



Photo By Brian McKim

**A Chinese balloon could be spotted making its way over Falls City early on Friday morning. The Journal was first alerted of the balloon by local resident Bob Claymiller around 7:30 a.m. that an object was in the air northwest of Falls City. The balloon, moving in an easterly direction could still be spotted as of 9:40 a.m.**

**According to an ABC News story, China's foreign minister has claimed it is a civilian balloon used for meteorological purposes.**

**Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said in a statement on Thursday that the government was tracking the balloon and that it didn't seem to present a military threat.**

**The balloon was shot down by U.S. Military off the coast of South Carolina on Saturday afternoon.**

## Internal audit of customer utility accounts finds overcharge, now what?

By Nikki McKim

According to a social media post by the City of Falls City/Utilities, an error was discovered in calculating the "power cost adjustment" (PCA) billing during a recent internal audit of customer utility accounts resulting in an overcharge. The audit was part of multiple layer control steps the city has in place to perform routine monthly oversight audits. "The monthly control procedures failed and new steps have been implemented by management for oversight and control to ensure the error doesn't happen again," stated City Clerk Anthony Nussbaum.

The post stated, "The PCA is an adjustment made to your electric bill each month to reflect fluctuations in the true cost of power purchased and/or the cost of power generation by the City of Falls City. We have investigated the error and determined the incorrect base cost for power production was utilized in calculating the PCA beginning when the new utility rates became effective on October 1, 2022, as set forth in Ordinance 2022-106. The PCA calculation is performed manually each billing cycle and then entered into the city's utility billing software. Unfortunately, the manual calculation was incorrect, and the current checks/balances process did not catch the error resulting in an overcharge to our customers for electrical power consumed. To correct the mistake, utility customers will receive a credit on the next billing cycle in February for utility bills due by March 15, 2023. The amount of credit will vary depending upon the total kilowatt hours (kWh) consumed by the customer between October 1, 2022, to January 15, 2023. The

credit will be applied directly to customer accounts in February and will carry forward until the credit is used. Please note that the credit cannot be utilized for the January billing cycle due by February 15, 2023, due to the timing of the credit posting. A revision to our Standard Operating Procedures, adding additional layers of checks and balances, will be implemented to ensure this error does not occur in the future. The City of Falls City considers transparency with our citizens of utmost importance, and we apologize for any confusion and inconvenience this issue caused."

According to Nussbaum, the error was specific to the PCA billing for electric power. Electric rates, usage and all other utility rates, including water, gas and sewer, were not affected; however, the sales tax will be adjusted proportionally with the PCA credit.

"Due to the error occurring at the effectiveness of the October 1, 2022 rate increase, the city is also crediting back any penalties and fees that may have occurred due to the overbilling of the PCA. The city operates one month behind on utility billing, so the error affected three billing months," stated Nussbaum.

The city issued the social media notice regarding the billing error, but the timeline for getting credits issued back to accounts couldn't be determined "as our software backup files required server mining and coding into the utility software in order to generate the credits," said Nussbaum. The city is working with its provider, Salt Creek Software, to generate the data and expects that data to be in the system by February 10.

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## Commissioners will start meeting on Wednesdays in March

The Richardson County Board of Commissioners met at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 31, 2023.

Steve Darveau, Jr. provided updates on the routine maintenance being done on county roads and bridges. Equipment repairs and department building maintenance items were discussed. A discussion was also held on the quality of rock that should be used in different conditions of county roads. The specifications for the replacement and construction of a County shop building in Rulo were presented to the Board. The summary of projects to be included on the Richardson County 1 & 6 Year Road Plan were presented with a public hearing to be held on Tuesday, February 21, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. (See page 5 for summary chart).

Darveau also presented a notice to advertise for sealed bids for the 2023 Armor Coat project to cover 10.6 miles beginning at the intersection of 712 Road and Hwy 73, thence east, along 712 Road to 656 Ave, thence south, along 656 Ave, ending at Hwy 159; and .8 miles beginning at Hwy 8 on 633 Ave, thence south, approx. 4.1 miles to the state line, and from the intersection of 703 Trail and 633 Ave east along 703 Trail; .6 miles in the Unincorporated Village of Preston and .7 miles in the Village of Barada.

A motion was made by Karas to authorize the Chairman to sign the statement to approve the National Functional Classification System routes that run through Richardson County to be submitted to the NE Dept of Transportation. The motion carried.

Sheriff Hardesty was unable to meet with the Board this week.

