

Ambulance would like new home

By BRANDON GAY

The Norton County Ambulance Service is looking for a new home either by building or purchasing.

On Wednesday Norton County commissioners discussed purchasing a building to be used as a new ambulance barn.

Commissioners have also discussed building a new structure.

While a new 4,420 square foot structure the county has discussed could cost around \$400,000, purchasing and renovating an existing building may be less.

Tom Arpen of BG Consultants, the county's engineering consulting firm, evaluated a 5,900 square foot building that could cost about \$300,000 after renovations are complete.

However, a possibility of old underground gas tanks on the site might raise the price. Mr. Arpen said once that issue was settled, a structural engineer would need to look at the building.

The ambulance service is applying for a grant to pay for part of a new building, but the same grant could be used to purchase an existing structure.

Mr. Arpen said typically a new building would cost about \$90 per square foot while purchasing and renovating a building would typically cost about \$50 per square foot.

The ambulance service is now housed in a 2,000 square-foot building, which doesn't allow much room for education and expansion.



A dazzling starburst exploded high in the air over Keith Sebelius Reservoir during Sunday night's Fourth of July Celebration. The weather cooperated beautifully right up until five minutes after the grand finale'.

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

Fireworks beats Mother Nature

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And what a show it was. With patriotic music playing in the background, fireworks of every sort lit up the night sky. Roman candles, starbursts, flares and explosions accompanied by the appropriate oohs and aahs made the light show a success.

But, no more than five minutes after the show's grand finale the wind began to blow at gale force and rain drops began to fall.

Within minutes, sheets of rain were coming down. Spectators had just enough time to escape to their vehicles before the park was awash.

Prairie Dog State Park Manager, Steve Mathes said 909 vehicles came into the park Sunday.

"It's been a real good week," he said. "We had over 2,500 vehicles come through during the week."

Wireless Internet planned

The Northern Valley grade school will get wireless Internet next year.

At its June 25 meeting, the Northern Valley School board approved a plan to set up the network with laptop computers.

In other business, the board,

- Reviewed bids for workman's compensation insurance and accepted a bid from EMC.

- Accepted a bid from Computer Solutions of Smith Center for 16 laptop computers and a harbor cart.

- Increased administrative and classified pay by 2.9 percent for the 2004-'05 school year.

- Held a closed session for employer/employee negotiations.

- Decided the next meeting would be held on Monday, July 12, at 8 p.m.

Roadwork may cause some delays

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Also, at the new viaduct on the east side of Norton on U.S. 36, temporary seeding has been planned for this summer with permanent seeding scheduled for late winter or early spring.

The two-year project on U.S. 36 from West Street in Norton to the K-383 junction six miles west of Norton has begun with pre-watering and some dirt work, Mr. Hein said.

A shoofly detour will be built this month, so that a box bridge about four miles west of town can be finished before winter.

Mr. Hein said that on the two-mile piece of U.S. 283/K-9, one lift of asphalt is yet to be laid. When that's done, striping, signing and temporary seeding will be completed.

Barring any extreme weather delays, he said that stretch of road should be open in late July or early August.

The rest of the U.S. 283 project to Hill City is still closed, but should be open again in early November.

Two other sealing operations are almost finished on K-9, west of U.S. 283 in Norton and Decatur counties, and K-383 and U.S. 83 in Decatur County.

They should be done this month. Meanwhile, pilot cars are taking traffic through the construction zones during the day.

Numbers change on driver licenses

Effective last Thursday, Kansas residents will no longer be able to use their social security number as their driver's license or Kansas identification number. License applicants must supply their social security number to the Kansas Department of Revenue for their

records, however, it will not be shown on licenses or identification cards.

If you are using your social security number as your license or identification card number, it will be changed to a system-generated number the next time you make an

application.

Also, as of July 1, the Department of Revenue will no longer accept an individual taxpayer identification number. As in the past, if you do not have a social security number, you can sign an affidavit attesting to that.

County worries about water issues at animal farms

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The regulations created rules to protect ground and surface water and to control odor. A team of technical experts, including an environmental research consultant, two engineers and a certified soil scientist, hired by the county, said state laws were not adequate to protect water and control odor.

The regulations were challenged in court by the Kansas Livestock Association and several area hog producers. The county was backed by the Kansas Association of Counties.

The district court sided with the livestock association, ruling that the regulations violated a 1998 state law that bars counties from changing the statutory provisions governing feeding operations.

The Kansas Supreme Court agreed with the district court's ruling.

In their statement, the commissioners said despite the ruling, they will continue to explore ways to solve problems created by confined animal operations, such as corporate hog farms.

"While the Supreme Court has invalidated the County's CAFO (confined animal feeding operations) regulations, the problems and concerns that led to their adoption remain," the commissioners statement said.

"In fact, it is believed that a number of CAFO projects have been on hold pending the outcome of the lawsuit.

"Now that the Supreme Court has ruled, the county expects to see increased CAFO activity in the

very near future. Because they have a duty to do whatever they can to protect the health and safety of the citizens in Norton County, the county commissioners will continue to monitor CAFO related problems and look for ways to solve them."

The commissioners said they would monitor confined animal feeding operations for violations of state law. They also said they may ask the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to consider incorporating some or all of the county's regulations into the state's rules.

It's now up to the legislature to fix the problems created by the 1998 law, the commissioner said.

"If counties cannot protect their citizens and the environment by adopting their own laws, the state should adopt laws that adequately address the types of problems and conditions that exist not only statewide, but those that exist in just some counties," the commissioners' statement said.

Another possibility would be to amend the law to allow counties to act on their own to regulate confined animal operations.

While all three commissioners declined to comment beyond their statement, they said they believed their statement would get out to people around the state and then they would evaluate the reaction.



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Podiatrist — Foot Specialist
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