

Writer against new gym proposal

Letter to the Editor:

I have expressed my concern about the new gym in the past. I still stand behind my concerns. Most of the letters that have been shared is on the safety issue. I have seen the time when we played in a nice big new gym and we still had one of our players taken to the hospital due to a head injury, so there is no guarantee that a new gym will protect our players from head injuries. I think of the commercial where everything is wrapped in bubble wrap. That may be a solution.

One of the big issues that the school board and voters needs to look at is the enrollment numbers. If you do your research on official enrollment numbers, available on the Kansas State Department of Education website, over the last 15 years, enrollment is down by an average of 10 students per year. The school board is putting a 15 year number on the gym. If the enrollment numbers keep the current trend, at that 15 year mark, we will have lost an additional 150 students. The official enrollment for the 2007-2008 school years was 319. "A summary of the preliminary 2008-2009 school enrollment compared with the official 2007-2008 school enrollment was reviewed. The total head count enrollment of 306 is down by 13 students at this time." (Quoted from the Sept. 11 board of education minutes.) If the current trend continues, by the time the gym is paid for, the enrollment will be 169 for kindergarten through 12. Do those numbers indicate the need to spend \$2.5 million.

The following was taken from the 2006-2007 Budget Profile:

Some Current Challenges for St. Francis USD 297:

- Rapidly declining enrollment.
- Unstable and uncertain school finance plan in the state of Kansas.
- Drought and weak economy in rural northwest Kansas.
- Insufficient economic development opportunities to retain and attract young families to the area.
- Out-of-control cost of health insurance.
- Aging school buildings and infrastructure.

Have any of these issues changed? The status of these issues is a sure sign that a \$2.5 million gym should be put on the wish list rather than pursued.

There is a rodent problem in the school building and some of the "new" windows are held in place with duct tape. They also will not stay open on their own. They have to be held open with books. The wood shop equipment is reaching an unsafe level, yet we just tell our students in wood classes to be extra careful or have the instructor do it for you. The wood students also need to piece wood together to get enough to complete their projects due to the budget not allowing the ordering of enough supplies. Sometimes, as wood workers know, it's impossible to make pieced pieces match. You go into the welding shop and there are problems there also.

And following the "budget" theme for a moment here. The following quote is taken from the Sept. 11, 2008, board of education minutes.

"In reference to the possibility of salary increases for all contracted employees, Superintendent Schiltz presented his thoughts and concerns dealing with the financial status of the

Letter to the Editor

school in connection with the continual drop in enrollment and the dollar-amount that this drop translates into. Following discussion, it was Board consensus to continue to review this subject in hopes that possibly a "salary adjustment" may be given sometime near the end of the school year, when a clearer picture of the financial status and budget expenses are known."

With the continual drop in enrollment, means that the numbers of students utilizing the new gym are also declining. We are already to the point that there is only 1 or 2 quarters or no JV basketball played. I look for within a few years that there is not a need for a second gym. Start the junior varsity games a half-hour earlier. Again due to the low enrollment numbers, in our school and others across northwest Kansas. I have also seen when the wrestling duels are over in a very short amount of time because there aren't enough kids to fill positions. USD 297 has already dropped to a 1A classification in basketball. Due to that drop in classification, the KSHSAA is setup that we would never be able to hold a playoff game. As far as being able to hold a tournament, we would be able to hold that tournament right now if we chose to. We participate in tournaments now that the gyms are not but a few feet bigger than the grade school gym. We also do not have the motels or restaurants to support hosting a tournament.

"If we build it, they will come." How many years has it been said that our kids will return to our town and school system? I have yet to see that happen. The number and dollar amount of scholarships that are given out each year to our seniors is a good indication that these kids want to further their education. There are not the job opportunities to bring those kids back to our community, as the school board has acknowledged in their own budget. Another build it and they will come argument that has been brought up, is that we can then set back and tell the Cheylin school system that, look we have this new gym. I feel and have heard many other people say that if this is the case, then Cheylin and the Bird City residents can help pay for it.

