

## **Village board approves 2014-2015 nursing home budget**

Written by Wauneta Breeze  
Thursday, 19 June 2014 00:00 -

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**By Sheri Hink-Wagner**

**The Wauneta Breeze**

Village board members approved the 2014-2015 budget for Sunrise Heights of Wauneta at last Tuesday's regular meeting.

The budget for the next year, which begins July 1, includes a budgeted surplus from operations of \$28,717.

The budget is based on a daily resident census (number of people living at the facility) of 30 residents, up from the previously budgeted 29 residents per day.

Administrator Lisa Kisinger decided to increase the anticipated daily census rate due to the facility's average census for the past year. The nursing home has averaged 32 residents per day in the past year.

The facility is licensed to accept up to 36 residents. As of last Tuesday, they currently had 35 residents and expected the 36th resident to move in last Friday. They also have a waiting list of individuals waiting for an appropriate room to open up.

The board also approved establishment of a retirement plan for staff members. The nursing home plans to offer a 2 percent match for retirement contributions for eligible staff members. The beginning date of the retirement plan will be discussed at a future village board meeting.

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### **NPPD presentation**

Chris Hegert, an account manager with Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), attended the village board meeting to provide members with an update on NPPD and an update on the village's contract with NPPD to purchase power.

Hegert said the village has been purchasing power from NPPD since 1975. He said NPPD representatives are in process of discussing new long-term power agreements with existing customers.

He told board members NPPD currently serves 51 municipalities, 25 rural power districts and provides retail services in 80 communities.

Hegert reported NPPD's average wholesale power rate was 5.91 cents in 2013. He also commented that Wauneta is currently paying the lowest kilowatt power cost of any municipality at 4.95 cents per kilowatt.

Village Chairman Lloyd Sinner said, "Over the years I feel we've had a very good working relationship."

Hegert also reported that NPPD was able to avoid a rate increase in 2014 due to a budget surplus of \$60 million. He also told board members that so far this year NPPD is operating with a \$50 million surplus and therefore hopes to avoid a rate increase in 2015.

Hegert closed his presentation by saying, "We appreciate your business very much and hopefully everything will work out that we can continue our relationship long into the future."

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### Update village website

Rod Keiser with Champa Group led a discussion with the village board regarding updates to the village's website.

Keiser said Champa is in process of presenting their customers with information regarding updated web servicing software.

As part of his presentation, Keiser gave board members a handout that showed the history of the village's website at [www.wauneta.com](http://www.wauneta.com).

The site was developed in 2005 as a static website that was maintained by a webmaster. In 2009 it was revamped to a different hosting software, Joomla 1.5 that allowed for village employees to update content, though it requires proficiency in Joomla. The site also added a business directory and council/committee directory in 2009.

Keiser suggested upgrading the website's software to Joomla 3.2 or 3.3 to give the site a more updated look and feel. He said the update would also make the site more mobile-friendly for viewing on mobile devices.

Keiser and board members also discussed revamping the site's search optimization tools to bring the site up on search engine results lists for those looking to relocate to a progressive small town.

They also discussed including a bill pay feature to the updated site, which would allow village customers to view/pay their bills online.

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Keiser also discussed including a local help wanted section to the site. Board members indicated there may be a need to address more agricultural issues on the website.

Discussion also included a conversation of how difficult it has become for village employees to keep the website updated in addition to their other responsibilities.

Board members asked Keiser to bring a proposal to the next board meeting that would include costs to update the site and asked the proposal include numbers to include off-site updating of the site by Champa employees. Keiser also indicated he will have a discussion with board member Beau Kramer about possible ag issues to cover on the website.

## **Economic development**

The board revisited the discussion of possible conflicts for board members who also serve on the Wauneta Economic Development Committee (WEDC).

Last month village board members also discussed possibly providing the Wauneta Economic Development Committee with pre-approved yearly revenue of \$5,000.

The village currently funds the WEDC when a request is made for community improvements. However, the new arrangement would provide the WEDC up to \$5,000 per year. WEDC members would be able to make a request to the village clerk instead of waiting until a village board meeting.

Board members had decided to table the discussion of the WEDC request until the June meeting since they had concerns about possible conflicts of interests since two of the five village board members, Rick Einspahr and Tony Cribelli, also serve on the WEDC.

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At the June meeting Village Attorney Arlan Wine reported back that there should not be an issue with the board funding the WEDC, so long as members who also serve on the WEDC complete a conflict of interest form and abstain from discussion and voting on issues concerning the WEDC.

No action concerning the funding request was taken at the June meeting.

Board members also appointed Randy Geier as a member of the WEDC at the June meeting.

### **Water compliance**

Village Superintendent Bill Bischoff gave the board an update on the status on compliance efforts concerning the village water supply's arsenic levels.

