

City commission approves fire-aid agreement

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News
The Goodland City Commission approved a revised fire mutual-aid agreement with Sherman County last week, but the new language does not include any mention of zero tolerance for alcohol.

The city presented the agreement to county commissioners at the end of February when all the city volunteer firemen submitted their resignations. Both commissions tabled the agreement until questions could be answered.

City Manager Wayne Hill said some changes had been made, and that City Attorney Jeff Mason had talked to County Attorney Bonnie Selby, but she had not gotten back to him on the final details.

"I don't think we should wait on her," Mason said. "I suggest the city approve this format and sent it to the county."

Mayor Rick Billinger asked if the city was rushing the agreement.

"Aren't we going to have to wait until she has decided what they want to have?" he asked.

City Commissioner Josh Dechant said approving the agreement would show progress.

"We sent them one," Billinger said, "and they sent it back with changes we could not accept."

Mason said Selby has seen the version being considered. Hill recommended the commission approve the agreement.

Commissioner Dave Daniels made a motion to approve the agreement as presented, and Dechant seconded. Billinger asked Mason what changes had been made.

"The major change was taking out mention of the alcohol policy," Mason said.

"Everything is answered except the alcohol?" Billinger asked.

"We should not put anything in here about our or their personnel policy," Mason said.

The commissioners voted 4-0 to approve the aid agreement. Commissioner John Garcia was absent.

Billinger asked Hill about the revision of city employee policies, including alcohol, and if the commission is going to have any input.

"Are you going to have them for the next meeting?" the mayor asked.

"We are looking at several of the policies," Hill said. "I don't think they will be ready by the next meeting. I want to be sure the policies follow the legal guidelines."

"I assume we are going to zero tolerance," Billinger said.

"It may be difficult to go to zero and zero tolerance," Hill said. "Some medicines cause you to have a slight level of alcohol, which is what is covered under the existing policy."

"I know we random test employees," Billinger said. "Do we test everybody?"

City Clerk Mary Volk said those employees with commercial driver's licenses and those in safety-sensitive jobs are subject to random testing.

"Everybody is subject to the reasonable-suspicion standard," she added.

"I think we need to get this done," Billinger said.

"It is being typed at this time," Hill said.

"I think it is something we need a lot of discussion on," Daniels said. "We are working on it," Hill said, "and taking some from other policies."

"Get the Highway Patrol policy," Billinger said. "I believe there should not be any tolerance anywhere, whether it is volunteers or paid people."

"That is my two cents worth." Daniels said he thought there needed to be a long discussion about the policy, and said he was not convinced the city could force volunteers to a zero tolerance.

On a related issue, Daniels said it was good to read a letter from the Insurance Services Offices about a recent visit to the city by the agency, which grades fire coverage for insurance carriers. There was some fear the city's rating would drop after the firemen quit.

Fire Chief Scott Gilmer received the letter on March 13.

"I was interested in the three areas the letter mentions," Daniels said.

The letter said the information is

being collected "to determine a fire insurance classification, which may be used in the calculation of property insurance premiums. The information is not for property loss prevention or life safety purposes and no life safety or property loss prevention recommendations will be made."

"Please provide us with any future updates as they occur, includ-

ing changes in fire station locations, new fire stations or changes in boundaries."

The office had someone come out and visit with Gilmer about the changes in the fire department and the new volunteers.

He said the inspector said no change in classification would be made until a further review next year.

Water-system project top issue in Kanorado

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winter brought out. There are places it doesn't drain, he said; the water just sits there.

"We need to get things to where it's running," he said, "not standing around."

There have been problems with the transfer station, Korbek said; the city needs to upgrade or repair it. He isn't sure how to fix the problems or which are the most important, but he will ask the City Council to help.

"If I get elected," he said, "I'll need to talk to the council and get ideas, decide what are the most important issues and go from there."

Korbek said his strengths as mayor would be that he gets along with people and he can see what needs to be done. He also said it is important for Kanorado to have a mayor who's always around.

"Bob (Helderman) works at Cop," Korbek said. "He's around all the time, and I'm retired, so I'm around all the time. Sandy works in Goodland. I think if there's a crisis,

the mayor should be around to handle it on the spot."

Bagley said that won't prevent her from doing the job.

"I don't see him doing volunteer work around here," she said. "I volunteer here in Kanorado; I do things for Kanorado."

Bagley said she and her husband Rex have both worked in Burlington, and he still does, while she now works in Goodland. Kanorado is a nice little town, she said, and it's a good place to live that is easy to drive from to work in Goodland or

Burlington.

Bagley said as mayor, she'd like to get grants for other projects.

"We need to make the town look better," she said, "and bring in some businesses."

"I want to work on Main Street, beautify, make things look nicer."

She said it is important to keep the community together and to bring more families in.

Bagley said her strengths as mayor would be that she cares about the community, likes people and does a lot of volunteer work.

Incumbents seek re-election in Goodland

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as a commissioner. He said he wants to keep the progress moving forward the city has made in the past few years.

Everyone in the county will vote at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall, 824 Main. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Positions for the Goodland com-

mission, Kanorado mayor and council and Goodland School Board will be on the ballot.

School board members Jane Philbrick and Andrew House are seek-

ing re-election. Chuck Wilkens and John Hendrich are running for the seats now held by Marty Melia and Fritz Duke, who did not run again.

The Rev. Travis Blake of the First

Baptist Church has filed as a write-in candidate, so there will be a contest to decide.

The top four candidates will win four-year terms.

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