I think a lot of people would be shocked at the number of St. Francis residents that are employed outside of St. Francis and Cheyenne County. It seems that when a job opportunity becomes available, there will be 10 Cheyenne county residents apply for that opportunity and a few from other areas and the job will go to the non-county resident.

It has been proposed for this project and other community projects that the gas wells that have sprung up around the county pay for these projects. Why are those targets? The Dairy is in Cheyenne county, why not go after so much a head for what is in the dairy? How about the feedlots? Why not target those. Put a 15 percent tax on every head of cattle that goes in or out of the yard? I do realize that for some people that it has got to be hard to drive by those producing wells everyday and think of the money that those land owners are getting. They are getting rich right? No. It has, just like everything else, helped those land owners get by.

While I am on the gas well

subject, I know that for a fact that there have been several business's in St. Francis that have not been interested in anything to do with the gas business. But yet we want that money. To me that is greed. We want something for nothing. I can also say that when the pipeline was run across the northern and eastern part of Cheyenne county, that our sheriff's department made sure that every vehicle with the pipeline that come into Cheyenne County was greeted.

It's unsafe and unhealthy for the athletes to walk to the other gym.

That walk has been made for years. I am wondering if it is that unsafe, if are we going to add an art room to the high school. Is Mr. Busse going to quit taking the PE class back and forth between the buildings?

I have also heard comments that if you are against this proposal, to not even vote. Well last time I thought about that statement, not even voting was the same as a yes vote. I hope and pray that all of Cheyenne County and St. Francis residents get out and vote.

With the recent economic turmoil, I again say we don't need this. Let the retirees and those on a fixed income in St. Francis survive. Let's not burden them with higher taxes.

If you want to propose raising the mill levy to bring in an industry into St. Francis, that would employ 100 or more people, I would be all for that. Something that would increase the enrollment by 10 students a year, go for it. I have seen many proposals brought before the city council and county commissioners, all to be shot down.

I also wish the grade school custodian a rapid recovery from the bat bites.

I also am writing this with the hope that there will be no retaliation against any of my family.

Rod Zweggardt
St. Francis



MAJESTIC SERVICE is one step closer to opening the truck stop. Last week four gas tanks were set. Kelly Hilt and Kevin Ritchey helped by running the heavy equipment from the county.

Herald staff photo by Casey McCormick

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



sc McCormick@nwkansascorp.com

What crazy days we live in! The world around us seems to be falling apart. The economy is in disarray with the experts finally stating, "We're in a recession!" Who knows what's going to happen to the price of gas and groceries except that they're headed up.

And then we have the candidates for president telling us how much more things will be screwed up if we don't vote for them. Thank goodness for baseball!

Sometimes I need a break from reality and that's what baseball does. It entertains and takes me

away for about three hours. The troubles of the world can wait that long, I figure.

The Major Leagues is at its most exciting point now. Two teams in each league, the National and American, are vying for the pennant. The winners will advance to the World Series. The proverbial "Fall Classic."

Each of the last four teams has a unique character. One aspect that sets them apart is their managers.

The Dodgers have Joe Torre, the veteran skipper who carried the New York Yankees to 12 years in the post season. The other manager with playoff experience is Boston's Terry Francona. He has taken the Red Sox to champion-

ships in 2004 and 2007.

The other two are new to a championship playoff but have an elder presence on the field. Philadelphia is run by Charlie Manuel, who did get the Phillies to the Division Series last year, and the Tampa Bay Rays are led by Joe Maddon. Although this is a new experience for them they have the look of grizzled veterans.

Each commands a team with a great deal of talent and all belong in a position to win the championship. It makes for a lot of excitement for a baseball fan and some time away from the worries of the world.

Club Clips

Pleasant Hill 4-H Club

The Pleasant Hill 4-H Club meeting was called to order on Oct. 1, at 7 p.m. at the St. Francis Equity building by President Laura Brunk. The flag salutes were done by Travis Rogers and Reagan Beims. Song leaders, Reagan Beims and Emileigh Dinkel, led the group in singing "Blue Suede Shoes." Roll call was "Are you here," and there were 14 members present.

