

Legislature continues budget figure struggles

It is hard to believe we have already completed nine weeks of the Legislative session. This next week will be the last week to work bills in committees. Come Friday no more bills will be able to come out to the floor for the entire body to vote on.

Freeze bill negotiations take strange turns

The political maneuvering has begun – Senate and House continue to meet trying to agree on the recession bill to balance the budget. Governor Brownback announced Thursday he will begin to start allocations to cut money from the budget.

Late Thursday the conference committee members from the House and Senate met and the House accepted the Senate's compromise offer on the budget. It would save \$20 million instead of the \$36 million that the House wanted. The House was surprised when the Senate refused to sign their own offer.



rick billinger
state rep.

Early Friday morning a conference committee meeting was called, at noon, in hope that the conference committee would be able to reach an agreement on the recession bill, so the Governor would not be forced to start the allotment process. Unfortunately the Senate conferees did not appear forcing the Governor to continue with his allotment authority to reduce the fiscal year 2011 budget by \$56.5 million.

The House conferees believe that, although the Governor has made allotments to get the state to a zero balance, it is still prudent for the legislature to capture additional

dollars to give Governor Brownback's budget a positive ending balance for fiscal year 2011. The House position is that we want to continue meeting with the conferees from the Senate when they come back to the table for negotiations.

Gubernatorial inaugural funds

When Governor Brownback was elected last year many of us were surprised to find out under current law he would not be able to donate the proceeds of his inauguration ball to charity, as he had planned to do.

This was a worthy way for Governor Brownback to use these extra funds. SB67 allows unused funds to be donated to a 501 (C)(3) charitable organization. Final action is expected next week.

Equal benefits for Agent Orange treatment

Thousands of Vietnam veterans suffer

from the effects of being exposed to Agent Orange. Although, commonly associated with Vietnam, the chemical was used in surrounding areas like Thailand. Many Vietnam veterans who served outside of Vietnam are struggling with the same health issues and side affects from Agent Orange as Vietnam veterans.

This week the House took action and passed HCR 5016, urging the United States Congress to extend equal benefits and compensation for the treatment of Agent Orange exposure to Vietnam era veterans who served outside of Vietnam. The vote was unanimous.

Unemployment insurance

Monday the entire House will work the unemployment insurance bill that we passed out of our committee on Thursday. This bill will probably take a considerable amount of time on the floor Monday. Next week I will comment on the particulars of

the bill.

So far this session it seems like we have spent a lot of time on social issues, but our committees have also been working on the budget, economic issues and tax concerns. Leadership has said, budget, more tax and economic issues will start appearing this week on the floor, allowing the entire House to work these bills.

I have requested a resolution for the late Jim Morrison on Thursday. Karen Morrison and her family will be in Topeka to receive this award. I will have more information about this resolution next week.

I am working on a survey to be mailed out to the voters later in the session. It is my honor to represent the 121st District. If you have any input on any issues which may come before the Legislature this year please contact me at rick.billinger@house.ks.gov or call me at (785) 899-4700.

Hearing set for five homes

HEARINGS, from Page 1

and felt it is getting worse.

Gerber said he agrees it looks terrible.

James said he had talked to Virgil Baumfalk about the corner where he has used equipment parked around the old Steiner's Drive-In.

In other business the commissioners:

- Heard that Sen. Jerry Moran is planning to hold a community meeting from 11 a.m. to noon on Thursday, March 24, in the basement at Western State Bank.

- Heard the official U.S. Census figures showed a 9 percent decrease for Sherman County and a 6 percent decrease for Goodland.

- Heard an update on the water plan from Public Works Director Rich Simon the water tanks have been filled and found the leak. He said the contractor should be here Tuesday, March 15, to disinfect the tanks. He said the plan is to start up on March 17 or 18, and put them on line on March 21 or 22. He said the electrician is getting the pumps up and the pump installer is to be there.

He said the plan is to have the Layne Company here April 4 to 8 to put the media in the treatment tanks and start pumping water through those. He said there is some other minor stuff to be done yet.

He said leakage tests have been done on the evaporation ponds and found an issue with one liner. He said snow and rain got in on one of them, and they will have to check this out.

