Health Department moved into the building at 1622 Broadway nine years ago, and Tuesday the county commissioners talked about whether to stay when the 10-year lease runs out this year.

Miller Construction built the building and leased it to the county. Owners Mike and Jodi Miller were invited to the meeting to get a feeling for the future of the building.

Commissioner Mitch Tiede said it would be good to consider the options before the lease runs out.

Miller handed Tiede a copy of the lease, noting that a buyout clause had added to the lease a few months after it had been signed. The clause gives the county an option to extend the lease or to buy the building for \$71,250.

"I would work with you with ei-

Signs will restrict concealed weapons

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

Sherman County commissioners decided Tuesday to draw up a list of county buildings and property where concealed weapons would be banned.

A state law allowing Kansans to carry concealed handguns with a license went into effect in January. Under the law, concealed guns are banned from all courthouses, sheriff and police office, among other places.

William McKnight, building maintenance superintendent, asked the commissioners about other county buildings. He asked if the commissioners wanted to pass a resolution similar to the ordinance

ther option," Miller said.

The lease ends at the end of the year, he said, but one provision says the county has to let Miller know at

least 60 days before that.

"That gives us some idea of what we are looking at," Tiede said.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure

the City Commission passed last month banning guns from city-owned buildings and parks.

"Do we want to restrict every facility under county control?" Commissioner Chuck Thomas asked.

"I hadn't thought about the various buildings like Household Hazardous Waste," Commissioner Mitch Tiede said.

The commissioners considered a blanket statement that would cover all county building.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure said he thought it would be a problem to include fire stations because some of the volunteer firemen or farmers might pull

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a commitment from the county before he put the money into the electric doors.

Tiede asked if Miller would go ahead if the county was going to buy or extend the lease.

Miller said he would work that out depending on what the county was going to do. He said it would be best to do both doors with an electric opener, and the two could be tied together.

Tiede asked if that would double the cost.

Miller said it would not be double, and would be cheaper to tie them together than try to do two separate controls.

Thomas wanted to know if the two door would stay open long enough for a person in a wheelchair to get in or out. Miller said the timing is

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Frontier members vote to merge with Oakley

By Pat Schiefen

The Goodland Star-News

Frontier Equity and Co-Ag of Oakley will become Frontier Ag on March 1 after members of both cooperatives voted Wednesday to approve the merger.

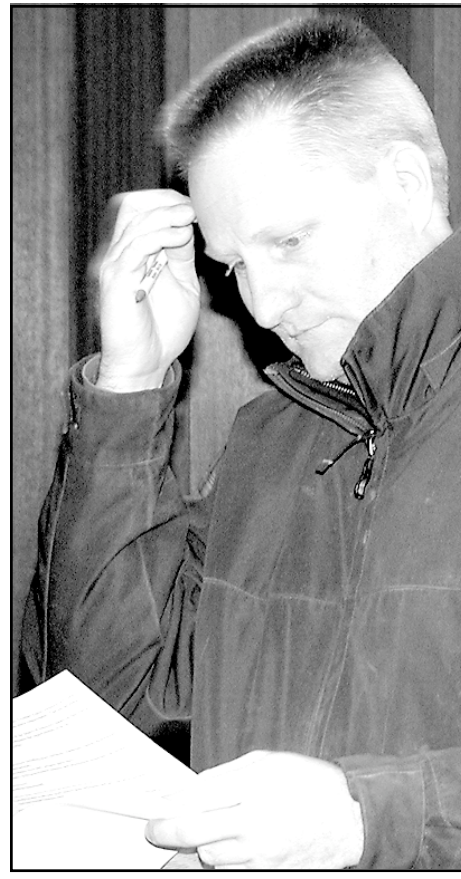
Voting took place Wednesday evening at the Goodland Elks for members of Frontier Equity and Wednesday afternoon at the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center in Oakley for members of Co-Ag.

The merger passed in Goodland with 77 percent or 131 to 39 of the votes. The merger passed by 88 percent for members of Co-Ag. For the merger to be approved a two-thirds majority of the members voting from each cooperative had to agree.

Brad Cowan will be the general manager for the company, which will have around 150 employees. The mailing address will be 415 W. 2nd, Oakley.

All of the current services will be continued with administrative offices for both in the existing main offices in Goodland and Oakley.

Frontier and CO-AG have both grain, fertilizer, chemical, custom application, seed, feed, petroleum and shop facilities. Frontier has a convenience store and a Carquest parts store. CO-AG has a man in Salina who helps find markets for



Andrew House (left) studied the ballot he received for the vote on the merger between Frontier Equity and Co-Ag on Wednesday night at the Elks Lodge. A line formed quickly after the voting began.

Photos by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News

grain that is stored on the farm and an Internet and computer maintenance business in Oakley. They also do aerial crop spraying out of Oakley.

Frontier has elevators in Bird

City, Brewster, Goodland and Ruliton, and fertilizer operations in Bird City, McDonald and Atwood.

CO-AG has elevators in Breton, Grinnell, Menlo, Mingo, Page City, Seguin, Winona and Oakley.

The combined board of directors will be expanded to 10 members, five from Frontier and five from CO-AG, with two associate members from each board.

"I'm excited about getting it put

together," said Cowan. "There is a lot of work to do before March 1."

Members of the Co-Ag board were in a meeting Thursday morning, and unable to respond to a call from the newspaper.

