



NEWS

The YATES CENTER

\$1 (Includes tax)

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NEWS BRIEFS

American Legion Breakfast Oct. 17

Plan to attend the American Legion Post #13 breakfast, Saturday, Oct. 17 from 7 to 10 a.m. They will be serving biscuits and gravy, hash browns, scrambled eggs, sausage links, juice, and coffee. Free Will donation accepted. Hope to see you there.

Yates Center, Toronto Flu Clinics

The Yates Center Senior Center will host a community flu clinic Wednesday, Oct. 14 from 1 to 4 p.m. and the Toronto Senior Center will host a community flu clinic Thursday, Oct. 15 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. The clinic is being offered to help local seniors and community members prepare for the upcoming flu season. "We want to make it convenient for our members and community residents to protect themselves during flu season," Woodson County - SEK Multi-County Health Department.

Senior Center Dinner

The Yates Center Senior Center, 403 W. Rutledge, is having a Variety of Soups Dinner Thursday, Oct. 15 at 5:30 p.m. Bring a side dish and table service and come join us.

Medicare Prescription Drug Information

Did you know that you can review and change your Medicare Prescription Drug Plan annually? Medicare Annual Election Period, running from Thursday, Oct. 15 to Monday, Dec. 7, is the time to do just that! Wednesday, Oct. 28, and most Wednesdays, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at 211 W. Butler St., Yates Center, area Senior Health Insurance Counselors for Kansas will be available for you! Call 620-244-3826 to schedule an appointment.

Yates Center Transportation

Yates Center Transportation is available within five mile radius for residents 60 years of age and over, for a free will donation, Residents under 60 years of age, will pay a small fee. Transportation is available Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 to 4 p.m. Call the center at 620-625-2254. This program is SEKAA funded.

Send In Your Items

If you have items you would like to see included in The Yates Center NEWS, please send them in. They can be mailed to: The Yates Center NEWS, P.O. Box 285, Yates Cntr, KS 66783, emailed to: ycn@sekansas.com, or dropped off at the office: 113 S. Main, Yates Center.



Hayfest, FFL this weekend

By Kathe Hamman

Fall is in the air and it is time for the 6th Annual Hayfest celebration. The family event takes place Friday, Oct. 9 and Saturday, Oct. 10 on the Historic Town Square. The decorated hay bales have been popping up all week throughout town.

The event kicks off Friday night with the annual free will donation soup supper and called bingo at the high school commons. Saturday morning features the 23rd Friends For Life auction and walk and the Hayfest activities will begin following the Celebration Walk around the square that starts at 9 a.m.

The Hayfest activities kick off at 11 a.m. with craft vendors, food vendors, and music from the band stand. Free inflatables and several fun games for everyone will be held on the courthouse lawn all afternoon and there will be a corn-hole tournament on the south side of the square. There is a pole decorating contest being held, with the theme of "Hometown Harvest" along with the ever popular hay bale decorating throughout the community and county. Everyone looks forward to seeing what the public comes up with, one is never disappointed driving around town

checking out the art work.

Saturday the community will vote on the favorites and prizes will be awarded. A new addition to the day is the "The Final Bell" Haunted House sponsored by the junior class on Saturday evening. The ever popular scavenger hunt has been going on all week with the final clue posted Friday, find the golden medallion and turn it in for a big prize and also a new activity will be the hay bale hunt. There will be several small hay bales hidden on the square and a photo clue will be posted Saturday at 11 a.m. Turn in the bales at the registration table for a prize. Come on out and enjoy the beautiful fall day as the square will be a hoppin' place with games, crafts, delicious food, chicken bingo, free inflatables and games, activities, music and more. The afternoon winds down around 3 p.m. The excitement is not over as the crowd can make their way out to the rodeo grounds for the Bulls, Broncos Barrels Rodeo or support the junior class and hope to survive "The Final Bell" haunted house.

The day is full from sunup to sundown, so come out and help celebrate a beautiful fall day in Woodson County!



Kathe Hamman/NEWS

THE FRIENDS FOR LIFE committee members have been hard at work preparing for the 23rd annual walk. This organization has done so much for so many and it is all about community. Their cause is so meaningful and based on "the simple idea of people helping people." The celebration and auction kicks off at 9 a.m. and will be followed by the walk around the square.

Public gets full update on sewer project

By Cliff Ralstin

The Yates Center City Council held their quarterly meeting for the public at Town Hall Monday, Oct. 5 with council members Charyl Stewart, David Waddell, John Atkin IV, Chris Cavender, and Tammy Porter in attendance. Council member Jason Cathcard was absent.

The main topic of the evening was the public hearing and presentation for the sewer plant upgrades. Erica McNeese, of AECOM, an engineering firm working in conjunction with Real Water Technical Assistance, gave the presentation followed by updates on other aspects of the project by Beth Warren, of Kansas Municipal Utilities, and Carey Spoon, of the Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission.

