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Vol. 97, No. 99
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THE NORTON TELEGRAM

Sports:

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Pages 8 & 10

Friday

November 10, 2004

Norton, Kansas
Home of Eldon Mapes

Briefly

Living nativity set for Saturday

The Living Nativity, held every Christmas season, is scheduled from 6-8 p.m., Saturday at the Norton United Methodist Church parking lot. Seven scenes from the New Testament account of the coming of Christ, his birth, life and death on the cross will be portrayed. There is no admission but donations will be accepted. Everyone is invited into the fellowship hall afterwards for cookies and hot chocolate.

Visitors will be asked to turn off headlights as they travel the route.

State park will close for holidays

The Prairie Dog State Park Norton area office will be closed for the holiday season beginning Thursday, Dec. 23. The office will reopen on Monday, Jan. 3.

The 2005 park permits and hunting/fishing licenses will go on sale Saturday, Dec. 18. Call 877-2953 for more information.

Concert tickets still available

Tickets are still available for the Josh Turner concert to be held at 7 p.m. Sunday at the East Campus auditorium. The Norton County Arts Council is sponsoring the up-and-coming country music artist, best known for his hit single, "Long Black Train".

For ticket information Saturday or Sunday call 202-0273. If any tickets remain before show time Sunday, they may be purchased at the door. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$10 for children 12 and under.

Weather

Forecast:

Tonight — Partly cloudy with lows around 30. West winds 5 to 15 mph.
Saturday — Partly cloudy and warmer. Highs in the mid 60s. Southwest winds 5 to 15 mph. **Saturday Night** — Partly cloudy with lows in the mid 30s. West winds 10 to 20 mph. **Sunday** — Partly cloudy and breezy. Much colder with highs in the mid 40s.

Howell report:

Tuesday High 52, Low 31
Wednesday High 50, Low 34
Thursday High 56, Low 32
Week ago High 44, Low 30
Month ago High 50, Low 26
Year ago High 40, Low 23
December precipitation 0.00 inches
Year-to-date precipitation 25.75 inches
(Readings taken at the Paul and Pat Howell farm 10 Miles North and 1/3 Mile East of Norton)

Prayer

God of joy, forgive us when we forget the most important gift of all — your unconditional love. Help us to remember that you love us so much you sing about it. Amen



'Tis the season...

The halls of Norton Community High School are decked. Members of KAYS decorated the school Tuesday afternoon. Darci Darling, left, Amber Engelbert and Crista Rhoades put the finishing touches on the tree located in the front lobby by the office.

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

Cost share makes chemicals for noxious weeds cheaper

By VERONICA MONIER

Because of a budget cut and a state law, the Norton County Weed Department will be cost sharing all of its chemicals that kill noxious weeds.

Before the budget was cut this summer, the weed department cost shared on chemicals to kill three weeds — musk thistle, bindweed and Canada thistle, said Supervisor Reggie Beckman. Now it will cost share on all of the chemicals it sells to kill weeds.

For the cost share, the county pays 25 percent so that the customer only has to pay 75 percent of what the chemical would cost elsewhere.

But, said Commissioner Leroy Lang,

the county isn't trying to take away business from the places that sell chemicals in the county.

"We're in the business of taking care of noxious weeds, not general weeds," he said. "We aren't trying to take anyone's business. Cost sharing is an incentive for people to kill their noxious weeds before they spread all over."

Mr. Beckman said there were 13 types of noxious weeds in the state, but Norton County doesn't have all of them. He said the main ones here are musk thistle, bindweed, Canada thistle, and Johnson grass. He said there are

(Continued on Page 5)

Youth center is looking for a place to call its own

"The Rock," a non-profit Christian Youth Center is looking for a home in Norton.

"We don't intend for this to be a hang-out," said Trent Richmond, who is heading up efforts to get the center started. "It's not going to be open every day. But, it will be a place for high school kids to come, probably once a week. We expect them to have some ownership in the center."

