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Alley or road?

'Alley' has a street name, Fairgrounds Lane, and a 4-way stop sign

by Robert Reid
Leader & Times

The road just north of the wall that houses the racetrack, radio station and grandstands on the Seward County Fairgrounds was the subject of a minor debate recently between city and county commissioners, during a joint meeting in which the boards met to discuss issues they have in common.

With the Seward County Free Fairy Fair less than three months away, county commissioner Jim Rice said heavy traffic on the north Lima has created hazardous conditions for drivers.

"You can go out there about any time of the day and see cars parked on both sides of the road," Rice said.

Rice said Liberal Public Works Director Jay Sunkel and county road and bridge supervisor Tony Hartman are working on a plan to address the issue.

Ultimately, said the county would be willing to provide all of the equipment and whatever it took to put it down, but the city would have to provide the labor.

The commissioners emphasized the importance of improving the road.

"If we could make things look better, that would be an excellent place to start," he said. "Anybody that drives down here, they judge the facility."

Fairgrounds Lane is 2500 Road and Western Avenue.

"If we could work out something on that and get an idea of what we're going to do, I think that'd be a big improvement," he said. "It's probably one of the worst streets in town."

Liberal Mayor Ted Talbott Jr. Business said while improving the road is important, it is not an immediate need.

"It's known, it's an alley, and there are streets that go to

See LANE/Page 5A

STUDENTS CELEBRATE END OF SCHOOL

A couple of Garfield students make their way through the course of the three-legged race Friday morning at the Garfield Elementary School field day. Check out the Good Print Pics in Blue Basket Park to help kids kick off their summer break with a variety of pieces for more photos of the event, see PAGE 7A. (Jeff Pennington Photo)

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Beautiful blue skies and crispy white clouds greeted students, faculty, administrators and families Saturday morning at Bowlus Field for commencement ceremonies for Liberal High School Class of 2013. Receiving degrees were 237 students who will now be taking off into another chapter in life's journey. (JT Jones/Staff Photo)

Preserving part of Seward County's forgotten history

Whisenant, county look to save Springfield Cemetery

by Robert Reid
Leader & Times

On Dec. 19, 1887, Joe Trent signed a proclamation declaring Liberal the county seat of Seward County.

That score came following a week between Fargo Springs and Springfield that involved a petition drive, a special election and a proposal to influence public which would have decide where the county seat would be located.

Fargo Springs, which had been platted and chartered on Sept. 18, 1885, had the town that served as county seat until the spring of 1888.

Springfield, which was the town of Fargo Springs, and the Central Road between the two towns was the scene of the killing of Springfield's Jim Kelly, the first murder in the county seat war in Stevens County.

Springfield grew to a population of 800 in a matter of months, with a two-story courthouse, a hotel, along with a large brick school house, two hotels and public square filled with businesses.

The post office and several newspapers would soon follow and Springfield's boosters were confident that the railroad, like Fargo Springs after Springfield won the county seat vote.

Springfield would need only a railroad to become the undisputed city of the region, but the Chicago, Kansas and Nebraska railroad, which had been chartered by the state of Kansas in 1887, crossed the Cimarron River below Fargo Springs a few miles.

Fargo Springs, realizing the overwhelming odds the railroad decided to build to the southwest, but the simple fact was that the railroad around Fargo Springs would mean the death knell for Springfield, whose dreams for a railroad to the county seat.

Soon, a new town called Liberal became the county seat, and Springfield, which had blossomed and prospered then faded and died. The post office would continue until Feb. 15, 1915.

Now, one Liberal resident is looking to preserve what is left of the forgotten Seward County town of Springfield.

Tony Whisenant talked to Seward County commissioners at the board's May 6 meeting

See CEMETERY/Page 5A

ABOVE: Gracie Whisenant cut roving plans of Springfield Cemetery. A white concrete marker is the only monument of another Seward County settlement to it.

LEFT: Kansas Historical Marker of Fargo Springs and Springfield.

(Courtesy photos)