

Greeley County consolidated government

By Ron Wilson

Director

Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University

Community conversation. That sounds like something that goes on at the coffee shop, but in this case, it refers to an organized and focused conversation about how the community can be improved. Greeley County has used community conversations to help shape its future. For example, such conversations helped lead the county to vote to consolidate city and county government - the first rural county in Kansas to do so.

Christy Hopkins is director of Greeley County Community Development. Her article in Country Living magazine is the source for today's story.

Greeley is a truly rural county.

The county seat is Tribune, population 765 people. Now, that's rural.

In 2004, Greeley County engaged in what is called the Public Square process. Terry Woodbury, who has been profiled here before, is president of Public Square Communities LLC. He uses the powerful symbolism of the public square to describe the different elements of a community that can come together in transformative community conversations. For example, the four sides of the square represent the business community, education, health and human services, and government.

Greeley County became the first accredited Public Square Community in 2007 and was re-accredited in 2009.

"As a community, these steps confirmed Greeley County's dedication to engaging individuals from

around the public square on community issues and using community conversations to develop goals and ideas for the future," Christy said.

According to Terry Woodbury, a community conversation is "the opportunity to bring the community together to discuss needs, wants and plans. It is a place for a community to dream together. When one person says to another, 'I have an idea, what do you think' then change has begun. When that conversation is patient and deep and thorough, then the idea is shaped to fit the community environment."

Such conversations have become the norm in Greeley County.

"For residents of Greeley County, grassroots bottom-up community conversation has become the default behavior," Christy said. "It is how plans are made, how difficult issues are confronted, how we work

together to come to solutions on tough questions like 'what can be done about the theater?' or 'how should we address street repairs in Tribune?'" These conversations require attendees to be active participants, to provide input and ask questions, and to play a role in determining the best course of action.

Community conversations are open, "everyone-invited" gatherings designed to share ideas and opinions while helping develop the solution that best fits Unified Greeley County. Though the format of each gathering may vary, ranging from predominantly open forum to small group discussions and often including clarifying presentations on a given topic, each conversation focuses on positive interaction, giving every Greeley County resident the opportunity to take an active role in charting the course of the

community's future.

Since engaging in the Public Square Process in 2004, Greeley County has held community conversations on a range of specific concerns: community vision and goals, a housing shortage, the future of the theater, maintenance of city streets with limited government funds, best location for a veterans' memorial, and, most recently, prioritizing and funding major renovations on the elementary school.

Results of these conversations touch all segments of the Public Square. For example, in 2009 voters approved a new "Unified Greeley County" with a 73 percent majority vote to consolidate city and county government. Other landmarks include development of a county-wide recreation program that sponsors some 50 activities annually, creation of a new com-

munity foundation, a renovated community-owned theatre showing late-run films, formation of Greeley Homes LLC to attract private investors in new housing, construction of a memorial honoring 400 veterans, and 69 percent voter approval for a \$3.8 million school bond.

"By talking through the alternatives, developing new ideas, and working together to reach consensus, our citizens are building a stronger, more stable community for future generations," Christy said.

Community conversation. It's not just talk, it's a way of bringing the community together for positive change. We commend Christy Hopkins and all the citizens of Greeley County for coming together in constructive conversation. These conversations have helped bring about transformation.

Time to start taking precautions against bad storms

During 2010, Kansans suffered \$370 million in estimated property damage because of severe weather. Although storm damage typically occurs during the spring months, last year almost half of the losses occurred during August and September, according to Kansas Insurance Department estimates.

"With spring almost upon us, Kansans will begin taking precautions for bad weather," Sandy Praeger, Commissioner of Insurance, said.

"But, as 2010 showed, severe weather can happen almost any time. That's why it's important to review homeowners and auto insurance on a regular basis."

Commissioner Praeger offers the following insurance considerations as Kansas enters the spring storm season.



sandy praeger

• insurance comm.

Ask yourself these questions

Do you have the right insurance? Do you know what your policy covers? Is the amount of coverage adequate? Does it cover new additions or recent remodeling?

"Check all limits, including coverage for contents," Commissioner Praeger said.

"Keep your agent's name and number available and easy to find, and periodically discuss coverage options with him or her."

Know your policy limits

Not all policies cover the follow-

ing: Water and wind-storm damage; debris or tree removal; sewer backup because of flooding; sump pump failure; and additional living expenses if disaster forces you from your home.

Also, check your auto policy. Comprehensive coverage (other than collision) pays if a storm or floodwater damages your car.

Inventory your personal property

The department can provide you with a "Personal Home Inventory" booklet to help you list the contents of your home.

Go online at www.ksinsurance.org, under "Publications," to print off a personal copy.

Keep a copy of the inventory,

sales receipts and video or photographs of your property in a secure place outside of your home.