The organization should have between eight and 12 youth board members made up of juniors and seniors. Sophomores can be committee heads and all classes will be parts of committees.

This will allow incoming freshmen to get involved through a committee first, then as sophomores, they can be ap-

pointed as committee heads. As juniors and seniors they can be on the board. This will allow them to grow into leadership roles.

Adult positions will include a program director, finance, building and program committees and a board of directors.

At a recent committee meeting a mission statement was carved out. The center is to be Christ centered, committed to developing facilities and providing opportunities for youth to grow in their faith.

The core values of the center will include:

- To be a Christ-based, inter-denominational youth center in the Norton County area.

(Continued on Page 5)

Contract isn't what coordinator wants

By VERONICA MONIER

Norton County Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Alvin Mapes isn't happy with an employment contract proposed by the county.

Mr. Mapes said he didn't want to be a consultant, which is what the contract proposed. He said he contacted the state, which said he would have to document 20 hours of service a week. He said it was his understanding that only an emergency manager could ask the state for a resolution declaring a disaster and didn't think that a consultant could do that. He said no other coordinator in the state was hired by their county as a consultant.

Also, he said, by being an employee, rather than a consultant, he was covered under the county's liability insurance. He

said if he was a consultant, he could be sued.

County Attorney Doug Sebelius said anybody could sue or be sued these days and so Mr. Mapes could still be sued for doing something wrong.

"All these years I've been without a contract," he said. "I don't see the need for one. You just need to set up a salary for me in the fixed amount I am entitled to or cover the time it's (the job) going to be consuming. Responsibilities have been increased over the years trying to get all these things developed."

Mr. Mapes said if they had to keep the contract, then everywhere it said consultant should be changed to emergency manager. He said they needed to arrive at a figure for an increase in salary to cover

taxes and insurance.

He said he talked to an accountant, who said he would have to pay the full taxes at 15.3 percent. He figured to cover taxes and his private health insurance, as well as an increase in salary, it would cost almost \$17,000. He said he makes \$10,200 a year now.

Commissioner John Miller said with Mr. Mapes having to pay full taxes, instead of the county picking up half his social security taxes, he would be making less than he is now.

According to tax law an employer has to pay one-half of an employee's social security taxes but self-employed workers and consultants have to pay the whole amount.

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Parent training begins soon

Twila Custer, early childhood teacher, and Joan Hale, school psychologist, will be offering the "Becoming a Loving and Logical Parent" training course beginning Monday, Jan 3.

The classes will meet at 6:30 p.m. every Monday through Feb. 7 in the Eisenhower Elementary Library. The classes are free and books and materials will be provided.

This parenting course, developed by the Love and Logic Institute, was designed to help parents find an-

(Continued on Page 5)

Economic development is on its way

By VERONICA MONIER

The recently formed Economic Development Committee is trying to get finances figured out so that a director can be hired.

The committee is supposed to include two county commissioners, two Norton city council members, two at-large county representatives, two at-large Norton city representatives, a representative from Alma and a representative from Lenora.

The City of Norton and the county still need to appoint at-large representatives.

County Commissioner John Miller asked Norton City Councilman Jerry Hawks how the city felt about splitting the committee costs. Mr. Hawks said the council hasn't talked about it yet.

Mr. Miller said the committee needed to figure out a budget, so that it can get things rolling. He said the county has \$90,000 in its economic development fund, \$10,000 of which is earmarked for the airport.

Mr. Hawks said he felt that for this first year, they needed to establish a budget that covers costs and the salary of an economic development director and then go from there. He said things would be more clear after the first year on how much money was going to be needed.

Mr. Miller said as for the smaller cities in the county, like Lenora and Alma, he was told that other places who have an economic development committee just charge \$500 to \$1,000 a year to join. He said that seemed to work out best and helped to keep everybody involved.

Mr. Hawks said the city has some money in economic development, but it also has more sales tax money than was expected.

"We're committed," he said about the city. "We just have to figure out who pays for what."

