

Secretary of State visits Norton



Dick Hahn took a water sample from one of the sinks at *The Norton Telegram*. — Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

City takes test sample for monthly water check

Tuesday, Water and Waste Water Supervisor Dick Hahn was taking water samples within the city to be tested for bacterial levels. This time, it was *The Norton Telegram's* turn.

Mr. Hahn said four samples have to be taken each month to be sent to the state's microbiology laboratory in Topeka. The sample has to be "raw" water and can not be taken at a location with a water

softener, filter or reverse osmosis system.

He explained that the city is divided into quadrants and each quadrant is divided into five areas. A sample can only be taken once a year in each location.

Mr. Hahn also conducted a chlorine test with a hand-held meter.

"It tested fine," he said. "The chlorine residual is real good."

Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh came to Norton a week ago Wednesday to visit with voters and talk about what small towns need to keep things going.

Without adequate health care, he said, people cannot continue to live in small towns like Norton, or Burlingame, where he grew up.

Older people like his parents, he said, can't live where there is no health care and no hospital. Younger people with children also look for good medical care.

And young people especially are interested in education.

However, he said, there seems to be some fundamental flaws in how the state pays for schools.

The question the state Supreme Court has asked, he said, is "How much does it cost to educate a child in Kansas?"

So far, said Mr. Thornburgh, a Republican, no one has been able to answer that question.

While obviously not a great supporter of Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, Mr. Thornburgh said he thought her idea of having a five-year education plan like the state's 10-year highway plan was good.

There are some major flaws in the school funding system, he said, and the Legislature has not had the willpower to make hard decisions. In order to pay for education, he said, other programs may have to be cut.

He said he didn't think the court would step in to take over the school system because the court can't appropriate money. However, it might force the Legislature back into session this summer.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act, he said, while not popular with educators and with goals impossible to achieve, has put the focus back on the child, where it belongs.

Consolidation of school districts will happen, he said, but geography is as important as the number of students. It might not



Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh (left) talked to Jon Lofgreen during a public meeting last week at the Town and Country Kitchen. Norton County Commissioner John Miller can be seen in the background. — Telegram photo by Cynthia Haynes

make sense to have five school districts in Topeka, but it doesn't make sense to make students ride the bus for hours to attend classes, either.

Those districts which consolidate should get the financial benefit, he said, and perhaps even some sort of bonus for saving money.

Mr. Thornburgh said he thought the marriage amendment, which was on the ballot on Tuesday, would help voter turnout.

He said he thought it might create some problems because of the law of unintended consequences. Although he believes in the principle of a marriage being between one man and one woman, he said, the amendment could cause problems for innocents because it is poorly worded.

The secretary of state talked about elections both past and present and said that he had helped draft the federal voting act.

He went on to say that in 2006, for the first time every person in the state will have the right to a secret ballot.

In the past, he said, those who were handicapped had someone help them vote. With new voting machines the state and federal government are providing, everyone can vote in privacy.

Even though every county will have voting machines, he said, they don't have to use them for everyone. Paper ballots, which are still used in 20 Kansas counties, including Norton, can still be used for those who want them, he said.

Accessibility is a problem, he

said, as County Commissioner John Miller noted there is no polling place in Norton County that meets all the requirements for handicapped accessibility.

Sometimes places can be made accessible by putting plywood down on areas of gravel parking lots so that wheel chairs can be moved across them, he said. Sometimes, it means changing the way the doors to buildings open or the way the voting booths are set up.

After visiting with farmers eating breakfast at the Town and Country Kitchen and with the 15 or so Republicans and one Democrat who turned out to greet him, Mr. Thornburgh spoke briefly with the press and then went to the county clerk's office to visit with the staff.

CORRECTION

In the Tuesday edition of *The Norton Telegram*, in a story about the Norton County commissioners, a bid from New Look Paint and Body Shop for repairs to an ambulance was incorrectly reported as being \$3,518. The bid was actually \$3,050.18. This was a reporter's error.