Recovering after the storm

If you suffer loss or damage because of a storm, follow these tips:

- Contact your agent and/or insurance company immediately.
- Keep a record of conversations with your agent or company. Write down the date and time, the person's name and a summary of the call.
- Make a list of all damaged property and take photographs of it.
- Get instructions from your company's adjuster before calling anyone to repair or replace damaged property. Your insurer's visual inspection of your loss may be required before claims are paid.
- Keep a list of all damaged property with the date, price and place of purchase for the adjuster. Make

a copy of the list and all insurance forms you fill out.

Settling your claim

If a disaster occurs, adjusters will handle the largest losses first, but they will work to handle all claims as quickly as possible. Remember the following:

- Be present when your adjuster inspects your property.
- Insurance companies will have their own adjusters who will carry employee identification. These adjusters will not charge you a fee for service. Be leery of any adjuster who charges a fee and always ask to see identification.
- Beware of questionable or unfamiliar contractors. Get more than one bid and hire a local, reputable contractor to make the repairs.
- Don't accept an unfair settlement. If you can't reach an agree-

ment with your insurer, call the department.

Get help if you need it

The department can help in the following situations: Your agent or company doesn't respond to your calls; you believe you have not received a fair settlement; or you have a dispute about contract language or state legal requirements for coverage.

Call the consumer assistance hotline in Kansas (800) 432-2484.

"I believe that a little preparation and information about insurance before a problem occurs is a great way to gain some peace of mind-and keep your focus on your family's immediate needs during an emergency," Commissioner Praeger said.

Winter may have been hard on newly planted alfalfa

This could be a tough winter for alfalfa in Kansas, especially on newly seeded stands. The two main concerns for alfalfa are winter kill and heaving, said Jim Shroyer, Kansas State University Research and Extension crop production specialist.

"There is a wide range of winter hardiness among alfalfa varieties. Some varieties may have suffered winter kill injury this winter, especially where the crop had no snow cover," Shroyer said.

As in wheat, winterkill in alfalfa occurs when the crown is frozen, he said.

"If the plants are damaged by winter kill, the taproot will turn soft and mushy. Producers should check for bud and new shoot vigor. Look for delayed green-up, lopsided crowns and uneven shoot growth. If you see any of these symptoms, check the taproots for firmness. Some plants may even begin to green up and then die. But plants that put out second leaves are probably fine," the agronomist said.

If some plants are injured and stands have been thinned, producers may wonder about thickening the stands. Shroyer advises caution.

"Interseeding alfalfa to thicken

an alfalfa stand will generally not work. If the stand is one year or less old, new seedlings will generally come up and then be out competed by the survivors from last year. If large areas of a one-year-old field have been killed, those areas can be disked and then seeded. If the stand is two or more years old, interseeding alfalfa will not work because of allelopathic effects from the established plants," he said.

This winter could also result in a more common form of injury to alfalfa. As the soil freezes and thaws, alfalfa stands can be damaged by the heaving effect, Shroyer said.

"This winter has been cold enough to freeze the soil where it is not under snow cover. Soils with high levels of clay are especially prone to winter heaving," he said.

If heaving has occurred, dig up some plants to determine if the taproot is broken, he advised.

"Plants with broken taproots may green up, but they perform poorly and eventually die. Slightly heaved plants can survive, but the longevity and productivity will be reduced. Crowns that heaved one inch or less are not as likely to have a broken taproot. With time, these plants can reposition themselves. Raised

crowns are susceptible to weather and mechanical damage. Raise cutters to avoid damaging exposed crowns," he suggested.

Producers can start to evaluate the health of their alfalfa stands in March or April, as soon as the soils thaw, Shroyer said. "They should look at the crowns and roots. Buds should be firm, and white or pink in color if they have survived with good vigor. The bark of roots should not peel away easily when scratched with a thumbnail. When cut, the interior of healthy roots will be white or cream in color," he said.

When alfalfa growth reaches

four to six inches, producers can use stems per square foot to assess density measure, he added. A density of 55 stems per square foot has good yield potential. There will probably be some yield loss with stem counts between 40 and 50 per square foot. Consider replacing the stand if there are less than 40 stems per square foot and the crown and root health is poor, he said.

More information about alfalfa production is available at local Kansas State Research and Extension offices.

public notice

RESOLUTION NO. 1339

A RESOLUTION FIXING A TIME AND PLACE AND PROVIDING FOR NOTICE OF A HEARING BEFORE THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF GOODLAND, KANSAS, AT WHICH THE OWNER, HIS OR HER AGENT, LIENHOLDERS OF RECORD, OCCUPANTS AND OTHER PARTIES IN INTEREST OF STRUCTURES LOCATED WITHIN SAID CITY AND DESCRIBED HEREIN MAY APPEAR AND SHOW CAUSE WHY SUCH STRUCTURE SHOULD NOT BE CONDEMNED AND ORDERED REPAIRED OR DEMOLISHED AS AN UNSAFE OR DANGEROUS STRUCTURE.