There was no old business. In business, motions were passed to add an intermediate class to the fair and to work FFA.

Also, there was election of officers. They go as follows: Grady

Brunk, president; Darris Keller, vice president; Casey Keller, secretary; Jude Faulkender, treasurer; Payton Beims, reporter; Allison Grice and Jandy Dunn, club representatives; Travis Rogers, historian; Christina Schoenrogge, parliamentarian; Dalton Straub, Jake Faulkender, Brady Dinkel and Garrett Brunk, recreation; Emileigh Dinkel, Reagan Beims and Audrey Meyers, song leaders.

The game played was Thumbs up Seven up.

Refreshments were served by the Rogers and Meyers families. The meeting was adjourned.

Christina Schoenrogge, reporter

AARP

AARP met at the Senior Center on Oct. 9 with 17 members present.

After a short business meeting, Nancy and Neal McCumber told about moving to St. Francis. They found out the house was a little large for them so they started

a Bed and Breakfast. It was very interesting to hear them tell all about it.

Wilma Lampe, hostess, served delicious refreshments.

The next meeting will be on Nov. 14. The speaker will be Leigh Ann Bandel.

Come One, Come All Haigler's 1st Annual Fall Tumbleweed Festival Sunday, Oct. 19 12 Noon MT



At the Country Schoolhouse 67 South

- * Old Country School Box Social & Auction 1 p.m.
- * Homemade Ice Cream
- * Dedication of School Bell
- * Cakes & Pie Walks on Carousel Merry-Go-Round
- * Games & Awards

Free Admission; but please bring decorated box lunch for check-in (12 noon - 1 p.m.)

Dress in old-time outfits welcomed, but not required. All proceeds to Country School 67 South Restoration Fund.

Re-Elect

John Faber
120th
District
Representative



"During the last twelve years that I have served in the House of Representatives, I have cast over 10,000 votes. I have worked hard for the best interests of our district, studying the issues and their importance for the citizens of Northwest Kansas as well as for the state.

Kansas faces many challenges, but I am optimistic about our future. I want to continue developing new and innovative ways to create economic opportunities for rural Kansas. I appreciate the trust that my constituents have placed in me, and I will continue to work hard to serve their needs in Topeka."

John has the experience we need and the vision to succeed:

- Votes to protect "home owned carnivals" from government regulation.
- Also serves on the Education Committee, Education Budget Committee, and Joint Committee on rules and regulations.
- Understands the importance of hard work and cooperation and the issues facing the 120th District.

Paid for by The Campaign to elect John Faber, Ed Carson, Treasurer.

St. Francis 13th Annual Craft Show

Saturday, Nov. 1 • 10 a.m.-3 p.m. CT

St. Francis Grade School • 307 E. Webster

HANDCRAFTED ITEMS

- Wood Items • Jewelry • Candles • Homemade Salsa • Baked Goods • Stoneware • Christmas Items • Herb Mixes & Plants
- Original Oil Paintings • Honey • Floral Arrangements
- Clocks • Homemade Purses • Much Much More!

•• Door Prizes throughout the Day ••

Specialty Vendor Booths in the High School Cafeteria

- Independent Beauty Consultant • Premier Designs Jewelry • Homemade Gourmet
- Pampered Chef • Gold Canyon Candles • Avon



Soup Lunch Served 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. PROCEEDS TO THE SFCHS CHEERLEADERS

For more information: Bonnie Zweggardt • 785-332-2569; Tammy Grice: 785-332-2910; Chamber Office • 785-332-2961 or email: coc@cityofstfrancis.net

Sponsored by the St. Francis Chamber of Commerce



Count on Scoular People

This Harvest Season Count on Scoular People

The Scoular Company of Goodland is excited about the 2008 Fall Harvest and looks forward to meeting your grain marketing needs.

We will be taking CORN, MILO, MILLET, and OIL SUNFLOWERS

For the latest prices, call Jeff or Kyle at 785-890-3639

www.scoular.com

The Scoular Company wishes you a safe harvest.