

Commission OKs panel to review services

County commissioners — except Duncan — agree to critique

By DARRIN STINEMAN
Salina Journal

The word “consolidation” was absent from the conversation, but the Saline County Commission agreed Tuesday to take part in a panel “to review the delivery of governmental services.”

The official proclamation was in response to a request from the League of Women Voters, which in 2005-06 conducted a yearlong study of city-county consolidation and came to the conclusion that it would be best for a group with broad representation to look further into the matter.

The league made the request for task force participation at a March 29 joint meeting of the Salina City Commission and Saline County Commission. At that meeting, County Commissioner Sherri Barragree said she

was “very strongly against consolidation.” Commission Chairman Craig Stephenson was noncommittal when asked when the League could expect a response from the county regarding county participation in the task force.

The city commission voted to participate at its first opportunity after the joint meeting. The county’s answer came Tuesday.

“This is merely a study,” Stephenson said during discussion of the proclamation. “It’s an opportunity for us to work with individuals in our community to explain what exactly our role is in government and the services that are provided, and if there is duplication somewhere out there, to have that addressed.”

Barragree didn’t comment on the matter during the meeting, but she was involved in drafting the proclamation, which said: “Saline County recognizes this as an opportunity to review the delivery of governmental services to the citizens of the county. The commissioners do support the formation of a task force to review

delivery of services.” Well, not all the commissioners.

Commissioner Randy Duncan said he would not sign the proclamation. “I’ve said all along I’ve not seen a need for a joint task force between the city and county,” Duncan said. “I think we have a very unique government in Salina and Saline County that works and works well through cooperation and collaboration. I think the last two or three days with the unique situation that we’ve had in Salina and Saline County with the flooding situation probably shows how well Salina and Saline County works together, especially in times of emergency.”

Now, what’s that cost us?

Sidney Shultz, who last week strongly criticized Stephenson and Barragree for their support of building a large expo center, appeared before the commission again Tuesday to ask what had been spent on the effort.

“How much of our money have you

spent pursuing this expo center that hasn’t been approved?” Shultz asked. “I just need a ballpark figure.”

“I think that’s a figure we could get for you at a later time,” Stephenson said. “I don’t think we have it right in front of us right now, Sidney.”

“Well, I’ve heard it’s a quarter of a million dollars or better,” Shultz said. “That’s a lot of money. It could’ve done wonders for the facilities we have already that we should be maintaining. A lot of folks are unhappy about that, and me especially, that we spend money and spend money that we don’t really need to spend until you get the approval to spend it.”

In November, voters shot down — by a 70-30 margin — a proposal to use sales tax funds to build a large expo facility two miles south of Salina.

Shultz later asked Stephenson if the criticism commissioners heard from several people at last week’s public forum on the issue would change his mind. Shultz pointed out that with 30 days notice, the county can back out of a land option it’s holding — at

a cost of \$1,666 a month — to buy the ground two miles south of Salina.

“We do not have a signed agreement back or signatures of commissioners on the current (option) agreement,” Stephenson said.

“What’s your plans on that?” Shultz asked.

“We’ll see when the agreement comes back,” Stephenson said. “If there have been any alterations made in the agreement, at that time there will be action taken by the commission.”

Duncan said his understanding was that the county had spent \$300,000 to \$400,000 on the expo, and he asked Stephenson if that was correct.

“I’m not going to comment on a figure I’m not comfortable with at this time,” Stephenson said. Stephenson said he would have county staff compile the figures and get them to Shultz.

■ Reporter Darrin Stineman can be reached at 822-1416 or by e-mail at sjdstineman@saljournal.com.

Briefly

Police: 27-year-old pursued in chase

A 27-year-old man riding a motorcycle allegedly led police on a chase at speeds of more than 100 mph Monday night through south Salina.

But police believe that man was the one arrested later at a Salina hotel.

Rogar G. Carter Jr., Chester, Pa., was arrested for allegedly fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer, Deputy Police Chief Mike Marshall said.

Marshall said a police officer investigated what sounded like four gunshots fired in the area of 200 W. Magnolia, in the vicinity of Central Mall, shortly before midnight. The officer saw a man on a motorcycle and tried to pull him over.

Instead, Marshall said, the cycle sped away. Police pursued the motorcycle on Chapel Ridge, Magnolia, and watched it turn and go south on Ninth Street in the northbound lanes.

Officers lost sight of the motorcycle rider. They later received information leading them to Carter’s room at the Country Inn and Suites Hotel, 2760 S. Ninth, where he was arrested.

Officers found no evidence of gunshots.

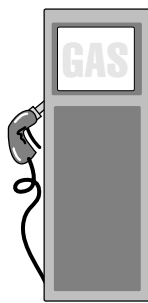
KU endowment fund unique

The recently established University of Kansas endowment fund at the Greater Salina Community Foundation is among the first of its kind at Kansas community foundations, the Salina foundation announced through a press release.

The KU endowment fund is intended to create a source of flexible income for the university. The Salina foundation also holds funds for Kansas Wesleyan University, Kansas State University at Salina and Bethany College.

