

Power agreement approved by city

By Tom Betz
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The Network agreement approved with Sunflower Electric to replace the City's existing agreement does not affect the city power supply contract with Sunflower.

City Manager Doug Gerber said the agreement is for network integration transmission service (NITS) and replaces an existing agreement due to expire on May 31. He said the city power contract with Sunflower is not affected as it expires in May of next year.

Gerber asked Rod Blake, power plant superintendent, to explain the agreement.

"It is not that big a deal if we were just looking at Sunflower," Blake said, "but looking for other possible suppliers we will need to have the information and be able to have options later down the road. Especially if we venture out to a power supplier in eastern Kansas."

He said the agreement is designed to allow customers to deliver energy from multiple resources to their load under a transportation contract. It allows the city to manage the transmission load. The city pays for use of the transmission system based on the network load at the monthly transmission system peak.

He said the agreement is something required by Sunflower Electric and the Southwest Power Pool. He said the city is doing another

survey with the Southwest Power Pool.

Commissioner John Garcia asked if Sunflower cannot directly provide the information to the city, is it better to go straight to the power pool?

"It would take someone much smarter than me to do the balancing," Blake said. "I did some of this when we were with MEAN out of Nebraska, but it is not something we can do for the long term."

Blake said the balancing work involved with the NITS was complicated and time consuming when he did it before, and it has grown more complicated since that time.

Gerber said the agreement is a critical component of the city's ongoing power supply needs, and Sunflower is willing to act as the agent for the city.

Commissioner Dave Daniels asked if other places do this other than Sunflower and the power pool.

Blake said the city could use another group such as KMEA, MEAN, or there are others.

"Who we go with will help handle this no matter who it is," Gerber said.

Daniels said the city can terminate the agreement at any time.

Gerber said yes. Commissioner Annette Fairbanks made the motion to approve the agreement and Garcia seconded. The vote was 5-0.

High school blood drive



Goodland High School student Christy Studer (lower left) was a new blood donor at the Red Cross Blood Drive organized by high school math teacher Jacqué Elliott last Thursday in the high school gym. Over 80 pints of blood were donated.
Photo by Tom Betz/The Goodland Star-News

Colby post office to make changes

By Kevin Bottrell
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Colby's mail may soon go to Salina before heading on to its destination, though the service says letters should not be delayed.

The U.S. Postal Service is considering merging Colby's mail processing center, along with one in Hays, with the one in Salina.

Colby Postmaster Kenton Krehbiel said the Colby center serves any zip code that starts with 677, which includes most of northwest Kansas. Krehbiel said mail from those zip codes comes to Colby from about 25 post offices. The center sorts mail for those offices, and then sends that mail to each office to be sorted to individual mail carriers.

The Colby center processes about 8,500 pieces of mail a day, said Postal Service spokesman Brian Sperry. The post office employs 25 people with 8 in the processing center.

Central Plains Marketing Manager Dan Loukota said the Hays sectional center also is being looked at, along with Independence, Hutchinson and about 100 others around the country.

In a letter sent out to business that do a lot of mail, Loukota says the economic downturn and the Internet have led to a 20 percent decline in mail volume over the past five years, more than 43 billion pieces of mail.

"Stamped single-piece, first-class mail — that's the kind of letter that people send to grandma or to pay their bills — has declined by 50 percent in the last decade," Sperry said.

Consequently, the Postal Service is not able to keep up with the cost of processing and delivery. Krehbiel said the Colby post office has also seen the decline.

Loukota said the service has more people, equipment and buildings than it needs and consolidating operations make good business sense.

"It would be fiscally irresponsible not to do so," he said.

Loukota said the service doesn't know yet how much money would be saved by consolidations; that will be determined in the study. Another priority, he said, is to find a way to consolidate without delaying processing or turnaround times.

"We want to make sure there is no impact," he said. "Time and money, those are the things we have to look at."

Loukota acknowledged that layoffs may be a possibility, but said the service would make every effort to find employees another place within the company.

Sperry said any changes would not affect customer service in the front office.

The Postal Service is soliciting public comments on consolidation as part of the feasibility study. Loukota said comments can be sent to Mgr. Consumer Affairs, U.S. Postal Service, Box 199504, Omaha, Neb., 68119.

Loukota said the study will take about 60 days, and the service is already partway through it. He said they should have a decision within six weeks. If the study supports closing the Colby processing center, he said, the service would hold a public meeting in Colby for business owners and residential customers.

This isn't the only cost-saving measure the post office is undertaking. On Thursday, Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe announced the service would get rid of 7,500 positions around the country and close seven district offices. The service offered an early retirement option to some of those employees, most in management or administrative jobs. The service also plans to close about 2,000 post offices over the next two years.

Donahoe said the moves are part of a plan that would save the post office about \$750 million each year. However, its deficit approaches \$10 billion a year.

Barbershop chorus to perform at Colby

The Tumbleweed Chorus and The Ladies of Prairie Rose Harmony will present their annual Broadway Barbershop program on Saturday, April 9, at the Frahm Theatre on the Colby Community College campus.

John Collett of Goodland, a member of the Tumbleweed Chorus, said the two groups will share the stage and sing their favorite numbers from Broadway shows arranged in the barbershop style. The two groups will combine to sing a special arrangement of "Sunrise, Sunset."

Two performances are scheduled with the matinee at 2:30 p.m. mountain time and the evening show at 6:30 p.m. mountain time. An afterglow at the student union will follow the evening performance.

Tickets are \$10 when purchased in advance and \$12 at the door. For

tickets or information call John Collett 821-1178, Ken Corke 890-2293 or Scott Briney 821-1145.

Special guest quartet Cabaret will highlight the show. Cabaret members come from four different states, but when they get together, they really get it together. All four members are accompanied musicians who have sung together for nearly a decade, and with various Sweet Adelines groups for longer than that.

Their special brand of harmony and sparkling personalities promise to light up the stage and cap an evening of harmony and fun.

The Tumbleweed Chorus is under the direction of Peggy Cabrinha of Atwood and Dr. Phil Shuman of Colby conducts the Prairie Rose Harmony.

Voters invited

A special meet and greet with School Board and City Commissioner candidates is planned from 7-9 p.m. on Monday, at the High School auditorium the night before the election.

This event will help the voters of Sherman County become better acquainted with the candidates for School Board and City Commission, said Ken Klemm of the High Plains Constitutional Society, which has organized the event.

Klemm said each candidate will have three minutes to answer three advanced questions. He said there should be time for a question and answer period to follow.

The event will wrap up with a meet-n-greet, he said. "We've encouraged candidates to stay for this time to allow folks to chat and pose further questions voters might have."

corrections

In the cutline for the picture under "Volunteers honored" on page 7 of the Tuesday, March 29, 2011 edition of The Goodland Star-News David Branda and Eileen Townsend's names were misspelled. Carol Baum also received a certificate. This was due to a reporting error.

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

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Coach Gary Smith
899-2437 or 821-1163