

Landlord Finds More Than \$20K After Tenants Arrested

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Police say the landlord of a recently raided apartment found a package containing more than \$20,000 days after its tenants were arrested.

The Omaha Police Department says the landlord entered the apartment Saturday to check for damages after

Nebraska State Troopers searched the residence and arrested the tenants three days earlier. The *Omaha World-Herald* reports that inside, the landlord discovered a 6-by-8 package wrapped with black duct tape next to two pillows and a blanket.

Police say they determined the

package was safe and opened it to find \$20,780 inside. It remains in police custody.

A state patrol member who conducted the March 18 raid says it seemed the apartment had been entered since the raid. The purpose of the raid was not disclosed.

Funding

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emergency clause making those sections effective April 1.

“These current scenarios (under consideration in the county’s master plan) are based on not having this new state legislation,” Troe said. “With the legislation so recent, I’m not sure how we’re going to implement the legislation into the document.”

Yankton truck company owner Ralph Marquardt recommended waiting for additional information.

“I would recommend that you wait one to two months to get the figures from Pierre,” he said, adding the delay in passage of a final plan is worth the wait for updated information.

SB1 will increase the state fuel tax increase by 6 cents per gallon and also increase the excise tax on vehicle purchases. Both funds go toward state highways, which still benefits Yankton County, Troe noted.

In addition, license fees will increase 20 percent, with 12 percent — or slightly more than one-half the amount — going directly to counties, Troe said. The increase in license fees should provide an additional \$160,000 annually for Yankton County, added to the \$1 million currently available annually for road and bridge projects, he estimated.

Yankton County could also seek money from the newly-formed Local Bridge Improvement Grant (BIG) fund but would need to compete for a share of the \$15 million annually, Troe said.

“You could be eligible for money, but you have to complete a plan like this,” he said, referring to the master document under consideration. “We’re one to two months away (from final approval of the county plan), so you would likely be at the top of a nice list.”

However, Yankton County should not count on BIG money as any consistent funding source for its 84 bridges, Troe said.

“BIG is cyclical. One year, you may not get anything, and another year you may get enough to replace three bridges,” he said. “There are 1,200 bridges in the state, but Yankton County is above average for population and travel, so you could com-

pete (for funds) a little better.”

SB 1 also provides for an increase in the wheel tax from the current \$4 a wheel to the new \$5 a wheel. Yankton County is now receiving \$475,000 annually from the wheel tax and should see another \$100,000 with the new increase, Troe said.

In addition, SB 1 contains new provisions for transportation funding at the county level.

Under the new law and its formula, the Yankton County Commission could raise property taxes by up to 90 cents per \$1,000 of taxable value for the transportation funding, which would generate an estimated \$1.44 million, Troe said. Townships are now allowed to raise property taxes up to 50 cents per \$1,000, which would generate an estimated \$100,000 in Yankton County, he added.

Yankton County could first implement smaller property-tax increases, Troe said.

“You wouldn’t need to go the entire 90 cents per \$1,000,” he said. “You could step your way into it if you desire. You can roll the dice on property values increasing or the economy improving.”

Yankton County zoning administrator Pat Garrity said he believes county officials and residents would be willing to accept higher fees and taxes if those increases are moderate and the funds are used directly for transportation.

“We have gotten a good 13 to 14 months of public input (on this master plan) from truckers, farmers and the general public,” he said. “And this (new highway funding) would be a \$1.4-1.5 million line item straight for road improvements. That’s a great tool.”

Troe encouraged Yankton County to consider the new funding options as a way to catch up on badly-needed road and bridge projects.

“You need to see it as new revenue for the system, not replacement revenue,” he said. “If you want to make a dent, you need to go forward with this (additional funding). You need to look at it as a revenue enhancer, not a revenue replacer.”

In the meantime, Troe will tweak the master plan for the county commission’s final review and approval.

Yankton County currently replaces roughly two structures per year at a cost of \$250,000 each, he said. Given the impact of structure replacement on the county’s overall transportation budget, the plan offers three scenarios.

• Scenario A would replace two structures a year. Under this plan, the county would replace 50 structures over the next 25 years at a cost of \$12.5 million and total improvement project costs of \$15.3 million.

