

Representative decides not to run for re-election in fall

By Steve Haynes

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State Rep. Ward Cassidy of St. Francis, who has represented the northwest corner of Kansas for nearly four years and risen to a key position in the House leadership, said Monday he won't run for re-election this fall.

Speculation on who would take his place centered on former Rep. Rick Billinger of Goodland, who filed for the seat on April 18, more than a week in advance Mr. Cassidy's announcement.

Rep. Cassidy, 67, beat Mr. Billinger in a contested primary two years ago after they were thrown together in the same district by a panel of federal judges who wound up drawing new boundaries for the state Legislature. The House and Senate had been unable to agree on a plan that would pass court muster, leaving the job to the judges.

In his short time in Topeka, Mr. Cassidy had become chairman of the House Education Budget Com-

mittee, vice-chair of Education and a member of the powerful Appropriations Committee. In those roles, he helped shape state spending and his committee had the final say, for the House, on nearly 100 school and college budgets.

"Four years and time away from family have taken their toll," he said. "I have enjoyed fighting for northwest Kansas and feel I have had success in promoting and protecting our area."

"I did an interview for a Topeka paper a few weeks ago and responded to the question, 'What did I like best and what did I like least about serving in the Legislature?' My response was the same for both questions: 'Some of the people I have met.'"

"It has taken a lot of thought, but I have missed too many events of my grandkids. I will finish my term, as I still have some issues to solve for constituents."

Reached after yet another meeting in Topeka, the represen-

tative said he hopes to stay involved in public affairs.

"That was a hard decision," he said. "It was a lot of work, but that's what you ask for when you ask to come down here."

"I've got a grandson who'll probably be playing a lot of high school basketball next year. I never got home (after taking the Education Budget job), it's tougher than most people think."

"It's not something I regret. I really enjoyed it.... A lot of people have really been very nice since they heard I would not run, but those kids are only little for so long."

"This was never about me. I really wanted to help northwest Kansas."



Cassidy



HOLLY HINGST, MARGRET POLING and Sandy Smull review papers as part of the Citizens for a New Pool Committee

Committee to promote interest in new pool for St. Francis

As summer weather approaches, people begin thinking about enjoying time at the swimming pool. There's nothing like a refreshing dip

on a hot, sultry day!
Most of us have wonderful childhood memories of spending time with family and friends at the pool during the lazy days of summer vacation. Sadly, those wonderful times at the St. Francis Swimming Pool will be coming to an end in the near future.

The engineering firm, Miller and Associates, evaluated our pool 10 years ago and it was their professional opinion that it's life expectancy was approximately 15 years.

"The current pool has been made to work beyond it designed expectancy," said JR Landenberger, City Superintendent. He went on to say that it is unknown exactly when the pool will fail but it's a gamble with a structure this old.

The current pool opened for business 57 years ago on June 4, 1957. The first manager was Francis Sey-

bold and Roger Lewis was the assistant manager. Frank Lockard was hired as a lifeguard.

In 1957, the pool was described as "modern in every aspect and exceeded the standards for swimming pools." It had a filtering plant, heating plant, diving towers and boards, necessary deck areas, modern ladders, and underwater lighting. The two brick bathhouses provided adequate facilities for both men and women. Prices for the first season were 35 cents for adults, 25 cents for high school students, and 10 cents for younger students. Adult season tickets were \$5 and \$4 for children.

Things have certainly changed over 57 years and it's time for a new swimming pool in St. Francis! A more modern and safer pool that will accommodate swimmers of all ages is needed. Everyone deserves those wonderful summer memories at the pool having fun with family and friends. If the community is to stay progressive, we must provide quality recreational activities for everyone to enjoy.

The "Citizens for a New Pool" Committee has been working on surveying the citizens of St. Francis about their feeling and ideas concerning a new swimming pool. They have collected 540 surveys so far. If you have not filled out a survey, please pick one up at The Herald Office or the Equity Office to voice your opinion. The committee appreciates everyone's input.

Picnic in the Park

As a moneymaker project, the committee will be hosting a "Picnic in the Park" on Friday, June 20, during alumni. They will be serving barbecued beef sandwiches and the trimmings. Their goal is to promote interest in the new pool and to encourage other residents and alumni to get involved in this very worthwhile project.

Hospital employees voice concerns

Amanda Miller

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Over 20 hospital employees crowded the conference room of the basement for the hospital board meeting last week, concerned about the hospital losing its management company, Great Plains Health Alliance. The employees had some speakers that wanted to address the board, so that they felt heard and understood.

Board member Jane Young opened the meeting by saying that the board was asked by the county commissioners to look at other options for management and leasing companies, and the board was performing its due diligence by having another company, NewLight Healthcare, come speak at a meeting recently. She said that the board would never put the employees or hospital in a situation where they were in jeopardy. The lease with Great Plains Health Alliance does not expire until the end of 2015. The board did not mean to cause any panic or concern, and wants to be as transparent as possible during this time.

