

Council reviews nuisance properties, storage containers and city projects

BY KAREN KNAUER AND
SHEREE L. WINGO
HIGH PLAINS NEWS

The Bird City City Council discussed nuisance properties, storage containers, sidewalk rules and upcoming city projects during its May 11 meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m., with all council members present, along with City Attorney Jake Kling and City Clerk Sarah Mellinger.

Council members approved minutes from the April 13 and April 23 meetings and approved payment of outstanding warrants totaling \$23,457.40.

Judy Waters presented the library's updated budget, with projected 2027 income of \$46,125 expected to cover day-to-day operations.

Building permits were approved for Gary Taylor to install a canvas carport and for Jacob White and another resident to demolish existing structures.

Willy Martinez, representing the Thresher Show, requested permission for an additional storage container on the grounds. Council moved the request to the end of the meeting and later approved the grandfathered-in container.

Under unfinished business, council discussed the Shoff property. Negotiations have ended after the owners stopped communicating, and council



A new sign lights up the night at the Thresher Show grounds in Bird City. Wayne Erickson handcrafted and donated the sign to honor the nation's semiquincentennial birthday. *Photo by Karen Knauer*

agreed to advertise for sealed bids to demolish the building and remove concrete and trees on the property. Bids are due June 8.

John Blea discussed three properties on West First, East Second and East Seventh streets. The West First Street property is mostly cleaned up, though Blea requested additional time for roof and window repairs. Garage repairs on East Second Street are nearly complete, and storage containers on East Second and East Seventh streets have been removed from city limits. The thrift store sidewalk also has been cleared.

During a lengthy discussion about storage containers, Mayor John Bays asked the

council, "Do we even want them in our town?"

Council also discussed several nuisance properties. One property on West Fifth Street is making progress, while another on West Fifth Street has seen little improvement and may face fines if conditions do not improve. A property on South Bird Avenue will be fined for lack of progress.

Another Blea property on West First Street still contains wood and metal that Blea plans to scrap. Council discussed the possibility of eventually adding noncompliant properties to the tax roll and taking possession if no action is taken. Four properties were removed from the nuisance list after being brought into compliance.

Council members also discussed storage units and agreed they should not be used as residences.

Discussion was held on the city sidewalk code, including how sidewalk measurements should be determined. Bays said the code is "very vague." Bird City's sidewalk code will be compared with codes from other cities before further action is taken.

Council discussed a West Seventh Street property containing junk vehicles. A written complaint will be sent, and the issue will be revisited at the June 8 meeting.

Dennis Whitmore reported the sanitation department is "going great." Sheriff Cody Beeson and his deputies were

absent, though an April incident report was included in council packets.

Jay Keithline requested funding for new fire hoses because current hoses are not drawing all water from the trucks. The request was tabled until the next meeting because the city treasurer was absent.

Frank O'Very and Evan Waters updated council on the swimming pool. The pool will be filled soon, and a manager and eight lifeguards have been hired. Lifeguards will be certified in either Goodland or St. Francis.

Council entered a five-minute executive session before approving an unspecified matter by a 5-0 vote.

No committee reports were given. Kling reported all legal matters are handled.

No treasurer's report was given because Dana Wright was absent. An additional budget meeting will be held next month.

Mellinger was approved to attend a grant-writing workshop May 27 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. City Hall will be closed during the workshop.

Council approved a \$500 donation to the Fourth of July show, matching last year's contribution. Options Domestic and Sexual Violence received \$1,000, and the Cheyenne County Fair received \$75.

The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

Senior prank meets its match on school lawn

BY SHEREE L. WINGO
HIGH PLAINS NEWS

The St. Francis senior class of 2026 thought it was pulling off a lasting senior prank by spray-painting "2026" on the school lawn.

Turns out, the joke was on them.

The numbers measured 19 feet, 2 inches wide and 34 feet high, taking up a large section of grass. But school administrators were not upset by the prank.

The lawn is scheduled to be torn up this summer so a replacement underground sprinkler system can be installed. That means the seniors' oversized message will soon be history.



The St. Francis senior class of 2026 spray-painted its class year on the school lawn as a senior prank. The lawn is scheduled to be torn up this summer for sprinkler system work. *Courtesy photo*

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