☆☆☆☆☆
The Norton Telegram will correct or clarify anything that is wrong in a news story. Call our office at 877-3361 to report errors. We believe news stories should be fair and factual, and want you to tell us about any failure to live up to this standard.

Flurry of letters causes hurt feelings

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

Kansas Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh met a week ago Wednesday with election workers, staff at the county clerk's office and others to talk about problems with the primary elections last summer.

The meeting at the Town and Country Kitchen was sponsored by the Norton Republican Central Committee to allow the secretary to talk to people, answer questions, and visit with Norton County Clerk Robert Wyatt about the primary.

He didn't get to talk to Mr. Wyatt, who had an accident late last month and was in the hospital in Kearney but he did meet with about 20 people, mostly poll workers.

Nor were George and Vickie Gassmann at the meeting.

"We saw he (the secretary of state) was in town but nobody told us why he was here or we would have been there," Mrs. Gassmann said.

A letter from the Gassmanns after the August primary, in which Mr. Gassmann lost a bid to be the Republican candidate for com-

missioner from District 3 by one vote, started a chain of letters, misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

They still don't think their questions have all been answered, and they wish they'd been invited to the meeting with Mr. Thornburgh.

In their letter, the Gassmanns questioned information given out and procedures for handling the primary election. The secretary of state's office replied a little over a month later that their questions could only be answered by the county clerk's office, but that perhaps some retraining of election workers might be needed. Copies of both letters were sent to Mr. Wyatt, who quickly wrote the secretary's office that his people were being falsely accused and sent documentation of election work.

The secretary's office then wrote Mr. Wyatt thanking him for his documentation and to the Gassmanns saying that the matter had been looked into and no problems were found.

Mr. Thornburgh said that he came to town to talk to Mr. Wyatt and his workers and soothe hurt feelings.

Many of the questions from the primary center around provisional ballots. If a voter was not on the official rolls, they were allowed to vote a provisional ballot, which was kept apart. After the election, the provisional ballots were opened during canvassing. If it was determined the voter had the right to cast the ballot, it was counted, and if not it was voided.

In their letter, the Gassmanns asked how provisional ballots were to be received and accounted for and how the canvass of the votes was carried out.

"The book says they (provisional ballots) are supposed to be counted on Friday unless you advertise otherwise," the Gassmanns wrote.

They said they believed 10 to 11 provisional ballots had not been accounted for. Those ballots were discovered in a Lenora bag along with the regular ballots.

"Shouldn't the county clerk figure out he was missing 10-11 ballots?" they asked.

They were also concerned, they said, when told that the commissioners were to be the ones canvassing the votes, since Mr.

Gassmann's opponent was John Miller, an incumbent commissioner.

The Gassmanns also asked whether misinformation had been given out by poll workers about who was eligible to vote and about how their campaign finance report was handled after they discovered an error, which they wanted to correct.

Mr. Thornburgh's office answered the letter, saying that the Gassmanns really needed to talk with county officials. The office sent a copy of both the letter and the answer to the county clerk, who serves as the county election officer.

Brad Bryant, election director in the secretary of state's office, wrote, "You have raised a number of questions that can only be answered by the county election officer and the persons who counted and canvassed the ballots. In some cases, it may help to clarify the proper procedures and to recommend retraining of certain individuals who apparently were not aware of some of the statutory requirements for conducting elec-

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Three new members join ranks of Lions Club

Three new members were inducted into the Norton Lions Club during the noon meeting Tuesday at the American Legion.

Donna Mulford, Dan Pfanzenstiel and Carolyn Plotts were sworn in by Lion Wes Moore. Sponsors of the new members were Jake Durham and Bud Posson.

The state trading pin collection of the late Glen Tweed, long-time Norton Lions Club member, has been installed as a permanent display at the Norton County Mu-

seum. Mr. Tweed had arranged the pins in order of the convention they represented.

The club is scheduled to help assemble and install new playground equipment at Elmwood Park on Monday, April 25.

Slides showing some of the history of the club were shown during the meeting. The slides were from 1964-'65, depicting the day-long pancake feed that had been held in the old Melroy Cafe and pictures of a club variety show.

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