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Commission hears PW quarterly update

By MANUEL GOMEZ

The Rice County Commissioners Monday met at the County Courthouse for its weekly meeting and heard a quarterly update from Public Works Director Tom Robl.

Robl said the department is currently finished with asphalt patching for the year and is preparing to begin sealing which will be completed by Heft & Sons of Greensburg.

Robl said sand seals will be completed on Fourth Rd. from U.S. 56 to Raymond; Avenue Q from First Rd. to Fourth Rd.; and on Avenue R. from Raymond to Eighth Rd. A chip seal will be done on Avenue T from Alden to K14. Robl expects the work to be finished in seven to 10 days.

Applications for the cost-share program are due by Sept. 18. Robl said the county has jointly applied with the City of Lyons for the last three rounds which includes approximately two miles of local asphalt work.

He said the hangar project is nearing completion and a meeting has been scheduled to discuss operational procedures of the new hangar.

The fuel system is operating but some work remains due to a lack of funds. Robl said funds are still available through the grant that will be used to install a cover and a catch basin. Robl said materials to complete the project will probably arrive mid September.

Robl said the water well and well pit have been extended at the solid waste landfill. He said he is currently working on engineering proposals for the CD pit that he hopes to have ready for next week's meeting.

In other business the commissioners:

- Heard a presentation from safety consultant

Andy Brooks of Kansas Workers Risk Cooperative for Counties on how the county can reduce its worker's compensation costs. Brooks said insurance costs are based on a tier system and Rice County is on tier four with a score of 52.8, well below tier one where scores are more than 80.

His suggestions for increasing the county score include: improved management and support from the clerks office; adoption of KWORCC recommended policies currently on the KWORCC website; rapid premium payment; return of payroll estimates when requested; response to the payroll audit; controlling the number of high risk class codes or volunteers; loss control, reducing safety issues; having county employees attend KWORCC defensive driving sessions every three years; the creation of a safety committee that meets once a month; documented, monthly self-inspections of a county building; and timely incident investigation and reporting.

Brooks said Rice County currently pays a yearly premium of \$113,000 and advancing up the tier system would save the county approximately \$5,500 per tier. A two-tier improvement could save the county approximately \$11,000;

- Approved an invoice of \$30,728 from Kirkham Michael for engineering services on a replacement of the Cow Creek bridge on Hunter Boulevard with 90 percent reimbursable through the Kansas Local Bridge Improvement Program;

- Discussed with Rice County Clerk Raechel Manley office procedures and new-employee orientation. Manley said she has sent emails to department heads stating that county unemployment insurance rates will be raised due to

the number of claims submitted and lack of county representation at unemployment claim hearings.

She suggested scheduling training sessions for department heads to instruct them on what steps should be followed in these situations. Commissioner Derek McCloud said if the department head terminates an employee who files a claim that the county contests, they know their presence will be needed at the hearing. He stated the training is not needed.

She also asked commissioners if payables can be completed weekly. McCloud said since payables are now approved electronically, Rice County Counselor Scott Bush has advised they should be done once a week. However, he said further clarity from Bush is needed.

Manley noted that re-arrangement of the Clerk's office to streamline the orientation for new employees has been completed. She has developed a power point that highlights the important parts of the hand book and will email a digital version of the handbook to each new employee. They will also be completing their defensive driving course during orientation;

- Approved payment not to exceed \$5,600 to Computer Information Concepts for 32 hours of on-site training;

- Approved an employee status form for emergency medical services for a full-time advanced emergency medical technician;

- Approved an employee status form for a new hire in the treasury department;

- Approved abated taxes in the amount of \$155.34 resulting in a \$27.36 refund; and,

- Approved Resolution No. 2025-9 to cancel checks in the amount of \$1,498.70 with the funds returned to the general fund.



Fourth grader Amauri Schiller walks the red carpet along with Principle Katie Winkle on the first day of school at Central Elementary. (Photo by Manuel Gomez)



Bilingual Educators Rene and Amy Lucio conclude the History Harbor Grand Opening with the breaking of the pinata. (Photo courtesy History Harbor Foundation)

History Harbor Grand Opening

By MANUEL GOMEZ

The History Harbor Foundation celebrated its grand opening Saturday which featured four guest speakers at its location at 510 East Ave. S.