• Scenario B would replace one structure a year. Under this plan, the county

would replace 25 structures over the next 25 years at a cost of \$6.25 million and total improvement costs of \$20.9 million.

• Scenario C, which would have replaced on structure every three years, was removed from the table. The plan was considered unable to meet the county’s needs and would result in higher long-term costs. Troe will work on an alternative option that would replace one structure every two years.

As Monday’s public meeting concluded, Marquardt alluded to the presence of District 18 Rep. Jean Hunhoff (R-Yankton) in the room. Marquardt said he would like to see even more accomplished on state and local transportation funding, but he commended the Legislature for taking steps toward solving the state’s infrastructure woes.

“This is a positive move in the right direction,” he said.

The state has increased funding at its level, but much of the burden for coming up with additional transportation funding now rests at the local level, Troe said.

“The state gave you the vehicle,” he told Monday’s audience. “Now, you need to get in and turn the key.”

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

Radios

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Awareness Week in Nebraska. As part of that (designation), there will be a statewide tornado drill on Tuesday morning,” Garvin said. “We (in Cedar County) will be doing some outdoor siren testing around 10:10 a.m. in the entire county.”

The weather alert radios distributed today have been purchased by the Salvation Army and Hy-Vee, according to a news release. The radios are pre-programmed for the appropriate county/counties by Omaha television station KETV.

Representatives from local fire departments and emergency management will hand out these radios. The Salvation Army will give out emergency personal “go-bags,” and the American Red Cross will hold drawings at each location to give away disaster preparedness backpacks.

The NNLTRT was assembled in the aftermath of the June 2014 tornadoes affecting Cedar, Cuming, Dixon, Stanton, Thurston and Wayne counties.

The NNLTRT consists of a group of area volunteers working to bridge the gap of all kinds of unmet needs often left between the assistance offered by insurance agencies, government agencies and local communities.

“The whole goal of the long-term recovery is to get things back to normal for those people in need of an extra helping hand,” Garvin told the *Press & Dakotan* following last year’s tornadoes.

In turn, the joint effort has taken on a mission of finding resources for residents in the six counties.

“The goal of this committee is to see all of our fellow residents fully recover from

the tornado,” the team said on its online site. “Volunteer help, financial help and some personal support and guidance may be available for those interested.”

Twin E-4 tornadoes devastated Pilger, Nebraska, on June 16, claiming two lives and injuring two dozen while wiping out about three-fourths of the town of 350 residents.

The following night, slow-moving tornadoes struck Cedar County, hitting the Hartington, Coleridge and Laurel areas particularly hard but creating no fatalities. More tornadoes struck the region on the third night.

Following the June 17 tornadoes, Cedar County authorizes reported more than 30 rural homes and/or acreages were damaged or destroyed between Laurel and Coleridge, Nebraska. Two businesses were destroyed near Laurel.

At least six farms received damage, including one that was leveled. Power lines were also reported to be down that night, and Highway 57 between Hartington and Coleridge was closed.

Law enforcement blocked access into the town of Coleridge following reports of several homes damaged inside the community. The roof was blown off one home, and several trees are down.

Because of the extensive devastation, Garvin and other Cedar County officials were still working months later on damage assessments and repairs.

For more information on the NNLTRT, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/NNLTRT>.

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City

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lowed to park overnight every night, except for Monday night into Tuesday morning.”

Specifically, parking wouldn’t be allowed between the hours of 2-7 a.m. Tuesday morning.

“That’s the time that would allow our street crews to go in there and do some touch-up on nuisance snow or street sweeping in that area,” he said.

During those days, patrons would have to use city lot off-street or private parking. The permits would be good for parking on both sides of Walnut St. No fees for the permits were discussed by the commission at this time.

Mingo said that, if another hotel were to open up downtown in the future, they would also have to go through the same process to address street parking.

In other business Monday, the commission:

- Approved bids for asphalt and bituminous.
- Approved a bid for the purchase and storage of new Christmas decorations totaling \$38,000. Originally budgeted at \$17,000 for the replacement of half of the decorations, the commission opted to fully replace their current decorations with the difference being made up using the “bed, booze and board” (BBB) fund.

You can follow Rob Nielsen on Twitter at twitter.com/RobNielsen-PandD/. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net/.