

Wind whipped flames engulf rural fire truck

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land Rural Fire Chief Brian James said they were told not to worry about the empty house, and when the Goodland trucks arrived on scene the house and out buildings were all ablaze.

He said they decided to turn the efforts to keeping the fire from spreading further north through the fields.

The winds were out of the south at 33 mph with gusts to 46, and the fire was pushed north by the winds. The fire men were able to stop the advance at County Road 78 to keep it from jumping into a dryland corn field.

James had been Goodland Rural Fire Chief for less than 24 hours when the fire call came in. He said at least 12 rural firemen reported to the fire, and at one time there were four trucks from Goodland Sherman County Rural, three from Kanorado, one from Cheyenne County and four from Kit Carson County.

Water tankers arrived from Sherman County Road and Bridge, Dorman Brothers and Frontier Ag.

James said four farmers with disc plows came to help. He said he was not sure who all of the farmers were, but Roger Enfield was one.

Kanorado Chief Peterson said he thought the Kears had a disc and David Leonard. He was not sure who the fourth one was.

James said he felt it all came together pretty well, and the effort made the damage as light as possible.

Chief Peterson said the Kanorado trucks stayed on scene to make sure the hot spots were out especially in the trees after the sun went down and you could see the burning spots



Winds of up to 46 mph blew flames and smoke across County Road 77 north of Ruleton obscuring the unoccupied home, out buildings and trees caught in the path of the fire accidentally touched off by sparks from a crew welding a bracket on a nearby pivot sprinkler. The fire engulfed a Kanorado fire truck on the west side of the fire. Flames licked out above the corn stalks (right) in the field on the north side of Country Road 77 where the fire jumped and raced through the middle of the field before being stopped at County Road 78 before it could reach a dryland corn field. Tucks from four departments help contain and put out the fire Tuesday afternoon.

Photos by Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News



in the trees.

He said as the trucks were returning to Kanorado the tanker ran out of fuel and they had to take some fuel out to get it back to the station. He said running fire trucks in the corn fields causes them to overheat as the radiators get plugged with the corn stalks and leaves causing some stalling problems.

With the main fire under control a second fire call came in about a fire in a field at County Road 12 and Road 57. James said the landowner helped keep the fire down by turning on his pivot sprinkler.

He said a harvester was cutting the field and the fire started in the middle. He said the best guess is static electricity was the cause of the fire.

When James and the Rural Firemen returned to town he was called out with the city firemen to standby for the standoff blocking 14th and Main.

"I got home at 4 a.m.," he said.

He agrees he got a baptism as Goodland rural fire chief.

"I think we did a good job, and was proud of the rural firemen who helped," he said. "I need people to understand I am the chief for the Goodland Rural Fire and the Goodland City fire departments. Kanorado and Brewster are separate and have their own chiefs. They help on a mutual aid basis."

He said he did not call out any Goodland city or ask for help from Brewster trucks because with the red flag warning and high winds he wanted to have them as protection for the east side of the county.

Large rural fires were reported in Wallace County, Thomas County and Cheyenne County on Tuesday.

City commissioners agree to try fire department consolidation

CITY, from Page 1

been done.

Commissioner Josh Dechant said he had talked to a man from Georgia and he did a feasibility study, but to do the full study had a pretty good price.

Gerber said the feasibility study was done last year, but it focused on station location. He said he and Darrell Cloyd of the rural fire board both did some checking on the cost for the detailed study, but felt it would be too expensive, and that did not move ahead.

Finley asked if the consolidation happens who would be the ownership of the fire protection. Is it the city, is it the fire board, is it the county the city and the fire board together.

Gerber said he felt it would be a hybrid.

Mayor John Garcia said he felt it would be good to explore the possibilities, and know there is a lot of

logistics to be determined.

Garcia asked Enfield if the county commissioners were in favor of this consolidation.

Enfield said he agreed with Linin the commissioners are interested in pursuing this, and that they have appointed good people to the fire board who are making the decisions.

Garcia asked if the fire board and commissioners needed to do a workshop meeting.

Gerber said he and James had looked at an agreement between Colby and Fire District Three in Thomas County, and felt it looks like the right thing we want to do. He said under the agreement the rural fire board would continue to provide the funding. He said it would have to be rewritten a bit.

"I am in favor of moving ahead with this," Dechant said, "if you are asking us it is permissible to begin the discussion."

Gerber asked if the commissioners would like to hear from the fire

board.

Rural Fire Board member Kevin Zimmerman asked if the city would like for the rural fire board to come up with a proposal.

