

Tough decisions face board

By PAT SCHIEFEN
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The Goodland School Board faces difficult decisions of what to do to cut costs with uncertain state aid, increasing costs and declining student population. They will meet Monday night in a special meeting to concentrate on the recommendations.

The board had contracted with Keith Blackburn of Horst, Terrill and Karst Architects, P.A. of Topeka last fall to give its recommendations. The board wanted facts concerning the structural soundness of the buildings, what renovations are needed and about what they would cost. He gave his final recommendation at the school board meeting last Monday.

Blackburn also looked at the various proposals from an earlier task force organized by the district to look at future possibilities for the current buildings with a decreasing student population. Task force proposals included building a new kindergarten to 12, building a new grade school, adding on to a grade school to hold all of the grade school students, adding on to the high school to hold all of the district's students and closing Grant Junior High and moving the

junior high into the high school building.

The student population numbers used for the study are from 2007. It was noted that the district is losing 15 to 23 per students or about one classroom per year based on the district's and Kansas Association for School Board numbers.

Blackburn said that they recommend the district close the Grant Junior High and move those students to the high school. It concluded that the current high school is oversized and not being used efficiently in regards to square footage and will hold the junior high population with little renovation. The drawback to just moving the junior high students with no renovations is that the junior high students will not always be together and have a separate identity. It believed the that move could be done in the fall of 2009.

The study believes that if the district has the finances it should build a new cafeteria, kitchen and family and consumer science rooms. Blackburn said he thought such an addition could be completed by December 2010. The addition would be located immediately adjacent to the high school.