City sticks with lowest bidder on two street projects

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News

Contracts for asphalt paving on North Caldwell Avenue and concrete on 17th Street were awarded to the lowest bidder on Monday, but the mayor raised a question about taking a local bid for the 17th Street project.

In the end, though, the commission decided the risk of the city being sued by the low bidder, an Oakley firm with several employees here, outweighed the desire to go with a Goodland contractor. The difference in the bids was only about \$6,500.

When bids for the city projects and the county paving project on old U.S. 24 were opened together on Jan. 24, it appeared that APAC Paving of Hays was the low bidder for the old U.S. 24 project and the Caldwell project. That Sporer Land Development of Oakley was the apparent low bidder on the 17th Street

project.

Darin Neufeld, engineer from Evans, Bierly, Hutchison and Associates, who handled the design for the city, presented the bids and alternates with his recommendations.

The Caldwell project had two bidders, he said, APAC the lowest at \$883,798 and Venture Corp. of Great Bend at \$925,638. Neufeld recommended going with APAC, the successful bidder on the county project. Going with the same firm which got the county project will save the city \$20,000 in mobilization costs and make the official contract amount \$863,798, he said.

The commissioners agreed, and approved APAC for the Caldwell project.

Turning to the 17th Street project, Neufeld said there were three bids and Sporer had the lowest base bid of \$1,235,740. Second was Miller Construction of Goodland at \$1,265,145 and Smoky Hill of

Salina at \$1,580,634 was third.

Neufeld said both the bidders for the Caldwell and the 17th Street projects had been asked to submit an alternate bid for asphalt and concrete on the section of Eighth Street from Cattle Trail east to D'Lao Drive.

Neufeld said the asphalt bid from APAC was \$195,447. For concrete, it was \$252,318 from Sporer and \$229,496 from Miller. He recommended the concrete because it should last longer and handle the truck traffic on that section.

With an agreement to do the concrete on Eighth, the total bid from Sporer was \$1,488,121 and from Miller \$1,494,641.

"Can we not take the low bid?" Mayor Rick Billinger asked. "I was curious because there is only a \$6,000 difference between Sporer and Miller."

Commissioners Annette Fairbanks and John Garcia noted that the

difference actually was \$6,519.

"I would like to give it to the local contractor," Billinger said. "We talk about staying local and economic development."

Fairbanks asked City Attorney Jeff Mason what risk the city would have if the commission didn't accept the low bid.

"Anyone with \$147 can file a lawsuit," Mason said. "We don't have the liability if we take the low bid."

"I would like to give it to the local contractor," Fairbanks said, "but we did have someone bid lower. What are the contractors going to do in the future if we always give it to the local bidder?"

"I put a lot of trust in the recommendation of our staff and our engineer. My gut is we need to go with the low bidder."

"There is nothing in the contract about the lowest bidder," Billinger replied.

"No, we took that out," Neufeld

said. "The bid specifications said lowest responsive and responsible bidder. That is why we reviewed each contractor if they had done work for the city or in the county."

Jay Sporer of Sporer Land Development asked to speak.

"I am not sure how you define local," he said. "We have seven employees with Sherman County addresses. We would use the local ready-mix, which is about \$300,000, plus the motels and other expenses."

"We don't have an office here, but we work in the area almost every day."

"I agree with both of you (Billinger and Fairbanks)," said Commissioner Josh Dechant. "I want to keep it local."

"I look at the start date (March 1 for Sporer and April 13 for Miller). Sporer could have the whole con-

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College ready for accreditation team visit

By Pat Schiefen

The Goodland Star-News

The Northwest Kansas Technical College hopes to see the results of 2 1/2 years of work when a team from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association comes calling from Sunday to Wednesday.

The visit is the final step for accreditation that started with meetings in Chicago in 2004, a preliminary information form and approval for a self-study, officials say.

"I have no idea how many hours it has taken," said Brenda Chatfield, chair of the self-study team. "The whole faculty has helped review and edit the study.

"The self-study helped identify weaknesses so we can be a better institution for our students."

Since the last accreditation in June, 2001, Chatfield said, the college has added four programs, computer graphics technology; heating, ventilation, air conditioning/refrigeration; respiratory therapy; and telecommunications network analyst.

The college had improved its financial shape, upgraded its planning, started a plan for online learning and an "articulation" agreement with Fort Hays State University, stabilized management information systems and added a central library, she said.

Being accredited is important for students to be able to transfer credits from one school to another and receive federal financial aid, Chatfield said.

Accreditation comes up every five to 10 years depending on how the school did when it was accredited.

The evaluating team will be headed by Dr. David H. Devier, Dean at Cincinnati-Clermont College of Batavia, Ohio. Other members are Dr. Kathy M. Brock, Northwest Iowa Community College of Sheldon, Iowa; Linda G. Johnson, Southeast Technical Institute of Sioux Falls, S.D.; and Dr. Roger Stacy, Northern Oklahoma College of Tonkawa.

The team will meet with students, community leaders, program advisors, college board of control, faculty, staff and administration, said Chatfield.

The team's recommendation will be announced at 10 a.m. Wednesday at the college Student Union.

The steering committee for the visit included diesel technology instructor Gary Barricklow, Director of Student Services Paul Chaffin, self-study editor/writer JoAnn Clouse, executive secretary Sherri Knitig and electronics and computer technology instructor Candee Cottam.