

City looking to do water, electric system audit

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As an example, Christiansen said, the company is currently working on a water project in Colby. That city budgeted for an 11 percent rate increase, but when the project was designed, it turned out that no increase was required. However, he said, once the project is done, some customers may see an increase on their bill because their usage is being measured more accurately.

Finley also asked if a project can be done in phases, so the city would not have to undertake it all at once. Christiansen said the company can break down any potential project in phases and present the cost and benefits of doing so.

Finley said he was not questioning the value of the audit, but main concern was with the timing. With

this economy, he said, it might not be the best time to undertake large, expensive projects. Christiansen said that even if the city decides not to do a project, it will still have the results of the audit. That way it will know where the problems are in case it wants to do a project in the future.

Finley said he would be willing to go forward. Commissioner Jenifer Sanderson also indicated she would be in favor of the audit. Commissioner Gary Farris said he wanted to think about it before voting. The commissioners will vote on whether or not to go forward with the audit at the Monday, Sept. 4, meeting.

In other business, the commission:

- Got an update on the Flatlanders Fall Festival from Brent Wood, who said that the tractor pullers

are coming this year as well as the National Guard Patriot Motorcycle, which was built by Orange County Choppers.

Wood requested the welcome flags be put out, and again requested the council donate money to the festival.

"We have a lot to do 30 days out," he said. "I need to know where we are financially. We don't always come to you for financial support, but we are now."

The commission did not respond to the request at the meeting.

- Discussed a request for proposals for solid waste removal. Gerber said he didn't have enough information to put together the request and had some questions for the commission.

The first question was length of the contract. The previous contract,

which is ending in December, was for 10 years. Gerber said he looked at some other cities, and their contracts are typically for three years with an option for three more.

Garcia said the shorter term allows for better evaluation of performance. Gerber said the short term might scare off some potential bidders. Garcia suggested five years, to which the other commissioners agreed.

The commissioners also agreed the contract should be exclusive – the city would not contract with any other trash companies – and to have city staff handle billing services as well as include language about a better dumpster replacement schedule.

The commissioners discussed a recycling program, but were reluctant to incur the expense. Farris

suggested the county look into a program at the landfill. Gerber said the city should have some obligation to be more responsible in this area. Finley agreed.

"It could be a conversation to have with the new county commissioners next year," he said.

Farris wanted to add language to allow the city control over garbage collection rate increases. Garcia suggested making any rate change subject to commission approval. Finley asked that a minimum equipment requirement be built into the request for proposals.

Gerber said he would incorporate the changes and bring a request for proposals back to the commission for approval at a future meeting.

County working on budgets

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and the sleeping quarters are there for their convenience if they want to stay there while on call.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved a request to waive landfill tipping fees for a landowner who is demolishing an old store at 13th Street and Clark Avenue.

- Examined a bid to replace the south door of the courthouse. The bid was for \$2,400 to replace the door and the jam. The commissioners did not approve the bid, saying it was too expensive.

- Decided to look into partitioning a section of the law library to keep purchasing records. The records have to be kept in a secure area. The commissioners said they will talk to building inspector Brian James to see what codes need to be followed.

Kansas Rep to tweet at convention

Fowler – Congressman Tim Huelskamp, who represents Kansas' 1st Congressional District will be sending live messages through Twitter during the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Fla. His twitter account is @TimHuelskamp. Huelskamp will be giving live updates from the floor of the Convention and from various other events surrounding the Convention.

Tim Huelskamp is a Delegate from Kansas to the Republican National Convention. There will be a wide range of speakers and events surrounding the convention.

Long lines at Brewster hot dog feed

Brewster Mayor Mike Baughn (above left), Stuart Schmidt and Betty Jo Baird served food Friday at the Brewster Library and Museum's annual hot dog and watermelon feed at Hunter Hall Park. Beforehand, Bob Lehman (left) and Fred Juenemann grilled the hot dogs for the event. Donations went to the library.

Photo by Marian Ballard-Colby Free Press



Sherman County among many counties with rising graduation rates

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graduates. Even though the Sunbelt has seen tremendous growth over the past few decades, the South's rural counties haven't kept up in terms of attracting adults with college degrees.

But the problem of keeping college graduates in rural America is a national issue and one that is also enduring.

Missouri economist Stallmann said this is a reflection of the kinds of jobs that are generally available in rural communities. If there are fewer jobs demanding college degrees in a community, there are likely to be fewer college graduates.

"It's a big deal in a lot of rural counties because you don't see a lot of jobs that require a college education," Stallmann said. Young people graduating from high school don't see many jobs that demand a college

diploma, so they don't think about coming home once they leave for the university.

There can be a "self-reinforcing cycle" in rural communities, Stallmann said – young people leave to gain higher education, they don't come back after college because there aren't jobs that demand such education, and their absence diminishes the chances that more of these kinds of jobs will be created.

Nationally, rural counties and counties with small cities have caught up with urban counties in the percentage of adults who have some post high school education. Stallmann sees this as a sign that "there are perhaps more jobs in rural areas that require post secondary education but not college."

Both Stallmann and Partridge said the data on college education rates told them that rural communities should consider the kind of jobs

being created locally.

"Rural communities may need to think about the types of jobs" being created, Stallmann said. "There are some communities that are doing things like getting local businesses to put an emphasis on hiring local kids who got a college education."

"It really suggests that rural communities that aren't thinking about making themselves attractive to educated people are really going to suffer," Partridge said.

Bill Bishop is co-editor of the Daily Yonder (www.dailyyonder.com), an online news publication

covering rural America that is published by the Center for Rural Strategies. The Center for Rural Strategies (<http://www.ruralstrategies.org>www.ruralstrategies.org) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote healthy civic discourse

about rural issues.

Roberto Gallardo is an assistant extension professor at the Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University, (srdc.msstate.edu)



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