Mr. Miller said he thought the committee would need a budget of \$100,000 at least for next year.

"Claire Guston (an economic development consultant) said the biggest failures happen when people try to run things like

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Steve Horney, left, Community Relations Director from Valley Hope and Dan Sturgill, branch office manager for High Plains Mental Health Clinic, discussed their views of a newly formed group called Unified Resources. The group is dedicated to bringing together professionals from different helping fields. — Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

Cooperation make services better

By CAROLYN PLOTTS
People, who spend their professional lives helping others, are getting together to try to help one another.

When Steve Horney, community relations director for Valley Hope Association and Dan Sturgill, branch office manager for High Plains Mental Health Center kept meeting each other at workshops, it occurred to them that others in the professional helping field might be in the same situation.

They invited professionals from

other agencies and organizations to meet with them so they could better serve their clients. The idea is to provide a forum to learn from each other and to support each other; to cross educate each other; and to provide creative solutions to community problems.

The group plans to keep the meetings informal so everyone can speak freely about the challenges they face and ask questions.

Cindy Wegener from the Social Rehabilitative Services office was the first to address the group; next was Mary Kay Woodyard, who

talked about Hospice Services and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

At the next meeting, to be held Tuesday, Jan. 4, will be Pam Shelton, who has a background in alcohol and drug counseling.

If you work in the medical, mental or substance abuse field, are a member of the clergy, in law enforcement, in the school system, work with senior citizens or any other helping field, you are invited to join Unified Resources at 7 a.m., the first Tuesday of every month at the Town and Country Restaurant for breakfast.

Commissioners work out contract with coordinator

(Continued from Page 1)

Mr. Sebelius said the county could make him a consultant or an employee. It was up to the commissioners.

Commissioner Leroy Lang said if they put Mr. Mapes on the payroll, the county would have to have a certain number of hours a week documented.

After holding a closed session to discuss non-elected personnel matters, Mr. Lang told Mr. Mapes that the commission would take this offer under advisement and then get back to him.

Mr. Mapes said it seemed like it was taking a long time to get this worked out.

Mr. Miller said this is the process. The county has its attorney draft a proposal and the person involved has a chance to review it and ask for changes. Then, the county does another draft.

"This is like nothing we've ever had to deal with before," said Commissioner Dean Kruse. "It's going to take time."

Mr. Mapes said he didn't think he was asking for anything unjust.

"If we can't come to some sort of agreement, I will submit a resignation," he said.

Mr. Miller said he was asking for \$7,000 more a year and that the county had to see what all that entailed. He said the county needed information on a state reimbursement program Mr. Mapes had mentioned, so that they would know what was going on.

Mr. Mapes said he would qualify for the program as soon as he finished his general education diploma. He said he filled out a request for a reimbursement grant for the county this year, but was denied because he didn't have a high school diploma.

Mr. Miller said he needed to give them some kind of general

information so that they would know how much the county was going to be reimbursed. Once they knew this, they would know more about Mr. Mapes salary.

"This will give us a better idea of what's going on," he said. "Unfortunately, we can't just guess as to how much we'll be reimbursed. We have to have something solid. This could make a big impact. If we get 50 percent back, then it's only \$8,500 that will have to come out of the budget for your salary."

Mr. Lang said they needed the information because they didn't quite understand the reimbursement program. He said Mr. Mapes is expected to do certain things, but so is the county.

Mr. Miller said the county also needed to know the requirements for the program, like documentation of hours. He said the commissioners couldn't guarantee Mr. Mapes that he wouldn't have to work and document a certain number of hours because they didn't know what the requirements were.

Mr. Lang agreed.

"Things like this get compli-

cated," he said. "If one of the requirements is that I have to jump off of the roof of the courthouse, I'd kind-of like to know that before we do anything with this. Don't you think?"

Mr. Mapes said if it gets too complicated and if he didn't get some kind of answer soon, he was going to turn in a resignation.