Amanda Bartek-Ramsey, County Treasurer presented to the Board information regarding the new settlement with the National Opioid Settlements with Teva, Allergan, CVS, Walgreens and

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### REMINDERS SEE ADS INSIDE!

- Country Jamboree, 2nd Friday of the Month!
- FC Rural Fire Pancake/Sausage Feed, Feb. 12-7:30-1:30PM
- A&G Restaurant will be CLOSED Feb. 13-20th
- St. Thomas Episcopal Church Worship Schedule for Feb.
- Public Land Auction, Feb. 18 at 10 AM.
- Richardson County Land Auction, Feb. 21 at 11 AM.
- FC Rec Pancake/Sausage Fundraiser, Feb. 26th 8AM-1PM
- Taxes due April 18, The Write A-Way Income Tax & Accounting.

### PUBLIC NOTICES, BECAUSE YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW: Commissioners, Delinquent Property Taxes, Dist. 56, Notices

**\$1.25**



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## Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska selected for Kansas Capital Project Funds award

The Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska (ITKN) has been selected as one of nine grant applicants to be awarded funds through the third award phase of the Kansas Capital Project Funds (CPF) Broadband Infrastructure Program. The CPF program is designed to provide funding for the development of broadband connections in critical areas of the state lacking high-speed internet access and will result in fast and reliable internet access for thousands of Kansans.

Through a partnership between ITKN, Doniphan County, Rainbow Telecommunications and the City of White Cloud, Kansas, the Tribe will utilize the \$1,424,945 award to improve fi-

ber broadband internet access in White Cloud, Kansas.

White Cloud is a historically significant river town with approximately 110 homes, five anchor institutions, and ten businesses. The town is significant to the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, where many tribal citizens live, work, and own businesses. During the pandemic, citizens of White Cloud did not have sufficient access to online education, telehealth, or telecommuting due to the lack of broadband connectivity. An incredible 91% of the town is unserved. The town and business corridor are in the process of being revitalized, and reliable broadband infra-

structure will provide improved livability through access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. The city and surrounding areas boast a unique topographical landscape. Hilly treed lands and bluffs create performance and wide-spread access limitations for wireless broadband solutions, making underground fiber broadband the best option for high-speed internet access. However, installation of underground fiber broadband is expensive, especially with the difficulties presented by the terrain. The funding provided through the CPF program helps remove the cost barrier and creates an opportunity for reliable and future-proof technology.

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**FULL TIME  
BUSINESS OFFICE POSITION**  
STOP IN OR SEND RESUME TO  
hullmansford@sentco.net





From the Journal Files

By Brian McKim

50-25-15 Years Ago

**50 Years Ago, February 8, 1973 to February 14, 1973**

Several Richardson County farmers claimed top spots in the dry-land division of the state contest. Charles Kirkendall Jr. was the top corn yield producer (172.8 bushels); Carl Arnold won the milo sweepstakes (141.3 bushels); David Sickel was second in corn at 167.5 bushels; Fred Brewer was second in the soybean division with 53.8 bushels and Joe Godemann was second in wheat at 58.9 bushels and Charles Ebel placed second in milo at 135.1 bushels.

The City of Falls City replied to a legal suit over a denied permit for a shopping center north of town. The City denied that it was unreasonable and arbitrary in refusing the Noddle Development Co. of Omaha’s application for a permit to erect a \$400,000 Hinky Dinky-Gibson Discount Center north of town.

Odell gave the DV Jets their second Homesteader Conference loss, 59-55. Bill Bruhn led the Jets with 14 points. DV won the reserve contest 25-23, with Dale James leading the way with eight points.

Bob Aitken poured in nine points to lead the Sacred Heart junior high to a 38-17 win over Honey Creek. Rick Karas led Honey Creek with seven points.

Gary’s Derby advertised coke and sprite qts., five for \$1.00, plus a deposit.

The Town and Country Promenaders had a dance at the junior high gymnasium, with Dean Wiemers of Lincoln conducting the class.

One pound of Russell Stover candy at Sheets Pharmacy cost you just \$2.00 for Valentine’s Day.

The Chrysler Corporation reported its sales, income and profits hit all-time highs in 1972.

Benard Gerweck and his wife, Donetta, announced the purchase of the Montgomery Ward catalog store.

Humboldt wrestlers earning a spot at the state tourney were Al Stevicks, Ray Snoko and Mike Masonbrink.

Southeast wrestlers heading to state included Kevin Sopoci, Kent Morehead and Dave Lockard.

Richardson County Bank’s ad encouraged people to see the student loan specialist (Don Campbell) to secure college loans.

