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Commissioners agree past problems will not hinder project

By JESSICA CRAWFORD • Daily Leader

This past November, the City of Liberal filed a lawsuit against WaterPark Experts for the entire amount of \$2,260,000 due to a breach of the agreement made between the city and WPE in the latter part of May of last year.

The paperwork noted that WaterPark Experts backed out of their contract due to “experiencing financial hardship, that WPE was closing its doors, that WPE would be exploring the filing of bankruptcy,” according to the city.

The city has since agreed to finish the project themselves and also hired Alamo Grid Construction of Mississippi LLC to subcontract the project with Cap Kelly at the helm.

According to commissioners, things are coming right along and are still on schedule. However, there have been a few bumps along the road.

In Tuesday evening’s city commission meeting, city manager Mark Hall apologized to his commissioners regarding all of the problems that have cropped up with the construction of the aquatic center.

“When it comes down to it, it is my responsibility,” Hall said. “Yes, there was not a performance bond and we regret and wish there was. We will deliver the product as promised, no shortcuts or settling for less quality.

“I would like to apologize to the commission for the present situation,” he continued. “This is such a great, great project for youth and families in this community, and I am distracted from that benefit. I have always had the community’s well being in mind at all times, and again, I truly apologize for the situation. You are a great commission.”

Directly upon Mark Hall expressing his sincere regret to the commissioners, vice mayor Doug LaFreniere looked directly at Hall and took responsibility for the situation as well.

“Mark, I appreciate your comments very much. I know the responsibility lies with you, but also, we as a commission, we voted,” LaFreniere said. “You don’t vote, Mark, we do. There was not a performance bond. I didn’t think of it.”

Mayor Joe Denoyer also expressed his regret of the situation.

Although he expressed a lot of faith in the man in charge of constructing the pool, Cap Kelly.

“I am confident in Cap Kelly and Alamo Grid Construction,” he said.

“I want to deliver a quality product, and I believe that Cap can do that by the completion date.

“We can’t point fingers – we all reviewed the contract,” he continued. “I didn’t even know what a performance bond was, I will just be honest. We missed it, we can’t go back, we just have to go forward.”

Dave Harrison commented on the many negative statements spreading through the community regarding the project.

“We have a completion date that is set,” he said. “So let’s get closer to that and see what our product is before we get our hands wringing and fingerpointing.

“Let’s just get to the final project, and if it is like all the fingerpointers think it is, then I will agree with you,” Harrison added. “But until we get there, I think that is a little premature.

Whether we are right or wrong, it is a decision that we made and we are here to make sure the project does get completed and is done right.

“I am not going to tell you we are never going to make a mistake,”

Harrison concluded. “It’s unfortunate, but we move on.”

headline: Regents respond to Governor’s budget recommendations • Special to the Daily Leader Higher education funding would be cut by \$120 million TOPEKA — Today Regent Donna Shank of Liberal, chair of the Kansas Board of Regents, issued the following statement Tuesday in response to Governor Kathleen Sebelius’s Fiscal Year 2009 and Fiscal Year 2010 budget recommendations:

“The Board certainly understands the harsh reality of the state’s economic environment and the realistic and overall context in which the Governor’s budget recommendations should be viewed. Due to careful planning undertaken over the past few months, the state’s higher education system is prepared to absorb fiscal year 2009 budget reductions. However, it will not be easy or painless; these reductions will have a serious impact, and there will be consequences as a result. Nonetheless, we understand that every state governmental entity must share in the pain, so we are prepared to do our part.

“Looking ahead to fiscal year 2010, the Governor has proposed further budgetary reductions

that will make it increasingly difficult to address critical workforce shortages that exist in Kansas, make additional progress on vital deferred maintenance projects, and keep higher education affordable for hard-working students and their families. The state's higher education system only recently recovered from cuts incurred during the last recession and a \$120 million hit would profoundly stunt the progress the system has made toward meeting the state's workforce and economic development needs.

"The Governor noted in her speech last night that 'our universities are one of our State's greatest assets. By educating young Kansans they promote generational change and contribute to the knowledge economy that will move Kansas forward.' I couldn't agree more. Higher education institutions are engines of economic growth. Increased workforce skills boost overall economic productivity, thus the surest way to grow the Kansas economy is through an investment in higher education."

Specifics:

For the state's public higher education system (7 public universities, 19 community colleges, and 6 technical colleges):

- o A 3 percent budget cut in the FY 2009 operating budget equates to a reduction of \$24.3 million.

- o A 7 percent (3 percent in FY 2009 and 4 percent in FY 2010) budget cut in the FY 2010 operating budget equates to a reduction of \$56.3 million.

- o In addition, the Governor recommended a total of \$20.1 million in program and capital expenditure reductions which include the elimination of:

- o 1.3 million for deferred maintenance projects on state university campuses.

o 2.5 million for Wichita Aviation Infrastructure funding.

o \$2.5 million for Graduate Medical Education programs in Wichita.

o \$1.008 million for the Kansas Academy of Mathematics & Science.

Overall, higher education funding would be reduced by a net total of

\$120.3 million (\$24.94 million in FY 2009 and \$95.34 million in FY 2010).

headline: It takes two to save a life

- Special to the Daily Leader

It takes two to ride a tandem bicycle, sing a duet or play checkers.

The American Red Cross says it also takes two to save a life – the generous donor rolling up their sleeve and the Red Cross, working together to ensure life-saving blood is on hospital shelves for patients in need. Locally, citizens can be part of a life-saving duo by giving blood from noon to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 20, in Liberal at the Western Ave. Church of Christ located at 215 South Western Ave.

It also takes two in the community to spread the message of the on-going need for blood. During January and February, everyone coming to donate at a Red Cross blood drive will

receive two great Sonic® coupons for one life-saving donation. Redeem the coupon at a participating Sonic® and enjoy a free medium cherry limeade, and then use your buy one, get one free Sonic® Burger coupon for another visit.

“Local Sonic Drive-Ins are excited to be working with the Red Cross to raise the awareness of the need for blood,” said Christina Bell, regional marketing director for Sonic Corp. “We want to thank blood donors on their next visit to our drive-ins, and thank each one for caring enough to save a life.”

Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood. Those in need of blood include not only victims of disasters or traumas but a daily list of scheduled surgeries at area hospitals. From heart surgery to joint replacements, organ transplants or premature babies, leukemia and cancer treatments and many more, these patients can be old or young, family or friends, a next-door neighbor or a visitor to the area.

“We are all connected. We each give and receive; it’s a two-way street. You give blood today, and it may be you or someone you know who receives blood at some point in their life,” said Pam Head, CEO, Central Plains Region. “The time taken by one generous individual to give blood can give more precious time to someone in need. Whether it’s two more decades or two more minutes, to the person receiving your blood, it’s a true gift.”

For more information or to schedule an appointment, donors should call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (1-800-448-3543) or visit bloodisneeded.org.

You must be 17 years of age (16 in Kansas with completed Parental Consent Form), weigh 110 pounds be in general good health to donate blood. The Red Cross reminds those coming to donate to bring a photo ID.

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