From Staff Reports

fuel finder



A sampling of unleaded gas prices in the region.

Prices shown may not reflect the lowest gas price in the area.

- ◆ Salina, \$2.95⁹
Green Lantern, Ninth and Crawford
- ◆ Salina, \$2.99⁹
Green Lantern, Ohio and Iron
- ◆ Abilene, \$2.98⁹
Casey’s, Second and Buckeye

Corrections

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The Journal wants to set the record straight. Advise us of errors by calling the Journal at (785) 823-6363, or toll free at 1-800-827-6363. Corrections will run in this space as soon as possible.

Water everywhere



Photos by TOM DORSEY / Salina Journal

ABOVE: The church at the Central Kansas Flywheels Museum is reflected in floodwaters Tuesday afternoon. The museum is located on Diamond Drive north of Salina. BELOW: An old truck at the museum is reflected in floodwaters.



County fireworks ban remains in effect — for now

Stephenson says commission needs time to look at ‘language’ for new resolution

By DARRIN STINEMAN
Salina Journal

Saline County’s nine-year-old ban on fireworks will remain in effect this year, but there were indications at Tuesday’s county commission meeting that it could be extinguished in 2008.

Commissioners Craig Stephenson and Sherri Barragree went along with a recommendation from Bryan Armstrong, Saline County’s director of emergency management, to extend the fireworks ban. Commissioner Randy Duncan opposed the resolution, saying the ban is ignored as much by law enforcement as it is by Fourth of July revelers.

Under questioning from Duncan, Armstrong said the ban is “extremely difficult to enforce.”

“If people do report someone is in violation of the fireworks ban, a deputy is dispatched to check on that,” Armstrong said. “Usually by the time they get there, most of the people are gone, and the people who reported it don’t know who they were. So, it’s difficult to catch people in the act.”

Duncan pointed out that none of the neighboring counties have fireworks bans, and that Brookville allows the sale and use of fireworks even though it’s within Saline County.

“It just seems like an odd thing,” Duncan said. “You’re in the same county and you can legally buy ‘em in one of the cities within our county, but as soon as you drive out of the city limits, theoretically you could be arrested. If you buy fireworks in one of our neighboring counties and drive into our county, you could be fined for having fireworks and have them confiscated. It just seems odd.”

Armstrong recommended the ban be extended based on comments he received from rural fire chiefs who said runs tend to double or triple in the days around the Fourth when a ban isn’t in place. He also cited the safety hazard fireworks pose to children.

Armstrong’s opposition to allowing fireworks wasn’t ironclad, however.

“I’m glad it’s you making this decision and not me,” Armstrong told the commis-

“If you buy fireworks in one of our neighboring counties and drive into our county, you could be fined for having fireworks and have them confiscated. It just seems odd.”

Randy Duncan
county commissioner

“I also am torn between the issue. But in my position as emergency management director, and in support of rural fire districts, we must recommend that the ban not be lifted.”

Stephenson acknowledged that the ban is widely ignored, and he left the door open for the status to change next year.

“Randy, I understand where you’re coming from on this,” Stephenson told Duncan. “I, too, enjoyed shooting fireworks. Until we can get some type of language in place, at this late date before the Fourth of July, I have more concerns about the time period it would take for us to get that new resolution in place.”

Two people who attended the meeting — Bob Holgerson and Sidney Shultz — told the commission they would like to see the ban repealed.

“Fireworks come from that flag we all just pledged to,” Shultz said. “That’s where it all started, with our independence in this country, and we’re trying to stop that in every way. Why don’t we go back to educating people and try to go that route and make them control what they do?”

Holgerson’s appearance was one of several he has made before the commission on the issue.

“The tradition goes way back to the beginning of our independence,” he said. “Fireworks, to me, is a traditional thing. It’s not as big a crime as we think it is.”

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Humane Society wants boy charged in killing of ducks

By The Associated Press

WICHITA — The Humane Society of the United States is asking that a sixth-grader who stabbed three ducks to death be charged with animal cruelty.

The Wilber Middle School student allegedly used a pencil last week to kill a mother duck and two ducklings that had nested near the school.

The Humane Society said it did not want the 11-year-old to be jailed, but it

wants to be sure he receives “the intervention crucial to preventing future recurrences of violence,” said Mary Lou Randour, the group’s professional outreach coordinator and a Maryland-based psychologist.

“A conviction of animal cruelty would not only convey to the student the serious nature of his alleged crime,” Randour said, “but would also help ensure that he remains under psychological counseling and observation.”

District Attorney Nola Foulston said Monday that her office was investigating the case.

“It is incumbent upon us to dig deeper, not only out of concern for the welfare of animals but for the welfare of our children,” Foulston said.

An animal cruelty charge, she said, isn’t the only way to ensure that the boy gets counseling or treatment.

The boy was suspended last Wednesday, and school officials say a hearing

will determine whether he will get to return to school. They say he admitted to classmates that he mutilated the ducks.

Foulston said the case could be filed as a “child in need of care” case, but that depends on what the investigation reveals about the student’s actions, behavior and home life. Generally, child in need cases involve children abandoned, neglected or abused by a parent.