

Village passes 2 percent electric rate increase, looks to strengthen animal ordinances and penalties

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 18 April 2013 19:14 -

By Sheri Hink-Wagner

The Wauneta Breeze

Last week's village board meeting held on Tuesday, April 9 saw two items of particular interest for Wauneta residents. First, the village board approved a 2 percent electric rate increase to keep up with electric costs the village has been absorbing since January.

Second, the board had a lengthy discussion concerning the ongoing animal ordinance violations and strategized ways to protect the public through stronger ordinances and penalties.

Electric rate increase

Wauneta's electric consumers will see a 2 percent increase on the May billing statement, with service dates between March 20 and April 20.

A potential rate increase for Wauneta's electric consumers has been on the horizon since January, when rate increases from Wauneta's power suppliers raised their rates.

Since January, the Village of Wauneta has been absorbing electric rate increases. At the March village board meeting, the board reviewed a document from Bob McDonald with ESC Engineering. McDonald informed the board the actual increase seen in January by Nebraska

Village passes 2 percent electric rate increase, looks to strengthen animal ordinances and penalties

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 18 April 2013 19:14 -

Public Power District equaled approximately 1.5 percent.

They were also told that 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.

No action was taken at the March meeting regarding electric rate changes, with the board indicating they did not want to overprice electric in Wauneta. Instead the board decided to hold off until the April meeting to make a decision.

The board voted to increase electric rates 2 percent at the April meeting.

Board members indicated last month, they may perform a more in-depth study of electric rates at the end of the year, in September or October, to make sure rates are in line with the village's costs and budgetary needs.

VILLAGE OF WAUNETA ELECTRIC RATE INCREASE		
Effective on May 2012 billing with service dates March 20-April 20		
Residential	2012 Rate	2013 Rate
Meter Charge (per month)	\$18.75	\$18.75
Energy (per kWh)		
Winter		
1st 1,000 kWh	\$0.094	\$0.096
Excess	\$0.066	\$0.069
Summer		
1st 1,000 kWh	\$0.088	\$0.090
Excess	\$0.088	\$0.090

SOURCE: WAUNETA VILLAGE BOARD

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 18 April 2013 19:14 -

Animal ordinances

Issues regarding animal mischief around town have been an issue in Wauneta for years. The recent rash of complaints, sometimes as often as daily, seen by village staff have moved the issue of animal ordinances to the forefront of the village board's agenda.

During the April meeting, village board members organized a committee to research revisions to the current animal ordinances, which are to include stronger penalties for those who do not follow the ordinances. Committee members include Tony Cribelli, Rick Einspahr, Mike Dukes, Arlan Wine, Bill Bischoff and Evelyn Skelton.

The committee was instructed to draft an updated ordinance and penalties, which will be presented to the board, and potentially acted upon, at the May meeting.

Much of the board's discussion at the April meeting, as well as previous meetings, focused around dogs running at large—their real and potential threat to the public's safety.

"We've got a problem and we need to address it," said village board chairman Lloyd Sinner. "We have people in town, good citizens, who are scared to go out for a walk."

Although the revised ordinance and penalties will include language for controlling dogs in the community, it will also include stronger penalties for those violating the village ordinance for cats.

The village's current ordinance states that each household may have two adult dogs and two adult cats.

Board members discussed the need to provide easier means to deal with citizens not in

Village passes 2 percent electric rate increase, looks to strengthen animal ordinances and penalties

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 18 April 2013 19:14 -

compliance with the animal ordinance. Some possible additions would be a provision that the village would capture animals over the allotment and impound them until the owner could make arrangements for a new home or take them to a humane society.

The board also discussed adding increasing fines if residents are continually out of compliance with the animal ordinances.

Furthermore, current village ordinances state dogs must be “kept on a leash or be under the direct and immediate supervision and control of their owners or possessors.”

Discussion at the April meeting entailed the need for dogs to be on a leash if not in the immediate area of its owner, if not at all times.

Guests at the meeting questioned the ability of dogs to get adequate exercise if they were kept on leashes at all times. However, the general consensus of the village board members was that the public’s safety outweighed the exercise needs of dogs.

Currently, in order for the village and/or sheriff’s office to enforce the ordinance if a dog is running at large the dog must be caught. This is one of the items the committee hopes to change in the revised ordinance. They plan to add language which would allow citizen statements to serve as evidence of dogs running at large.