The village has put out a request for bids to purchase reverse osmosis systems to be used in homes and businesses around town.

The village is waiting to hear back from the engineer who will manage the well-rehab program for the village water wells. The project is expected to begin in July.

Wauneta has been accepted into a new trial study with the Department of Health and Human Services and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The study will provide funding to inject grout into the village's existing wells to isolate the layers of formation so the water supply will be pulled from a different location.

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The hope is the isolation will result in much lower arsenic levels in the town's water. A total of three cities were selected for the well rehab program.

### **Housing study**

Board members discussed supplying Southwest Nebraska Community Betterment Corporation (SWNCBC) with \$3,200 to use as partial matching funds for a grant to study housing in southwest Nebraska during the May meeting. Village Clerk Evelyn Skelton reported back to the board at the June meeting that SWNCBC was unable to apply for funds this year.

Board members briefly discussed hiring another entity to perform a housing study and decided to wait until SWNCBC could apply in the future.

### **Keno funds**

Skelton provided board members with an update of recent uses from the Keno funds in the village after receiving a request to research uses from Chairman Sinner.

Her report, which went back to 2010, showed several expenditures from the Keno fund to make improvements at the park, pool, as well as general needs of the village.

In 2013 keno funds were used to give WEDC a \$6,000 grant to fund economic development efforts, \$3,429.40 to purchase sprinklers for the park and \$1,890 to sand blast and paint the baby pool. The year before, in 2012 the fund provided \$14,860 to paint the main pool as well as

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several other projects.

After hearing the report, Sinner said, "I had no idea back then [when the village allowed keno inside city limits] that this thing would bring in the revenue that it has. It's a God's blessing."

### Other business

The village board approved three liquor licenses related to Wauneta's Harvest Fest at the board meeting last week. Two of the approved licenses were for the Wauneta Chamber and one for Good Times Bar.

Mandi Kramer, representing the Wauneta Chamber, told the board the Harvest Fest committee is planning a new location for the annual Harvest Fest dance. They plan to hold the dance on the north end of Tecumseh Avenue instead of inside the Legion Hall, weather permitting.

The first of the liquor licenses allows the Chamber to serve alcohol inside the fenced-off area designated for the dance, the second allows them to serve alcohol inside the Legion Hall if weather does not cooperate for the outdoor dance.

Rich Romine, dba Good Times Bar, also applied for and was approved to hold a liquor license to serve alcohol in the fenced-off area so that bar patrons could legally carry their drinks outside into the area designated for the outdoor dance.

In other business, the board approved hiring Emma Skelton for part time summer clerical help in the village office. She will be in the office mornings throughout the summer.

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### **Clerk's report**

During her clerk's report, Skelton told board members the village received its annual dividend from EMC insurance. This year the village received \$208, which is down from previous years.

She also told board members the village has had two audits in the past month—one on insurance premiums and one on workman's compensation.

The village was also audited for their SRF loan program by someone from the Department of Environmental Quality. She reviewed book work and took a tour around the village to look at the various projects funded by the SRF loan, everything that's been remodeled for the arsenic project to date.

She had high praise for the bookkeeping efforts of the village and the work that's been done.

Skelton also told board members the concession stand at the ball field is being managed differently this year. In the past it was managed by the Women of Today, who have been unable to staff it this year.

Instead, the concession stand was stocked initially by the village and the ball teams are working together to help staff the stand. In the end, the teams and the village will split the profits from sales.

### **Superintendent's report**



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Bischoff told board members WDesigns is currently assisting the village with work done to the lagoons. The village is in process of draining them now, which is expected to end soon. After the lagoons are drained, repairs will begin.

The village's lagoons have not been able to meet the pH requirements for reports. The village plans to drain the sludge out of the small lagoon with hopes that will lower the pH levels.

The plans include drugging, erosion control and a new scale. The company will get Bischoff prices to bring before the board at a future date.

Bischoff noted the village will only have one lagoon while the other is being worked on.

Bischoff also reported that there have been several homes in town having sewer issues lately. He and board members discussed possibly offsetting the cost of Rid-X to residents to help with the tree root problem.

Bischoff also noted the village has seen an increase in water consumption, which he feels is due to the rising number of residents using automatic sprinklers.

After a discussion of what neighboring communities pay temporary summer help Sinner mentioned he would like to see yearly evaluations on every village employee.

The village is also in process of ordering a light pole to replace the one that is bent on main street due to an accident this winter. Because the poles are specially made, the village may order one or two extras to have on hand in case of future damage.

The Wauneta Village Board regularly meets at 7 p.m. MT on the second Tuesday of the month at the village office. The public is welcome to attend meetings.

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