Garcia said he thought that would be a good idea. He said they need to look at the monetary questions. He asked how much the rural fire district property tax levy raises.

County Clerk Janet Rumpel said the mill levy raises about \$230,000 and that does include Kanorado and Brewster fire departments. She said it is tied to the valuation within the fire district.

Finley asked if that has been adequate in the past.

Rumpel said it has been.

"We have good fire protection and a good department," Gerber said. "We do not want to do anything to jeopardize that. I don't think it will, but we have to ask."

Talking about the fire chief duties Gerber said, "I think if James takes on this roll it will make it more dif-

ficult for him to continue to serve in the building inspector position. Brian disagrees with me. We might have to make some changes."

"I do not have a problem moving forward," Finley said, "but I do not feel we are ready to make a motion. I would like to see the proposal for the next meeting."

Garcia asked the fire board if they could have a proposal ready by the next commission meeting on Monday, Oct. 17.

Zimmerman said the rural fire board does not meet in October because of corn harvest. He said they could get it ready in November.

The question is how we handle the position until the next meeting, Gerber said.

Commissioner Chris Zimmerman said the rural fire board liked what Brian said. Give him a chance to get his feet wet and we can see what the work load is in the next few weeks.

"One question is how we cover the building inspections as well as the fire chief," Garcia said. "Tough for the commission to make a decision based on what we have. Might have to have some temporary help to see how it might work. We would expect you to give us a frank answer"

Gerber said he had put some thought to that and feel it can be done, at least on a temporary basis, and would be good time to test this.

Finley asked if the county is going to be paying some of the fire chief's salary.

"We have not had that discussion," Gerber said.

"It is a volunteer position," James said. "The chief gets paid \$100 a month and for calls and training. I felt it might be difficult to come up as it is a volunteer position, and felt that might scare the fire board away."

Finley said he did not have a problem in trying it, but if will be a bit of a problem if the city has to hire someone.

Dechant said they can see what is happening and Brian will be the best determination and Doug can judge his performance.

Garcia said it sounded like everyone was in favor of trying it as a trial basis.

Gerber said he would have a proposed contract for the next meeting.

"As of tonight Brian will be Goodland Rural Fire Chief and City Fire Chief in charge of both departments," Chris Zimmerman said.

Enfield said he felt the rural fire coverage will be good as well.

James said he felt some of the rural firemen might quit without giving him a chance to prove himself. He said the city has been through this before.

"The Goodland Rural Fire Department will always have the backing of the city fire department,

Kanorado and Brewster Fire Departments," he said. "I don't think all of them will quit."

"The goal is to keep all the county safe," Dechant said.

Asked how many are on the rural department Kevin Zimmerman said 17 on the county and full would be 24.

"Is there going to be a problem if there is a fire in the city and the county," Linin asked.

"Feel it can be handled," Dechant said. "We had a day where we had three fires at one time."

"The question is if there is a call can Brian respond," said Michael Dorn, a rural firefighter.

Gerber said the city would need to be careful to see the city calls are taken care of, and felt Brian would work hard to earn the trust of the rural firemen.

A question was raised about the county equipment and the current fire building.

Cloyd said the building will suffice. We do not see an issue and feel have a great deal with the assistant chief Troy Mannis.

"The fire board is not seeing it as city and county," he said, "but seeing it as community. We are trying to see it that way from Kanorado to Brewster."

Conservation award nominations sought

The committee for the Conservation Awards Program is seeking nominations for this year's Sherman County Conservation District program.

Nominations can be made by any person in the county, and should be sent to the Natural Resource Conservation Service office, 210 W. 10th, by Oct. 25.

The program is to stimulate greater interest in conservation of natural resources in the county by recognizing farmers and landowners who have made outstanding progress in establishing soil and water conservation on their farms.

Included in the awards are a soil conservation award and a windbreak award.

The program is sponsored by the agriculture committee of the Kansas Bankers Association. Committee members include board chairs of the Sunflower Extension District, Farm Service Agency, Soil Conservation District, the District Conservationist and the Agricul-

ture Extension Agent.

Awards were presented this year at the annual Conservation District banquet to Terry and Becky Baker for their windbreak and Dwight and Judith Chipperfield for soil conservation.

Points considered in selecting soil conservation award winners include use of land based on capability, completeness of conservation plan, balance of farm enterprise, quality of conservation work and maintenance of practices and spe-

cial practices unique to the farming operation.

Points considered in selecting windbreak award include providing protection from damaging winds for farm home, barns, livestock and fields. Windbreaks should be a minimum of three years old. The windbreak details include design, management, location, density and length.

For more information call the Soil Conservation District office at (785) 899-3070.

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