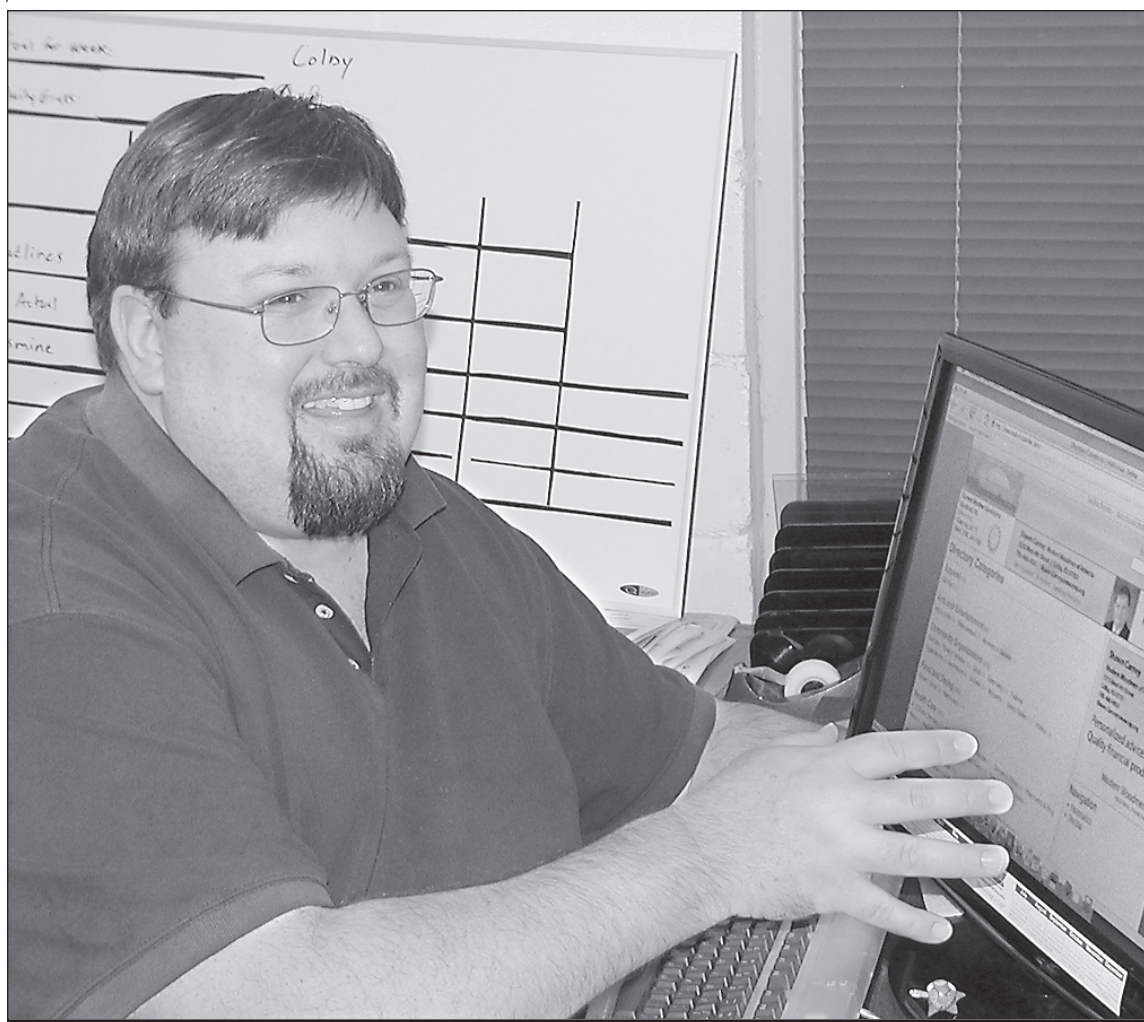
Those areas would be converted

to junior high class room space. The art classes would be moved to the industrial arts building. This would allow almost all of the junior high classrooms to be at the back of the high school building. This would also allow the junior high principal to have his offices in the junior high area and the junior high could use the back entry as their entry.

Another option that was explored was to build on a class room wing on the back of the high school for the junior high. Blackburn said after looking at where the junior high kids would be found that this would fragment them further. This was not preferable, he said even though the cost to build classrooms was less than the cost of building a cafeteria, kitchen and family and consumer science classes.

The study said that currently the three grade schools were close to housing maximum numbers but that could change with declining population. The district would need to keep an eye on those numbers.

A later decision Blackburn said could include closing one of the grade schools and moving the district offices to one of the grade schools.



John Dehn talked about the new internet directory and search engine site available at NW-KansasOnline.com. Here, he is pictured at his desk at the Colby Free Press.

- Photo by Vera Sloan, Colby Free Press

Big guy tackles big company project

By VERA SLOAN

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At 6 foot, 3 inches, and tipping the scale at well over 300 pounds, John Dehn is a big man.

He calls himself corporate director of new media resources and sales for Nor'West Newspapers — which includes The Norton Telegram — and that's a big title. His big plan is to help businesses in northwest Kansas make money by using big, new technology.

Mr. Dehn (that's pronounced Den) has the credentials to do that. His background is in Internet technology. He was hired by Nor'West, which operates The Telegram and five other area newspapers, in June to broaden sales opportunities for area businesses.

He has built a web-based business directory for area businesses and plans to install a new Internet search engine that will be unique to this area.

Together, he said, the two will equip every business in Norton County to be able to compete for online sales in the world market.

It is the newest and latest technology in marketing, he said, and can be done for a minimal cost. Businesses can have pictures and information in their listings, live links to other pages, even a full website with its own unique name — all for minimal costs.

"History tells us that we lose our market advantage when we don't keep up with change," he said. "Think back to when the competition was just across the street ... then to when it was a few easy and

quick miles down the road.

"Now, in the new market, it is only a click away on the computer. For survival in today's market, business must take advantage of available technology to retain current customers and attract new ones," Mr. Dehn said.

A huge percentage of consumers shop online, he said, and that percentage is growing. Technology empowers a business to order the products a customer needs, and still give the assurance of shopping through a local business.

The web site www.NWkansasOnline.com already lists all the businesses in northwest Kansas, he said, and he's waiting for the search engine to be completed.

While the list is as complete as research could make it, he added, business owners should visit the site at www.NWkansasOnline.com to make sure their business is listed.

After you visit the site, he said, you can call him at (785) 462-3963 or (785) 462-1149, Colby, or Dana Paxton, The Norton Telegram sales executive, at (785) 877-3361 to optimize your listing and add items for sale. Business owners interested in getting key words in the new search engine should call, too, he said. This is the time to call to secure their key words.

For example, he said, if you have a furniture store and your key word is "furniture," it can be locked in and given a priority spot among other businesses that may be selling furniture. When the word "furniture" is typed in, that

business' name will come up along with what other items the store has available. Local key word searches can be purchased for as little as \$100 per search word, Mr. Dehn said.

A business' name and products can be listed for as little as \$4 per week.

Businesses can secure a key word spot now and hold it for when the search engine launches in the next few months.

Mr. Dehn said he plans to give classes on how to get set up on the web, how to operate the business listings and how the search engine will be an advantage for area business.

Businesses owners can take part in the sessions to learn how to operate online, he said. The search engine will be promoted before it is launched, he said, just as the business directory is already being promoted in all six Nor'west Newspapers every week.

This is brand new to this area, he said. It offers the power of print, the power of the Internet and the power of a search engine for the northwest Kansas community.

The directory is available right now, he said. The search engine key words should be decided soon and will be available over the next two to three months.

Businesses that act now to reserve their key words will have a huge advantage over all their competitors, he said.

For information or questions, call either John Dehn or Dana Paxton.

Sound Off!

With the 2009 Kansas Legislative Session well underway, current economic conditions will force many challenging budget decisions for lawmakers and might threaten some of the gains in recent years that have reduced the cost of doing business in Kansas.