The village board plans to hear recommendations from the animal ordinance committee at the May meeting.

Conditional use permits issued

Village passes 2 percent electric rate increase, looks to strengthen animal ordinances and penalties

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 18 April 2013 19:14 -

The village board approved two conditional use permits for businesses to operate from a private residence.

Both businesses previously met with the Wauneta Planning Commission and the commission indicated their recommendation to approve the conditional use permits.

At the meeting last week Amanda Pankonin was given a conditional use permit for home occupation of a photography business.

The K & L Trust was also issued a conditional use permit for home occupation of a day care center in the home previously owned by Kent Doetker.

Prior to the Planning Commission's recommendation to approve the permits, letters were sent out to all neighbors within 300 feet of the homes.

Nursing home

The nursing home report at last week's meeting centered mostly around the facility's financials.

It was reported that the nursing home, despite some unexpected expenses, is currently in the black according to projections for the first year.

The board also heard an update on a new website being developed for the facility as well as recently adopted vision and values statements.

Village passes 2 percent electric rate increase, looks to strengthen animal ordinances and penalties

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 18 April 2013 19:14 -

The fire sprinkler installation continues and appears to be going well, according to nursing home committee member Page Johnston.

The committee reported Lisa Kisinger, nursing home administrator, is currently researching software to take the facility's charting electronic by the end of 2014. There is a guideline requiring all nursing homes to chart electronically by the end of 2014.

Payoff of current water bond

Last month, the village's auditor recommended the village pay off their existing water bond with village reserves.

This month, the board voted to do just that, authorizing an expenditure of \$20,000 to be paid to bond holders from reserve funds.

The bond was slotted to mature in April 2014. Paying the bond early potentially saves the village \$960.00 in saved interest fees.

Board members noted that additional water bonds may be necessary in the future to help finance other water projects and that paying off the current water bonds now will allow the village to issue additional bonds.

Backhoe purchased

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 18 April 2013 19:14 -

The village board authorized a \$34,200 payment with highway allocation funds to Tierra Vista LLC, a subsidiary company to BWTelcom for purchase of a 2013 Case backhoe.

The list price of the backhoe purchased was \$174,000. After trade value for the village's 2008 backhoe was taken into account the ending purchase price was \$34,200.

However, the cost to the village will only be \$14,200 because BWTelcom will make a \$20,000 donation back to the village after the purchase is completed. Additional details of the transaction will be included in a separate story in the Breeze.

Superintendent's report

During his superintendent's report, Bill Bischoff alerted the board of a letter that was posted on a resident's home. The letter implied it was left by city staff and informed the resident he/she needed to trim bushes in his/her yard and that if the bushes were not trimmed the city would trim the bushes and charge the resident.

Bischoff showed the board a copy of the letter and told them it was not issued by village employees.

Furthermore, he stated that anytime the village issues a letter to a resident, it is issued on village letterhead and signed by a staff member. The letter left regarding the bushes was not signed and did not provide any contact information.

Bischoff also reported on damage done by the winter storm that passed through town last week. He said the village had only one outage on the first circuit of the system. Each of the

Village passes 2 percent electric rate increase, looks to strengthen animal ordinances and penalties

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 18 April 2013 19:14 -

village's circuits provides electricity for a section of town.

The circuit went down at approximately 10:30 p.m. MT on Monday, April 8 when a tree came down over a power line.

After the village had the circuit 90 percent repaired Southwest Public Power District experienced a service interruption and the entire town lost electricity.

Village workers were outmost of the night Monday attempting to restore power to the village.

Other business

In other business, the village board approved a request from the Wauneta Chamber for \$6,000 to be used for repairs at the Chateau Theatre. The Chamber plans to use the funds to repaint the marquee, replace two back doors and carpet the front area of the theatre.

Bischoff informed the board the Planning Commission met recently and noted the last Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2004. Since its completion many things have changed such as ordinances.

The Commission recommends updating the village's Comprehensive Plan.

The village board voted to have Bischoff and deputy clerk Sara Bardsley look into the costs to have a new Comprehensive Plan done.

Village passes 2 percent electric rate increase, looks to strengthen animal ordinances and penalties

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 18 April 2013 19:14 -

The Wauneta Village board holds its regular meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. MT at the village office. The public is welcome to attend Village board meetings.