Mayor M.O. Armbruster, president of Armbruster Motor Company, was named a Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award winner for 1973. Armbruster was one of only 64 dealers selected for the award.

Steve Kottich, a junior at Sacred Heart, received a \$25 savings bond from the American Legion for his essay on “What Participation in County Government Day Meant to Me.”

Simanton and Pence Flower Shop at 1514 Stone St. advertised Valentine’s Day flowers consisting of large Belgian red azaleas for \$6.95.

Roger Lampe, a member of Troop 393 of the Boy Scouts of America, was presented the Pro-Deo-et-Patria emblem during the morning worship at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church.

A \$500 grant was made to the Rulo community by the America the Beautiful Foundation of Washington, D.C., to assist in renovating the Rulo auditorium.

Tigers wrestlers headed to the state meet included Tom Stalder, Wayne Schulenberg, Bob Jones, Al Niehaus and Ken Moeller.

Sacred Heart was named champion of its division in the Creighton University Mathematics Field. Champions included Janis Lantzy, Kevin McGinnis, Mike Bird, Dan Kean and Tom McGuire.

Ladies’ shoes and fashion boots were only \$6.00 at Brown’s Shoe Fit in Falls City.

Walter Kottich Jr. was re-elected president of the Richardson County Dairy Herd Improvement Association.

Approximately 170 people attended the annual dinner meeting of the Falls City Chamber of Commerce.

**25 Years Ago, February 8, 1998 to February 14, 1998**

Numbers showed a significant rise in new construction in Falls City in 1997. Building permits totaled \$2,917,351 compared to \$1,547,500 in 1996.

The Lady Irish basketball team won its third consecutive Pioneer Conference crown by defeating Southeast Consolidated 78-38.

Sacred Heart senior Brandon Sells signed a letter of intent to play football for the Northwest Missouri St. Bearcats.

The Dawson-Verdon speech team won the Homesteader Conference Speech Competition. The team members won nine events and earned 15 total medals.

Pellets struck Falls City Police Chief John Caverzagie from a shotgun blast in an incident involving a 26-year-old Falls City man. At least three pellets hit Caverzagie, one entering his knee and two striking his jacket, but not penetrating it.

Clarence and Emma Bauman celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary with an open house at O’Connor Hall at 1721 Fulton Street.

Journal Athletes of the Week were Joe Buckminster and Katie Simon.

The Falls City Wrestling Club Tourney drew 228 competitors from as far away as Grand Island.

Shirley Frederick, a CMC employee since 1975, received an appreciation plaque from hospital administrator Vic Lee during a reception.

At their lunch counter, Ken’s Pharmacy advertised a bowl of chili and a grilled cheese sandwich for only \$2.79.

**15 Years Ago, February 8, 2008 to February 14, 2008**

Joe Santo had seven points to help lead the Irish basketball team to a 44-39 win over Freeman. The Irish’s win was the eighth straight as they improved to 19-1 for the season.

Brett McQueen, Jacob Gruber, Dustin Metzner, Joe Santo, Darcy Stice, Theresa Gruber, Colton Martin and Maggie Parrish were inducted into the National Honor Society at Sacred Heart High School.

Armbruster Motor Company advertised a 2000 Olds Alero with 105k miles on sale for \$3,995.

Lem’s Northvue Café had a Valentine’s Day “Sweetheart” special of two tacos for two bucks.

The \$25,000 skate park erected at Pioneer Park opened with skateboarders braving the cold temperatures to test out the new ramps.

Triple S Construction demolished a Falls City landmark at 21st and Harlan. Matt and Julie Bauman had purchased the schoolhouse property. The school closed in 1957 when the new North School was built.

Long-time District 56 School Board member Ralph Huettner announced that he would not seek re-election due to his interest in running for a seat on the Richardson County Board of Commissioners.

Maggie Goltz won the Elks State Hoop Shoot competition for the third time.

Josh Murphy hit an 84-foot at the end of the third quarter as the Tiger boy’s freshman loss to Bishop LeBlond, 31-32.

January Falls City High School Students of the Month were Tim von Behren, Dakota Schulenberg, Emily Pierson and Jessica Chandler.

# Internal audit of customer utility accounts finds overcharge, now what?

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Nussbaum said the department initially thought the data would be posted back into accounts early last week, but the process was taking more time than anticipated. Once the credits are finalized, the city will issue an additional news release.