He said Van Kirk is not in town, and will be back in about three weeks to finish their punch list including 10th and Caldwell Ave.

He said APAC is working on the valley gutter at 10th and Caldwell. He said they found a gas line under the concrete, and Black Hills Energy came in and lowered the line and relocated a couple of gas meters.

He said the snow has slowed their work, but expects them back this week.

Commissioner John Garcia asked if the city has noticed any decrease in the water loss.

Simon said it is about 23 percent.

Garcia asked about having someone come look at the water loss.

Gerber said it has come down a bit, but not very much. He said the city needs to have a better water management system to get ahead of the emergency leaks, but that will take about a year to get in place.



APAC crews work on Caldwell Ave. curb and gutters

APAC Shears crews from Hays have been working on the curb and gutters along the west side of Caldwell Ave., and with warmer weather are expected back to complete the work on the valley gutter at 10th and Caldwell Ave.

The concrete work should be completed this month to make way for McCormack Company of Stratton, Colo., to move in and prepare for the mill and overlay project on Caldwell from Ninth to 13th Street.

Photos by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News



City approves incentives for Motel 6

CITY, from Page 1

said the commissioners would consider each request on a case by case basis.

Commissioner John Garcia said he did not have a problem with the precedent on how the incentives have been structured. He said he felt the city has to make sure the job number is being complied with. He said if that is part of the incentives the city has to stay on top of that. He said if they let the Motel 6 owners come back and ask for more utility credit he felt it would open the door for others to come back.

Fairbanks said she would not want to close the door on anything.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure asked what dollar amount of incentives the city is looking to grant.

Daniels said the city has been giv-

ing a six month utility credit after the business has been open for a year.

Rasure asked why the commissioners were making a decision now.

Daniels said so the city can do the record keeping.

Volk said she was asking for a starting point.

Solomon said the Motel 6 owners think the six months is great, and felt they were asking for the 12 months as a possibility.

Gerber said the program is not explicit in that part, and said the incentives have never been dependent on the number of jobs.

Daniels said that was part of the agreement with Adronics, and had a provision about the number of jobs.

Gerber said he and Solomon could put together a template to get

into the job creation part if that is what the commissioners want.

Daniels said when the city did the agreement with Adronics it was felt the people they hired were paying utilities and by having 20 or 30 employees it was a way to feel the city was getting some money back.

Gerber said with Solomon doing the analysis he felt the city would know what the projects have done.

The commissioners agreed to start the Motel 6 clock now, and use an average over 12 months to determine the six months of utility credit.

Rasure suggested the city staff

clear up that part of the incentive policy.

Solomon said with the reopening of Motel 6 and the Maverick Inn getting ready to open the city will be up to 435 motel rooms. He said that is a number the city can sell to try to get a convention or other events and take more advantage of the facilities like Max Jones Fieldhouse.

He said getting the motels reopened shows community progress, and the motel upgrades will help if the city is able to host events.

CONTRACT MOWER WANTED

The City of Goodland is accepting bids for contract mowing services for the 2011 season. Interested individuals must be at least 18 years old. Bid Specifications can be picked up at City Hall at 204 West 11th Street. Please submit your bid to the Building Official's Office at City Hall by March 29, 2011 at 10 a.m.. Bids should be based on an hourly rate. Bids will be opened on March 29, 2011 at 11 a.m. Bid award will take place at the following Commission Meeting, April 4, 2011. The City of Goodland is an E.O.E.



Paintball rally

March 19, 2011 at 10 a.m.
Behind Keirns Fitness Center
\$20/person-5 members/teams
BBQ included in price, starts 11:30 a.m.; ends 1:30 p.m.
FOR AGES 13 AND UP!

The Engineering Department at Northwest Tech is throwing the Paintball Rally. All guns and paintballs will be provided! Sign up at the Engineering Technology Building, 1401 Eustis, or call (785) 890-1540. Rally will be held, come rain or shine!





Mini Kickers for 5 and 6 year olds
Soccer League for 1st-6th graders.

Registration is due March 21st.
Coaches and Refs are needed.

Price is \$12 for GAC members and \$20 for Non members.
Registration forms are available on our website:
www.goodlandgac.com



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