

City restricts water use, names new administrator

BY KIRK BOXLEITNER
HIGH PLAINS NEWS

The Norton City Council weighed in on water issues and chose a new city administrator May 20.

Monica Wertz, with the Kansas Rural Water Association, recognized Kristen Bremer, a wastewater system operation specialist with the city of Norton, for completing the association's apprenticeship program. The program included 4,000 hours of on-the-job training and 288 hours of related technical instruction coursework.

"She also has obtained certification in both water and wastewater," Wertz said. "So she's done really well in a short amount of time."

Wertz also praised the city of Norton for its collaboration and support of the apprenticeship program, which she said she looks forward to seeing continue.

Water remained a topic for the council as restrictions were discussed, with city officials acknowledging the lack of significant restrictions or enforcement measures to date.

Norton Mayor Dale Jacobson proposed that Jim Miller, head of the utilities committee,

convene a meeting of the committee to discuss excessive water usage and possible solutions when he returns from vacation, "hopefully next week," especially given the current drought situation.

Acting City Administrator Alex McKenna reported that 31 new water meters have been installed. The meter reading system and billing software are being tested, and McKenna said she expects the city to install 35 more water meters in June.

"And the generator for city hall has been delivered, so we're working on getting it installed and operational," McKenna said. "We did receive a USDA grant for that, which will be reimbursing us \$20,000."

Jacobson issued an executive order restricting water usage for all water customers as of 8 a.m. May 21, rather than Memorial Day, due to "the extreme drought conditions" affecting northwest Kansas.

Jacobson specified that outdoor watering, including the irrigation of outdoor vegetation with potable water, is prohibited from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Labor Day. Outdoor watering is limited to every other



Northern Valley Class of 2026 crosses the stage

Graduation ceremonies for the eight Northern Valley High School graduates was held on Sunday, May 17 beginning at 2:00 p.m. in the Northern Valley gymnasium. Mitch Pugh was the speaker for the ceremony. Pictured are, from left, front row: Kathryn Speer, Audrey Mathews, Brooke Preston; back row: Clay VanPatten, Gavin Thalheim, Owen Hammond, Maverick Rogers, and Ayden Keith. Photo courtesy of Amy McKinney

day.

Residences or businesses with even-numbered addresses may water on even-numbered calendar dates, and odd-numbered addresses may water on odd-numbered dates. Potted plants may be hand-watered daily, but only during permitted hours.

The restrictions do not apply to car washes or businesses that sell outdoor plants. Special

permits may allow the watering of newly seeded lawns or sod, but anyone seeking to schedule alternate watering days must do so through the city, "who shall provide approval when such plan is reasonable, and furthers the interest of water conservation practices."

Private wells may be used without those restrictions, but well owners must have posted

permits from the city. Any violation of the water restriction executive order could result in a fine of \$25 per day.

After the council convened executive sessions, Dallas Gosselin was tentatively offered the position of city administrator, to begin June 4, pending the issuance of a contract at the council's June 3 meeting.

The council then scheduled a public works

committee meeting for June 1 and an ad hoc sales tax meeting for May 26, both at 4 p.m. Council members also reiterated that a town hall meeting on a proposed sales tax was set for May 28 at 6 p.m.

Finally, the council approved the use of the park grandstand for the Kansas Antique Racers from Sept. 5-7.

USD 212 Northern Valley seeking school nurse for next year

BY ALEX BARTA
HIGH PLAINS NEWS

The Northern Valley Schools Board of Trustees discussed an upcoming need for school nursing services during its regular monthly meeting held Wednesday, May 13, at Almena High School.

The Phillips County Health Department informed the district it will no longer be able to provide contracted nursing services because of financial concerns. Superintendent Ken Tharman



High Plains News Archive. Northern Valley high School

reviewed the current agreement with board members and outlined the services the district has relied on through the partnership for many years.

Having a nurse available and on-site can improve the health and well being of students limiting the times they are absent.

"Attendance is the number one thing that ranks whether or not a kid is successful," said Tharman. "Because they're just missing out on that one on one contact, that daily question and answer time. You can make up a lot of things, but you just can't re-create that moment when the lesson is being taught."

After discussion, the board agreed to begin advertising locally for a school nurse for the 2026-27 school year. The position will require approximately eight hours per week and will pay \$10,000 annually.

"We have middle school in Long Island and grade school and high school in Almena they would normally start their day in one of those buildings," added Tharman. "They would just work through each office and check in with the secretaries to kind of see what was going on."

In other business, Jessica Ledbetter told the board she had completed the Transition to Teach

(T2T) program and would now apply for her professional teaching license. She also shared details about a classroom project inspired by an observation visit with a Phillipsburg FACS teacher.

History teacher Mitch Pugh updated the board on student participation and success in several golf tournaments this season. He also noted he recently delivered the commencement address at graduation and is taking a Driver's Education teaching course through Fort Hays State University.

The board approved moving forward with a proposal from Electro Mech for new scoreboards and shot clocks in the Almena gymnasium after receiving additional information regarding warranties and installation.

Board members also discussed House Bill 2299, which takes effect in July and requires districts to adopt policies by September concerning personal electronic devices and electronic communication between students and staff.

Tharman reported the doors at the Long Island bus barn are in need of repair or replacement, and the board recommended accepting a bid from Mpire Overhead Door for the project.

Additional reports included an update on a bid from Aqua Shield to complete the carport project, inspection results identifying non-friable asbestos in three locations, and the enrollment of two new out-of-district students next year.

The board also accepted the resignation of Clayton Patterson and approved hiring Clay VanPatten for summer help.

K-8 Principal Mr. Gebhard reported Grandparents Day was well attended and enjoyed by students.

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