Customers who are worried about being unable to pay their bills should follow the routine procedures regarding extension requests by contacting city hall. The city is modifying its extension request procedures by allowing any previous extension requests made after October 1, 2022, not to affect the ability of the customer to get another extension until the credit can be applied to their account. There will be circumstances that could yield a shutoff requirement, however, stated Nussbaum, “the bill extension modification will

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## Iowa Tribe of KS and NE selected for KS Capital Project Funds award

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“This project will bring much-needed broadband internet access to the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska and the surrounding community members in Doniphan County,” said ITKN Chairman Timothy Rhodd. “Fast and reliable broadband internet connectivity will allow Tribal members access to critical education, healthcare, smart-farm initiatives, economic development and public safety resources. The Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska and our business holding company, Grey Snow Management Solutions, LLC, look forward to this upcoming project as these grant funds will create a better future for the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska and rural Kansans as a whole.”

The underground fiber broadband will be extended from the current termination point on the ITKN Reservation to Tribal Community Housing, businesses, and residents in White Cloud as funding allows. Newly served community members and businesses will be able to choose from a variety of plans provided by Rainbow Telecommunications.

The Kansas CPF program provides the funding necessary to build high-speed internet connections for thousands of homes, businesses, schools, health-care facilities and other public institutions in the State of Kansas. The U.S. Department of Treasury approved this program as a part of the federal CPF program, a \$10 billion capital project initiative serving states, territories, and tribal governments through the American Rescue Plan Act.

provide relief from shut-off procedures if followed by the customer. Disconnect notices will continue to be sent out to customers that have not paid their bill in full. The disconnect notice provides information regarding relief from disconnect.”

How will customers know precisely how much they were overcharged? They won’t yet. Nussbaum said there would be a credit for the PCA line during the next billing month, showing a negative adjustment.

“The sales tax adjustment will be accommodated by the negative adjustment for the PCA and any credit card processing fees that a customer may have paid. There is no set percentage for every account as the credit is based upon the kilowatt/hr (KwH) of consumption on a per-customer basis. The credit will be approximately 2.9-3.1 cents for each KwH used related specifically to the PCA billing line item only. Once the credits are finalized and posted to accounts, we will let the public know. Customers will be able to call City Hall to find out that information once it is avail-

able prior to mailing out the monthly bill,” stated Nussbaum.

For any questions for clarifications on rates or charges, Nussbaum said the rates are published online at <http://www.fallscitynebraska.org/utilities>.

Members of the community attended the Thursday, February 2, Board of Public Works meeting to discuss the issue; however, due to open meeting laws and getting on the agenda, they were not able to discuss the issue with the board.

Nussbaum stated the staff at city hall is available to discuss this information with citizens when they have questions.

The City Council met on Monday, Feb. 6. Any discussion regarding the utility bills will be printed in next week’s Falls City Journal.

Any pertinent information will be posted as soon as possible at [www.fcjournal.net](http://www.fcjournal.net).

Due to the open meetings act, anyone unable to speak at this week’s meeting who would like to place themselves on the agenda for the next meeting will need to contact City Hall.

A&G RESTAURANT

WILL BE CLOSED FEB. 13<sup>TH</sup>-20<sup>TH</sup>

& WILL REOPEN TUES., FEB. 21<sup>ST</sup> @ 11AM

FALLS CITY RURAL FIRE DEPARTMENT  
COMMUNITY BENEFIT  
PANCAKE & SAUSAGE FEED

SUPER BOWL SUNDAY  
FEBRUARY 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
7:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

At the Falls City Rural Fire Station  
(on old Highway 73 north)  
Shuttle Bus will be available at the  
Falls City Aquatic Center!  
Free Will Donation

Proceeds to be applied towards  
equipment upgrades & to the emergency aid fund.

COUNTY PREDICTIONS & HINTS

Analogy

The trade of the guilty blaming the innocent seeks a very low-level inhumanity. Truth overcomes the guilty with sometimes leaving lingering side effects such as stomach aches, chest aches, chest pains, headaches, and insomnia. I have a lifetime friend with quite a story. At a young age, he and some friends were riding around with him driving his car. The friends indicated they knew where a bottle of bourbon was. They went to an undisclosed location. He waited and they left and came back with a bottle of bourbon. It was pass the jug time and after trying the jug, everybody agreed it tasted awful. They threw it away and went home. My friend held this guilt of wrongdoing all through the years of marriage, raising children, and many years after. During this time, having headaches and lack of sleep, he finally admitted to many people his foul deed when he was younger. At this time, he has very few pains and is sleeping well.

Hints

Truth overcomes guilt in many ways. Aid to help weaken guilt is to admission. Bourbon doesn't taste or smell anything like oil.