McNeese presented a slide show outlining aspects of the project and associated costs. Since the council had previously trimmed the project down to just rehabbing the waste water treatment facility as the sole focus of the project. The two other aspects, rehabbing pump stations and repairs to the gravity system will be dealt with by the city at a later date.

McNeese began by showering current sewer staff with compliments for bringing the facility back into compliance with state regulations. She did emphasize that the plant was still in need of substantial repairs.

One of the leading causes of the current situation was a lack of regular and proper maintenance to the facility. This is due in no small part to a lack of redundancy at the plant. Without the ability to redirect incoming flow to other parts of the facility, many areas are unable to be taken out of service to effect repairs. Redundancy will be a focus of the upcoming project.

As McNeese dove into costs she emphasized that all numbers were worst case scenarios. That did little to ease concerns with the \$9.9 million cost number presented at the meeting.

The city has applied for \$1 mil-

lion in forgivable loan money from Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and another \$1 million in grant money from the Kansas Water Office for design costs.

Both McNeese and Warren reiterated that all numbers were very preliminary and a much closer estimate would be available once the design and engineering phases were complete. Spoon said the real number would not be realized until the project is completed. Any overages in funds would be returned at no cost to the city. Under budgeting could torpedo the entire project causing the city to start from scratch.

Favorable bids could lower the project as well and, as sewer superintendent Brent Torrens also mentioned, other options may exist, such as a different treatment process. These things could reduce overall costs by as much as one third it was said. Depending on the scope and decisions made, costs could drop to between \$4 million and \$6 million in actual costs.

The current push is to put things in place in order to avoid ever rising costs. Warren used an example of another city in which they deferred an infrastructure project only to be forced into compliance six years later. The moral of the story is that construction costs rose ten times over in those six years. KDHE loan forgiveness in Kansas is expected to plummet from \$2 million per project last year to somewhere between \$200,000 and \$300,000 next year. "The main thing is that you don't miss the opportunity if you want to move forward," said Warren.

The council decided to continue moving forward and gave the mayor permission to sign all pertinent documents.

In other business, Debbie Trahan, of Project 366, spoke to the council. Trahan is a member of a group consisting of approximately 12 individuals that are raising money for the school district. With the loss of roughly 40 students from the district this year, the dis-

trict has lost \$300,000 in state funding.

Trahan said Project 366 is raising money for projects such as resurfacing the track. The track must be resurfaced at regular intervals, \$30,000 a pop, or it will be rendered ineligible for meets. The press box at the stadium is also in need of repairs. Resurfacing the gymnasium floor, another five digit project, was also discussed. The loss of a grant through Greenbush saw much of the wood shop equipment removed this past year as well, even down to hammers.

Trahan said anyone wishing to help or donate can contact her or stop in at the Glass House and 54 Market. A request to the city for funds was tabled due to Project 366 not being a 501 c3. The city attorney will look into the legality of the situation.

A stop sign at Skinner and Green Streets will be taken down after a 90 day trial. It was put up to alleviate speeding by ATVs and UTVs in the area but Yates Center Police Chief Michael Strode said that now that school is back in session the problem has resolved itself.

The council was informed that a 14.2% increase in insurance premiums was moving their way. Mayor Justin Weston said that last year the city saw a 30% decrease and large swings in premium costs were not unusual. The council approved the new contract with Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

Citizen concerns about meeting minutes showing up on the city website in a timely fashion were discussed as well as requests to put timely items, such as water leaks repairs, on the website instead of just social media. City staff will begin doing both. As a side note, the council will allow department heads to access social media to do timely updates on projects and situations.

There were questions about city hall being open during lunch. It is.

Street superintendent Rodney Ryther asked the council if they wished to participate in LTAP train-

ing. The training is a primer for city employees and council members on what their responsibilities are and how to perform them. No decision was made.

The county is planning on holding a Kansas Open Meetings Act training session later this year. The city has been invited to attend and most council members acknowledged it was a good idea.

An update from chief Strode on a nuisance property was again discussed. Strode said that there is continued improvement and as long as improvement continued he didn't see any reason for the city to move forward on rehabilitation efforts at this time.

Following up on a request from the council from last meeting, Ryther said that new school zone signage costs have been reduced from a projected \$9,000 down to \$5,500.

A recent upgrade to raw water supply pumps has been put on hold as the contractor received the wrong pumps. The city will try again in two weeks to swap out the pumps.

Ryther revisited a loader bid from last week. He said that the city will not trade in the new loader. Instead he will pull funds from other line items in his budget, mainly street oil, to use for the 20% down payment for the new loader. Council member Porter stated that she wanted Ryther to have a new loader but she felt that \$185,300 was too much money and was the lone dissenting vote at 4-1.

Shelter house work at South Owl Lake was discussed and will be reemphasized. The old playground equipment at the park will also be taken down.

The council then approved \$287,402.25 in vouchers. When asked about the amount, it was stated that \$94,000 would be coming back to the city, \$88,000 was for roofing repairs to city buildings and another \$21,000 was for bunker gear for the fire department. The meeting was then adjourned. The council will meet again Monday, Oct. 19 at 7 p.m. at city hall.