The legislature must take great care to not counteract short-term state budget shortfalls with long-term and deeply negative impacts on the business climate in Kansas. In reality, the best solution to our current economic strains is to stimulate and grow our businesses. Small, medium and large businesses have been, are and will be crucial to our state's economic success.

To succeed, Kansas needs an environment that limits the costs and restrictions on business, especially in key areas that will likely dominate debate and discussion during this year's legislative session. Reducing state spending and incentivizing businesses to invest in capital, research and development, job creation and innovation will bolster the economy and grow jobs in our state. On the other hand, increasing business taxes and economic burdens will further current financial strains and discourage long-term busi-

ness growth.

It is important, first and foremost, to protect recent advancements such as reductions in the corporate income tax, the repeal of the property tax on new investment in business machinery and equipment, and the promise to phase out the state's franchise tax. These commitments have meant real cost savings for Kansas businesses and strengthened the state's economy. Backsliding could hinder further economic growth.

With regard to energy, any policy set forth for the state of Kansas must be comprehensive and balanced. The right policy should look at a variety of energy sources, technologies and energy efficiency options. It should foster innovation and "green" development without expensive mandates. It should avoid jeopardizing the low cost and reliability of energy in Kansas. Finally, it should not be based on the assumption that the business community is solely responsible for shouldering the costs of reductions or reform.

In addition, a strong infrastructure for the state, as well as a qualified work force that meets the needs of Kansas employers, are critical to the Kansas economy and can be accomplished without

burdening the business community with additional taxes.

Finally, reducing employer costs in human resources and health care issues will protect and grow employment in Kansas. The legislature must honor previous commitments to the business community by continuing policies that limit unemployment compensation burdens, protect the Fair Labor Standards Act and prohibit mandated, costly health care policies. These protections are crucial to the profitability and success of businesses in Kansas and the growth of our work force.

The Kansas Chamber of Commerce is the voice of business in Kansas and will continue our strong advocacy during the 2009 Legislative Session. With the business community and elected officials working together, efforts to make Kansas the best state in America to live and work can be realized. A strong state economy allows businesses to thrive, communities to grow and all Kansans to Achieve More.

Submitted by:

Amy J. Blankenbiller
President and CEO
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County commission meeting...

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Management Agency projects are nearly completed, leaving mainly tree burns.

He asked the commission about the issue of reinstating comp-time. The commission said it's not going to happen and that all overtime is asked to be very limited, because with the budget, all time needs to be managed.

Norton County Noxious Weed supervisor Reggie Beckman gave the commission a report on the jobs his department completed in 2008, including those performed for the road and bridge department, private and state highway.

His department did roadside, tree and bare ground work and bridge spraying for the road and bridge department; however, he

still has areas that need attention with noxious weeds. The commissioners asked him to prepare a plan for the 2009 work schedule, a detailed plan for spraying, including a proposal for county roads.

Curt Archibald, Norton County Solid Waste supervisor, said he would be going to a meeting in Topeka to meet with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment on landfill operations, and gave a report on recycle bins for the county. Mr. Archibald had filed a request for the bins with a recycling program and has been notified the county has been awarded some bins, though it is unknown how many will actually find their way here.

Lenus Schuck and Dennis Kibby asked the commission about

a road concern in West Union Township, between sections 35 and 36. Mr. Brannan said he was not sure of any work done except for a request from a farmer that asked for assistance in moving cattle, but that he would go look at the area of concern.

The commissioners had a conference call with Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas so all the commissioners would have an overview and orientation of the services they provide. Developmental Services also gave an update on related legislative action as well as an opportunity to discuss county funding with them.

The commissioners paid bills, and then with no further business to take up the meeting adjourned.

City council meeting...

(Continued from Page 1)

give a wind energy presentation.

Council member Kim Snyder asked the council to accept the Norton Horse Council's events for 2009, and thanked the Eagles for their donation to the Safe Ride program.

Councilman Kuhn said the 1985 Ford fire department truck is in need of repairs, mainly the tank because it isn't holding water. The fire department had money in its capital outlay to be used for something else, but the council decided to put that on hold and spend

\$13,642 to have the fire truck repaired at Hays Fire Equipment and Service. Council member Elaine Mann asked if bids had been put out for the repairs. Councilman Kuhn said yes they had, and this was the best price.

The council sold the 2001 Chevy Impala, with 126,000 miles, and the 2003 Chevy Impala, with 110,000 miles, for \$1,800 each to OMB Express. Councilwoman Mann said that usually they get bids for \$400 or \$500 for the police cars, and that this is a nice change.

Councilman Kuhn said the new police car, a 2009 Dodge Charger, has been ordered and was expected to be delivered sometime between 50 and 150 days.

