

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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Volunteer Firefighters “Taxed to the Max”

AVFD battles fires for close to 14 hours

By Janet Larreau

Training and equipment of the Arnold Fire Department were put to the test last week, as volunteers battled fires for 14 hours in three different locations.

The AVFD received their first fire page at 3:30 p.m. on April 13. Knowing they would be shorthanded if another fire broke out, Arnold took one grass rig and a tanker to what is now called the Cooksley Fire, which was sparked by dry lighting in northern Custer County. The fire went as far as the Middle Loup River in Blaine County, and by late afternoon, dry lightning sparked seven additional fires. Leaving the tanker, Arnold started coming back to the station with the grass rig at 7:45 p.m. and was paged out for a grass fire west of Lester Mills in Terry Mills’ pasture. The fire – also caused by lightning – was extinguished with help from some rain. When the rig got back from that fire, another page went off at 9:08 p.m. to a grass fire on the Dunning Road, just east of Roger Peterson’s place. Lightning had again sparked this fire, which spread quickly in high winds that were changing directions. When the tanker was called back to come to that fire, the fire hall was cleaned

out of equipment. Arnold called for mutual aid which was in short supply. Arnold is part of three mutual aid districts, and two were on the Cooksley Fire. The remaining one, Mid-Plains Mutual Aid, called out their resources, along with neighboring towns. Arriving to help were Callaway, Stapleton, Halsey, Dunning, Tryon, Purdum, Brady, North Platte Airport (grass rig), Hershey, Sutherland, Paxton, Curtis, Maywood, Elm Creek, Amherst, Gibbon, Region 51 Emergency, and numerous farmers and ranchers. Custer County Emergency Management tried to find help for Arnold while on the Cooksley fire.

“We were taxed to the max reaching out, trying to find departments so that the two fires didn’t combine,” said Arnold Fire Chief Andrew Tickle. “Our firefighters could see a glow off to the east and thought it was our fire. The whole sky in that area was glowing orange. The major issue was the wind, which was just horrendous and changing directions. Once we kind of knocked it down to manageable, it shifted from the north, and we had breakouts to manage.”

After a nine-hour stint on the Arnold fire, the last rig returned to the station at 6:00 a.m. on the 14th. Exhausted and dirty, fire department



Arnold firefighter Cassy DeLosh snapped this photo as department members drove towards the Arnold fire on the Dunning road last Thursday night.

members returned to their homes. Using a drone, Custer County Emergency Management reported to Tickle on Saturday that some 1,800 to 2,000 acres of grass were burned before the Arnold fire was contained.

Tickle said the show of support from the community was amazing. Local farmers, who have some nice set-ups, were helping; Reed’s Food Center opened in the middle of the

night to donate sandwiches.

“The Arnold fire started in our district, which goes within three miles of Highway 2 to the north, down to Peterson’s Hill south, beyond John Beshaler’s to the east, and almost to Gandy to the west. It’s what we sign up for and sometimes it’s more than we think we can do, but we manage, and I am thankful for our volunteers we have,” said Tickle.

Note: On 4/14 at 8:00 a.m.,

Custer County Emergency Management reported that a multitude of fire departments, aircraft, and volunteers assisted with the Cooksley Fire. Structures, an extensive amount of hay, and possibly livestock, were lost. Due to the magnitude of the fire, they were only beginning to assess the damage. A disaster declaration for the Cooksley Complex Fire has been submitted.

Village Board Signs Sub-Award Agreement for Grant, Sets Pool Hours

The Arnold Village Board agreed to sign a sub-award agreement with the State of Nebraska – Department of Economic Development for a Rural Workforce Housing Land Development Grant at its regular meeting held on April 11. In a report given earlier in the meeting, AEDC Director Cheryl Carson said the \$222,770.00 grant would be used for future housing land development.

Pool Hours Discussed

Board member Aaron Olson informed board members that

there have been three additional applicants for lifeguards. A discussion on swimming pool hours followed. Village Clerk Patricia Lamberty read two letters received from residents supporting keeping the hours as they are for families. Suggestions were also made on how adult volunteers could help. In both letters, the residents expressed concern about the lifeguards getting enough hours to want to continue applying each year. The Board discussed that with additional

lifeguards, the pool will be open seven days a week. It was mentioned that Reagan Cool will now be an assistant manager so there will be three certified pool operators. After discussion, the Board voted that the pool will be open the following hours:

Daily (Monday thru Friday): 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Saturday: 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Sunday: 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Adult Swim (Monday thru Fri-

day): 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Discussion was held on the cost of swimming lessons. The current fee for lessons with a season pass is \$15.00 per person for the first week and \$10.00 per person for an additional week. The fee for swimming lessons without a pass is \$20.00 per person for the first week and \$15.00 per person for the second week. Board members voted to change the fee for lessons with a season pass to \$15.00 per person per week and the fee for lessons without

a season pass is \$20.00 per week.

The Board then passed a resolution setting the wage for first year manager to \$13.50 per hour and first year assistant manager(s) to \$12.75 per hour. Managers and assistant managers will be paid an extra .25 per hour for each additional year.

Comments from the floor:

RT Green said that the tentative date for fall festival is September 16.

Fire Chief Andrew Tickle said that there is only one tornado siren that works. Superintendent Doug DeLaune said that it is a Great Plains Communications issue.

Andrew Tickle said that there have been issues with parking by the water station.

DeLaune also reported that the robotic vacuum for the swimming pool has been ordered.

In other business, the Board:

- Voted to purchase a \$37,026.70 Certificate of Deposit at the best interest rate for a term of 12 months or less and designate it to the Parks (Edna B. Peterson) Fund

- Accepted Tri-State Paving’s Proposal of \$62,630.00 to double armor coat and fog seal a list of needed street improvements.

- Was informed that the Arnold Community Gun Club reimbursed the Village for the claim payable to Mills Hardware for \$2,171.49 for metal for the building.

School Board Accepts Teacher Resignation

At their April 11 meeting, Arnold School Board members accepted the resignation of Pat Recoy from the Industrial-Tech position. The school will now start advertising for that position, as well as for a K-12 music instructor and head custodian.

In other business, Superintendent Joel Morgan reported changes that will be made in operating the track timing system for the April 28 conference meet at Arnold. He also reported that Hyannis is leaving MNAC, so some changes will be made to the schedule.

Heave-Ho, It’s Clean-up Time



Photo/Debbie Connelly

Legion members got some extra “push power” from school students on Monday, as they went around town collecting all kinds of metal during the annual Community Clean-Up Day. The 30-foot trailer was full by noon, with 7,000 lbs. collected in just a matter of a few hours.

Volunteers involved with Monday’s annual Community Clean-Up Day were greeted with sunny skies and only a slight breeze to tackle things on their “to do” list. Kids and teachers from the school, Rotary Club, Legion, and Chamber members met at the community center a little after 8:00 a.m., ate a light breakfast

provided by the Village and were then given their assignments. There were 25 locations to cover, including picking up trash and helping landscape on school and public properties, and providing a helping hand to several residents by raking and generally cleaning up. One group helped clean and organize the maintenance room at

Riverview Apartments. Village personnel helped with hauling away household trash and were available where needed. Chamber fed the hungry volunteers, with Mills Hardware donating and grilling hotdogs.

A second roll-off container, free to local residents through the end of May, was brought in anticipation of the clean-up. Su-

perintendent Doug DeLaune said one roll-off has already being emptied two times since its arrival the first of April. With the roll-offs available, and Legion members always willing to take all kinds of metal, residents can continue discarding unwanted items well beyond clean-up day.