

NEITHER RAIN, NOR SLEET

Moving welcome center discussed by council

Neither rain, snow, hail nor ice can stop members of the Fair North Central Rural Development Council. On Wednesday, people from Edmond, Stillwater, Enid, Cherokee, Ponca City and Blackwell braved the winter cold to attend the Economic Development meeting.

Council Chairperson Marilyn Harmon told the group of progress on moving the Welcome Center to the Blackwell Exit. She passed out a letter from Bruce Taylor, chief engineer for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

Taylor indicated ODOT would have a site location layout for the southwest quadrant of the SH11 interchange.

Harmon also reported that Senator Paul Muegge had talked to Mitch Surret from Neal McCaleb's office at ODOT. Surret said they should have the layout done in a week or so.

The multi-community group Land Run Tours group was discussed. The group will attend a trav-

el show in Oklahoma City on Feb. 14 and will pass out brochures and work to get tour groups to visit local attractions.

Harmon also told the group that Newkirk's Main Street and Rotary Club hosted a Business After Hours in December that was very well attended by different communities. Shidler will host a Business After Hours on March 10 at the Oklahoma Jubilee. "This is a perfect opportunity to showcase a community, plus expands our networking group," she said.

Phil Watson, statewide director for the Oklahoma Rural Development Council, updated the group on important issues the legislature will be facing.

Watson discussed the Truth in Sentencing legislation designed to keep hard core criminals in prison for their entire term.

Watson also mentioned legislation dealing with abolishing sales tax on groceries. Gerald Hall from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce added, "This is the

biggest issue facing municipalities in many years." He explained that cities have to get their revenue from somewhere for police and fire protection, etc.

Possibility of a correctional facility locating in this area was discussed. Blackwell Mayor Louis Gose told the group, "They will have a \$55 million investment wherever they locate, with no investment on the City's part."

Later, local business people expressed their concern over the labor issue. It was suggested that a realistic labor survey be conducted.

Hall gave a general update on several issues including a new quality jobs program for small employers. "You must add a minimum of 10 employees over a 12-month period, with 80 percent of those employees having wages of 150 percent of your county's average per capita income."

Each guest in the room introduced themselves then gave a community or business update.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 12.

Rail surcharge under consideration by BIA

By HELEN SEUBERT
J-T City Editor

Options leading to a possible surcharge for users of Blackwell's short-line railroad were discussed Wednesday by BIA Attorney Brian Wiseman during a meeting of the Blackwell Industrial Authority.

Possibilities of a per car surcharge stemmed from suggestions in early negotiations connected with the purchase of the railroad.

A surcharge would help replenish BIA's revolving fund and expenditures pertaining to the rail pur-

chase.

Several options are open for users. Wiseman told trustees, adding he was consulting with SKO (the operator) and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation as to the simplest options for users and the least complicated for all entities involved.

Discussion Wednesday also centered on soil remediation of the industrial park.

Arrangements and legalities already in place for the Brownfield site as determined by the Oklahoma

Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ), Cyprus-AMAX and BIA are firm, according to Wiseman.

BIA has given ODEQ access to the site for remediation and awaits the next steps. BIA consultant David Paige is currently focusing on the groundwater situation at the site.

Once remediation has been accomplished, landowners in the park specifically BIA, would be issued a certificate declaring the land clear of contamination.