Committee meetings were set. The Parks Committee will meet Monday at 5:30 p.m.; the Public Works Committee will follow at 6 p.m.; the Finance Committee will meet on Monday, March 2; followed by the Utility Committee at 6 and the Public Safety Committee at 6:30.

With no other business to conduct, the meeting adjourned.

I would like to Thank everyone for their support and generosity towards our family after our home and all our personal belongings were destroyed by fire. It was hard to see a fourth generation farm burning, but the firefighters responded quickly to our home. I appreciate all their efforts in controlling the blaze and getting the fire out. Because of quick actions we were able to salvage a few personal items. Thank you to ALL the firefighters and the neighboring towns who helped.

Thank you to all who responded quickly with clothes, clothes, and clothes... Thank You... Thank You... Thank You. Toothbrushes, blankets, school supplies, D.O., shampoo, combs, brushes, and other items were give right away. The Logan community including Prairie View and the neighboring towns have been so supportive and generous. We can't thank you enough.

I read an article in the Phillipsburg paper about the fire. It was mentioned that we were left homeless. I don't see it that way. Being in Logan has allowed that NOT to happen. The night of the fire our children stayed with their grandparents and the following day, Mike and Barb Lehn had offered us a home at the Corner Cottage for a week. Thank you very much. During that week we looked at houses; a place to temporarily call home. We will be residing at 502 N. Douglas. Since 2-1-2009 the evening of the fire, we have had a roof over our heads. We may not have all our belongings but we are alive with a place to live -- so we are not homeless. Thanks to our friends, family, and the community for making that possible.

My aunt and sister came from Omaha and Council Bluffs to help out. My aunt was surprised to see all the support, "you wouldn't see this where we live. You would be homeless in the larger cities. Thank the Lord for all these people."

We have received so many things from organizations and individuals and other communities such as - Logan, Prairie View, Norton, Phillipsburg, Plainville, Stockton, Wichita, Colorado, Kansas City, Omaha, Iowa and Alton just to name some of the locations that have helped us. This list of items is unbelievable -- dishes, cooking utensils, clocks, coffee pot, mixer, bath towels, wash cloths, dish towels, silverware, entertainment center, TV's, clothes, food, queen size box spring and mattress-from Plainville, full size box spring and mattress, queen size bedroom set-from Logan, pots and pans, slow cooker, crock pot, gift certificates to Babcocks, blankets, homemade quilts, photo albums, pillows, hide-a-bed and two recliners from Norton, curio from Norton, pictures, nick nacks, hangers, can opener, toaster, play station II for the kids-thank you Todd and Tyler, laundry soap, and many other needed and much appreciated items. As you can see, people in the Logan community and surrounding towns are giving and loving people.

We've also had many people help with the cleanup of the farm and at the place we moved in to. We have had people that we don't know or haven't seen for 30 years



offer to help. There were people from the FCE Club and ABC Club that helped box up LeVeta's belongings. On Saturday, February 7 there were around 15 people from the Mormon Church that helped box up and clean LeVeta's house. We had family and friends from Wichita and Carbondale arrive on Saturday to help. Darren would like to send a special thank you to all that helped fix the garage on Sat., Feb. 7 which included-Todd, Chad, Charlie, Leland, Eli, Neil, LaVon, Donovan, Steve and Chuck. The Red Cross gave us money to purchase clothes, bedding, food and storage containers, Knights of Columbus gave us money to purchase food, clothing and cost of room and board. Other organizations which gave money were-Logan Lions Club, STUCO at Logan High School, USD 326, St. John's Parish, Logan-CYO, and many individuals. Family members have helped a lot; Lavon Schick moved his camper out to the farm for Darren to use during calving season. Thank you LaVon. The Logan basketball boys and coaches came out after school and helped clean up burnt rubble. We had people that we didn't know very well or hadn't seen for years show up to help rescue pictures and dry them. There were several people who made meals for us. We really appreciate that.

The Logan fifth grade class organized a canned goods drive in the Elementary School and several boxes were collected. A benefit soup supper was held and I was in shock and cried when we found out that it raised \$4,923.73. The Logan senior class had a bake sale for us that made \$527; the seventh and eighth graders of Logan donated their money that they earned running the concession stand-\$262.74 and the Logan freshmen class had a 50/50 donation which raised \$300, and our church "St. John's Parish", in Logan, will be having a benefit meal on March 1 to help us with some issues we are having in the home in which we are residing. Now you know why I cried--the support is astronomical.

We will someday rebuild on the family farm and the money that was raised will surely be a help in doing so. Several people have told us - when bringing things to us - "it's no big deal, glad we could help," but as you can see KINDNESS is a Big Deal!

Thank you all once again,
Darren and Dorothy Becker, Charles, Katie, Renee