"Maybe I'm getting too old to do this," he said. "Maybe I should just go for my social security and let someone else worry about it."

Mr. Lang said it was up to him. Mr. Mapes said he would get the county clerk the information on the reimbursement program and would meet with the commissioners next week.

In other business, the commission:

- Went into a 15-minute closed session with County Attorney Doug Sebelius and County Clerk Robert Wyatt to discuss non-elected personnel.
- Went into a 25-minute closed session with Mr. Wyatt and Sheriff Troy Thomson to discuss non-elected personnel.

Parent training begins Jan. 3

(Continued from Page 1)

Answers and actions for some of those difficult moments in child rearing. These techniques are effective with all children, from toddlers to teens.

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(Continued from Page 1)

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Budget is priority for committee

(Continued from Page 1)

this on shoestring budgets," said Mr. Miller.

Mr. Hawks said he thought the committee should have its own framework, like the airport board, so that it will be capable of making its own decisions without having to go back to the county commission or city council to get things done.

In other business, the committee:

- Discussed who to appoint for the remaining at-large representatives. Mr. Miller said the county was going to advertise in *The*

Norton Telegram for interested people. Commissioner Dean Kruse said that way, they would get people who were interested.

- Talked about what was needed in an economic development director and what the salary should be. Mr. Miller said whoever is hired should be a county employee, so that he or she had access to the entire county. He said salary with benefits, which includes a single coverage health insurance plan, would cost \$64,436.04. If it was a deal breaker, the county could offer family health coverage but it would cost \$7,056 more. He

said some people think the director should be a grant writer as well and that it should be a qualification for the job.

- Discussed holding a large scale general meeting to get the opinions of the general public, school district, senior citizens and others.
- Set future committee meetings for 5 p.m. Wednesdays, Jan. 12 and Jan. 26.
- Discussed inviting other towns like Clayton and Edmond to have representatives at the committee meetings.

Law reduces chemical costs in county

(Continued from Page 1)

several different chemicals available that kill each and some things work on more than one.

He said one of the main things the weed department does is sell chemicals.

"We cost share because it gives the taxpayers a break and will hopefully get the landowners to spray their noxious weeds," he said. "We're not out to make money. We're here to help the public."

Mr. Beckman said the county was cost sharing on some chemicals, when it didn't have to, just so people will spray. Now that the budget has been cut, the county has to cost share on all of the noxious weed chemicals.

The state law says that when a weed department's budget is set below 1.5 mills, which is \$58,596.14, for Norton County, then it has to cost share on chemicals for all noxious weeds.

He said he hasn't figured out why a county has to cost share when the weed department's budget goes below 1.5 mills. But it's a state law and so that's what happens.

Commissioner John Miller said

they lowered the weed department's budget because it was a way for the county to get the mill levy down. He said if it doesn't work and the weed department can't afford to buy chemicals in the future, then the commission will change the budget so it will work.

He said the department has a pretty good stockpile of chemicals, which is another reason the county could afford to lower the budget.

Mr. Beckman said the department will be okay on the amount of chemicals it has this year, but

they might have a problem next year. The biggest problem, he said, will be finding the money to replace the chemical stock once it is depleted.

He said the department buys between 1,100 to 1,200 gallons of chemicals a year at a cost that ranges from \$9 a gallon to more than \$200 a gallon. It just depends on what is bought, he said.

But, Mr. Beckman said, he keeps a sharp eye on how much is being spent there.

"We don't overspend," he said. "We're really tight as to what we spend."

Youth center gets underway

(Continued from Page 1)

- To provide a safe and accepting environment, free of tobacco, alcohol and drugs.
- To provide an atmosphere where youth can be encouraged in their faith and in-turn, encourage their churches. Youth will be encouraged to become a member of a local congregation.
- To bring the message of Christ to the youth in a relevant way while maintaining the truths of the

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To learn more about "The Rock Christian Youth Center" call Trent Richmond, 877-4016.



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