

## Village receives stellar audit report, electric rates hold fast for another month

Written by Wauneta Breeze  
Thursday, 21 March 2013 17:59 -

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**By Sheri Hink-Wagner**

### **The Wauneta Breeze**

Terry Galloway with Almquist Malthzahn Galloway and Luth attended the regular meeting of the Wauneta Village Board on Tuesday, March 12 to deliver the company's audit of the village's financials.

Overall, the auditor's opinion of the village's financial state was stellar. He told the board they were, "very efficient and good at keeping costs down."

In fact, the audit shows the Village of Wauneta coming in under budget in every category.

After presentation of the village's audit, Galloway provided the board with a comparison of how the Village of Wauneta compares with other communities of similar size in Nebraska. The comparisons Galloway presented showed over and over that the former and current Wauneta Village Board have strived to make the village financially sound.

The firm performs audits on several communities within Nebraska and provided comparison between Wauneta and other communities of the same size (under 1,000 population).

The firm recommends the municipality have between 30-35 percent of its assets unrestricted. According to the report, the village of Wauneta has 68 percent of its government wide assets unrestricted.

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Further, the firm states having 40 percent of the funds in the general fund unassigned as a best practice.

The village of Wauneta blew that best practice away with 188.71 percent of the general fund balance unassigned. Galloway explained that percentage as equivalent to almost 22 months of cash in the village's reserves.

The summary also showed that the people of Wauneta are paying less property taxes, about \$20 or 10 percent under what other citizens of similarly sized towns are paying.

Due to the sizable cash reserves held by the Village of Wauneta, Galloway recommended the village board clear up an old debt. He recommended paying off the roughly \$40,000 in water bonds the village owes with the cash reserves.

The village took the recommendation under advisement and plans to review the possibility of paying off the debt at the April meeting.

### **Electric rate increase**

The village board had an in-depth discussion of the electric rates paid by Wauneta consumers.

Although no action was taken to raise rates at the March meeting, board members reviewed initial information shared by Bob McDonald with ESC Engeneering. McDonald informed the board the actual increase seen in January by Nebraska Public Power District equaled approximately 1.5 percent.

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However, when McDonald reviewed the village's budget for the electric fund he informed the board they would need to raise electric rates by 8.2 percent to stay even with budgeted expenditures.

The village board members expressed concern over raising the electric rates beyond the raise seen by NPPD until more research could be done.

"I feel strongly about not overpricing our product," said Sinner.

The board plans to implement a small rate increase, possibly 2 percent, at the next meeting to keep up with raising costs, based on updated information from McDonald.

They will perform an in-depth analysis of actual costs later this year in September or October.

The board was adamant that they did not want to raise rates the 8.2 percent. However, they also recognize that the electric fund has provided the village funds for several key community projects such as rehabilitation to the streets and park. "It is the backbone of our community," stated Cribelli.

### **Nursing home**

Lisa Kisinger, Sunrise Heights of Wauneta Administrator, attended the meeting to present the board with several nursing home issues.

She presented a balance sheet summary which provided an overview of the financial status of the facility, which is staying in a good financial status.

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Kisinger also presented the board with several new personnel policies for their review and approval. The first four policies concerned employee pay increases.

The first policy concerned a standardized practice for implementing employee pay increases. The policy states employees will be eligible for a raise yearly on the anniversary of their employment. Wage increases will be based on a scale of rankings completed by their supervisor.

The second policy allows the nursing home management to keep wages competitive with other nursing homes in the surrounding area with approval of the village board.

The third policy provides for internal controls regarding pay increases when the employee's supervisor is also a relative. The policy states the supervisor will request at least three of the staff member's peers to evaluate the employee based on routine employee rankings. Pay increases for staff members whose supervisor is a member of their family will be approved by the nursing home committee.

The final pay increase policy approved at the March meeting concerned pay increases for department heads. The policy is very similar to the former, in that three of the staff member's peers will be asked to review department head's job performance as part of their annual evaluation process. The pay increase for department heads will be approved by the nursing home committee.

The final nursing home policy reviewed at the village board meeting concerned absenteeism and added the requirement that staff members call the facility to alert their supervisor if they will not be at work instead of sending a text message.

Other nursing home business included approval of a business associate agreement with Rural Health Development, Inc. (RHD) which outlines the privacy policies between the nursing home and the management company.

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The village board also approved RHD's capability to access the nursing home's computer systems remotely and the facility's corporate compliance plan.

### **Keno funds to WEDC**

The village board approved appropriation of \$6,000 of Keno funds to the Wauneta Economic Development Committee.

WEDC committee members stated the funds will be used to provide economic development activities in Wauneta including action such as purchasing abandoned lots around town.

### **Superintendent's report**

Village superintendent Bill Bischoff provided board members with a written report of activities under his supervision.

He reported that Pivot Electric will finish installation of well controls this month and that work done on the SCADA system will be completed after the well controls.

Bischoff continues to work on revisions to the village's drought ordinance and plans to present a new ordinance to the board at the April meeting.

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Bischoff is sending information to the Department of Health and Human Services to see if the village is eligible to participate in a new program to help lower the arsenic levels in the village's water.

Bischoff reported the street department completed the annual crack seal for the village's streets on March 1 for an estimated cost of \$6,000 to \$8,000.

Crack seal work was completed on portions of Atoka, Quachita, Sioux, Legion, Pontiac, Ponka and Valley Streets.

The sewer department report included notice that the DMR reports have been completed for the October-November release. Ammonium limits were good compared limits and the Ph levels were borderline. Bischoff plans to monitor the levels during the spring release.

The Department of Environmental Quality suggested the village find a more effective way to monitor flow and that it address erosion on the banks.

Bischoff plans to involve the city engineer on both issues for suggestions on ways to correct them.

The electric department plans to start the third phase of electric meter change out soon and will finish all three phase meters.

The village expects delivery of a backhoe at the end of March. Other equipment items planned for the future is attendance at the Nebraska State Sale in May to check on replacing the dump truck. Bischoff plans to compile estimated pricing on the last sale of equipment for the April meeting.

The village continues to receive animal complaints. This month complaints centered around complaints of citizens walking their dogs without a leash. Specifically, one citizen requested the

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village enforce the dog leash ordinance.

### Other business

In old business, the village board voted to add another person, Sheri Hink-Wagner, to the Wauneta Economic Development Committee. Others serving on the committee include Bill Bischoff, Tony Cribelli, Rick Einspahr and Joey Large.

Other business conducted at the March meeting included a discussion of needed repairs to the Wauneta EMS building on Tecumseh. Sinner informed the board he had been approached by the Wauneta EMS regarding needed repairs to the exterior of the Ambulance barn.

Sinner received a quote for work to the building's exterior from S & S Construction. After discussion, the village board approved the bid of \$4,705 for the needed repairs.

The Wauneta Village board's regular meeting time is the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. MT. The public is welcome to attend Village board meetings.