Founder Dr. Donna Devlin, history professor at Sterling College, told those in attendance her research interests are related to sexual violence in Kansas and Nebraska, particularly in the 19th century.

She said through history we can learn about the issue of sexual violence, something that is still an issue in the 21st century, and the changes necessary in the way those crimes are addressed.

"Our mission is to provide a public venue, a humanities-based support system, for community empowerment and a safe space for women who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence, oppression and/or persecution," Devlin said. "In cooperation with a network of agencies serving the needs of victims, our mission focuses primarily on rural communities in need."

"Overall, this servant leadership model aims to regenerate an interest in public education for everyone while also providing a means by which women in particular, may learn to thrive independently, free from violence in possession of the tools necessary for full civic and economic participation."

She said the Foundation is a culmination of those two passions, bringing history to a community, and empowering a community with knowledge, but also particularly to assist young women and men who suffer from domestic and sexual violence.

She said the overall goal is to start raising funds to purchase property to establish an emergency shelter here in Lyons that would serve Rice

County. She said the foundation is affiliated with Bright House in Hutchinson which no longer has an extension office in Rice County. She said History Harbor will become the Rice County liaison for Bright House.

Author Emma Hilger of Wichita spoke of her book "I'm a Good Mom", a child's board book which helps mothers deal with postpartum issues while providing their babies the proven benefits of hearing the mother's voice as she reads.

Hilger, a graduate of Wichita State University and a mother of two young boys, said she struggled transitioning to a life in which there were no measurable objectives or grades for her new role as a mother. She said personal and societal pressures to do a good job as a mom often wears mothers down resulting in a need to be built back up.

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Church Women's Thrift Shop moving

By HAZEL HODGSON

Exciting things are happening here in town! The "Thrift Shop," now located on the south side of the square is making plans to re-locate to the west side of the square in the existing Woydziak Building. The Thrift Shop will begin our 53rd year in business this October.

This move will be the 6th in our years of serving the Rice County area. The Shop receives, processes and sells gently used donated items. Approximately 80 volunteers from 15 area Churches make up the work force to keep the business thriving.

The upcoming move presents us with many challenges. As construction work on the building gets under way, we have a tentative move date of January 1, 2026. In the meantime, our needs are varied and we ask for the community to bear with us.

We are so thankful for the donations we receive and the benefits we in turn are able to give back to individual entities in Lyons and the surrounding area.

If any group or individual has the ability or desire to donate in a financial or any other way, please feel free to contact one of the Steering Committee members. The Shop plans to continue with our current hours at this time. We are open for business on Tuesday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Barbara Morgan, President, 620-562-7769.

Proposed budget to exceed RNR

By LUCKY KIDD

The Lyons City Council voted at Monday night's meeting to change the date for the Revenue Neutral Rate (RNR) and Budget hearing to a special meeting next Monday, Aug. 25 at 6 p.m. at City Hall. However, the budget hearing for the city of Lyons will be held September 2nd, although an action during Monday's City Council meeting was made to change it.

The budget is being re-published to take care of an error in what had originally been published, and while it was thought initially the meeting date would need to be changed, Mayor Alicia Hommon and City Clerk Bailey Saylor confirmed the hearing on the budget and to exceed the RNR will be



Cemetery Saxton Martin Hartle is recognized by City Administrator Troy Houtman Monday for his 45 years of service to the city. (Courtesy photo)

Sept. 2 at 6 p.m. The first September meeting will be on Tuesday due to the Labor Day Holiday.

The proposed budget calls for a mill levy of 54.521 mills, an increase of 2.5 mills from the 2025 levy and 4.158 mills above the RNR which is what

would raise the same dollars as was raised for the 2025 budget. This will generate an additional \$87,717 in revenue for the city for the next year.

Net authorized expenditures in the budget, after transfers, amounts to

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