(12), Block Eleven (11), First Addition to the City of Goodland, according to the recorded plat thereof. Also known as 623 W 9th Street.

may appear and show cause why such structure should not be condemned as an unsafe or dangerous structure and ordered repaired or demolished.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

that the City Clerk shall cause this resolution to be published and shall give notice of the aforesaid hearing in the manner provided by law.

Adopted this 7th day of March, 2011.

Joshua Dechant, Mayor

ATTEST: Mary P. Volk, City Clerk

Published in The Goodland Star-News, Friday, March 11 and 18, 2011.

RESOLUTION NO. 1340

A RESOLUTION FIXING A TIME AND PLACE AND PROVIDING FOR NOTICE OF A HEARING BEFORE THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF GOODLAND, KANSAS, AT WHICH THE OWNER, HIS OR HER AGENT, LIENHOLDERS OF RECORD, OCCUPANTS AND OTHER PARTIES IN INTEREST OF STRUCTURES LOCATED WITHIN SAID CITY AND DESCRIBED HEREIN MAY APPEAR AND SHOW CAUSE WHY SUCH STRUC-

(12), Block Eleven (11), First Addition to the City of Goodland, according to the recorded plat thereof. Also known as 623 W 9th Street.

TURE SHOULD NOT BE CONDEMNED AND ORDERED REPAIRED OR DEMOLISHED AS AN UNSAFE OR DANGEROUS STRUCTURE.

WHEREAS, the enforcing officer of the City of Goodland, Kansas, did on the 7th day of March 2011, file with the governing body of said city, a statement in writing that the structure, hereinafter described, is unsafe and dangerous.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF GOODLAND, KANSAS:

That a hearing will be held on the **18th day of April, 2011**, before the governing body of the city at **5:00 o'clock p.m. MST** at the City Commission Chambers, 204 W 11th, 2nd Floor; Goodland, Kansas, at which the owner, his or her agent, any lien holders of record, any occupant and any other parties in interest, as that term is defined by law, of the structure located at:

Lots Thirteen (13) and Fourteen (14), Block Thirty-seven (37), Second Addition to the City of Goodland, according to the recorded plat thereof. Also known as 322 W 7th Street.

may appear and show cause why such structure should not be condemned as an unsafe or dangerous structure and ordered repaired or demolished.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,

that the City Clerk shall cause this resolution to be published and shall give notice of the aforesaid hearing in the manner

provided by law.

Adopted this 7th day of March, 2011.

Joshua Dechant, Mayor

ATTEST: Mary P. Volk, City Clerk

Published in The Goodland Star-News, March 11 and 18, 2011.

RESOLUTION NO. 1341

A RESOLUTION FIXING A TIME AND PLACE AND PROVIDING FOR NOTICE OF A HEARING BEFORE THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CITY OF GOODLAND, KANSAS, AT WHICH THE OWNER, HIS OR HER AGENT, LIENHOLDERS OF RECORD, OCCUPANTS AND OTHER PARTIES IN INTEREST OF STRUCTURES LOCATED WITHIN SAID CITY AND DESCRIBED HEREIN MAY APPEAR AND SHOW CAUSE WHY SUCH STRUCTURE SHOULD NOT BE CONDEMNED AND ORDERED REPAIRED OR DEMOLISHED AS AN UNSAFE OR DANGEROUS STRUCTURE.

WHEREAS, the enforcing officer of the City of Goodland, Kansas, did on the 7th day of March 2011, file with the governing body of said city, a statement in writing that the structure, hereinafter described, is unsafe and dangerous.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERN-

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That a hearing will be held on the **18th day of April, 2011**, before the governing body of the city at **5:00 o'clock p.m. MST** at the City Commission Chambers, 204 W 11th, 2nd Floor; Goodland, Kansas, at which the owner, his or her agent, any lien holders of record, any occupant and any other parties in interest, as that term is defined by law, of the structure located at:

Lots One (1) and Two (2), Block Two (2), Second Addition to the City of Goodland, according to the recorded plat thereof. Also known as 223 E. 1st Street.

may appear and show cause why such structure should not

be condemned as an unsafe or dangerous structure and ordered repaired or demolished.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Clerk shall cause this resolution to be published and shall give notice of the aforesaid hearing in the manner provided by law.

Adopted this 7th day of March, 2011.

Joshua Dechant, Mayor

ATTEST: Mary P. Volk, City Clerk

Published in The Goodland Star-News, Friday, March 11 and 18, 2011.

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