When one hospital employee asked why the commissioners felt it was necessary to look at another company at all, Judy Rockwood, hospital administrator, said that the commissioners asked the board to explore other opportunities to make sure they were making the best financial decision.

Dale Patton, county commissioner, was also present at the meeting. He said he was one of the commissioners that requested the board look at other management companies. He said the reason for that is to get a comparison of prices, apples to apples.

Roxie Neitzel, board member, said she thinks they have to look at the whole picture too. Not just the money issue.
The first person to speak for the hospital employees was Kathy Hertel, supply manager. With a heart-felt speech, she explained how Great Plains Health Alliance has provided good insurance, been good to the employees, provided

them with the opportunities to be members of networks that wouldn't be possible otherwise, and they have kept supply prices low.

Candi Douthit, education coordinator and registered nurse, said she thinks it is wise for the board to do due diligence. As a nurse, she has had the opportunity to work at most of the hospitals in this region. Cheyenne County is the employer of choice. The hospital has the best nurses, and the highest standard of care, partly because it can offer such wonderful benefits and opportunities because of Great Plains Health Alliance. Losing them would be awful also because that would mean losing the computer system that the hospital now has.

Susan Roelfs, Care Manager, asked the board if they planned to look at more than one other company. She also wanted to know if the board's goal was to have the hospital managed or leased, and if they knew the difference. She also asked if there was a company in Kansas they could look at. The hospital is undergoing a lot of changes now, she said. Doctor Miller will be leaving, and two new physicians will be here in the coming years. She said although there is never a great time for change, this seems to be a bad choice of time.

Rita Keeker, with medical records, also spoke on behalf of the hospital employees. She said that the expertise and knowledge that GPHA provides is priceless. There are constantly changing regulations, critical legalities and if it wasn't for Great Plains Health Alliance keeping on track of all the regulations the hospital could easily fall behind. Getting reimbursement from Medicaid and Medicare could be compromised if the hospital falls behind on state and federal regulations.

Also present was Kari Gilliland, former hospital board member. She said as a former board member she has seen first hand the many benefits that Great Plains Health Alliance brings to the hospital. If the board is going

to do its due diligence, and look at other companies, then the board members are going to have to do the hard work and research. Mrs. Gilliland said this decision has a real impact on the community, on people's jobs, benefits, and providing for families in this community. By looking around the room you can see how important this issue is to people. She closed by saying she hoped that the board handled it with grace.

Reid Raile, information technology manager, said that he is all for due diligence, but he wanted to be sure that the board was comparing apples to apples. He suggested that it would be very difficult to compare companies, and that outsourcing the comparison to a third party may be the best idea.

After the visitors had all spoken, Mrs. Young said that she apologized if any alarm was raised. This was strictly a fact-finding mission that the county commissioners had asked the board to do, and the board will be as transparent as possible. She said if it would help, she would be willing to send some sort of communication to the employees.

Erika Zimelman, board member, said she has sat on that side before and she understands feeling frustrated. She said the board has had conversations about how they are going to look and see what other companies are offering, like the county commissioners asked them to.

Mike Bandel, board member, said when they started the process to due diligence for the commissioners they were hoping to find that they had the best

management company they could have, and that is still his hope.

"We are here to make the hospital the best we can. And we are glad you're here. Tell us what you're thinking," Mr. Bandel told the employees. He said his hope is that the hospital has the best deal right now.

Mrs. Young closed the visitor portion by saying that she would put together a summary email for the employees of what happened at the board meeting.

—Senior Center Menu—

May Menu

May 1, Thursday: Hawaiian meat balls over rice, spinach salad, muffin, tropical fruit.

May 2, Friday: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, peas and carrots, roll, plums.

May 6, Tuesday: Sausage patty, hash browns, half banana, raisin bread toast, scrambled eggs.

May 8, Thursday: Pizza burger, macaroni salad with vegetables, corn, bun, fruit crisp.

May 9, Friday: Spanish rice with hamburger, California blend vegetables, peaches, cornbread, pudding.

May 13, Tuesday: Chef salad, strawberries and bananas, crackers, brownie.

May 15, Thursday: Beef and Noodles, mashed potatoes, green beans, bread, orange pineapple salad.

May 16, Friday: Pulled pork sandwich, potatoes o'brien, pea salad, bun, applesauce.

May 20, Tuesday: Baked spaghetti, broccoli salad, apricots, garlic bread, pudding.

May 22, Thursday: Chicken and rice, harvard beets, cucumber salad, whole wheat roll, mandarin oranges.

May 23, Friday: Meat loaf, scalloped potatoes, mixed vegetables, roll, pears.

May 27, Tuesday: Hamburger gravy, cole slaw with pineapple, seasoned carrots, biscuit, cookie.

May 29, Thursday: Potato, sausage and cheese casserole, stewed tomatoes, roll, apple salad.

May 30, Friday: Fried Chicken, mashed potatoes with gravy, corn bread, gelatin with fruit.

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Sunday, May 4
St. Francis High School Cafeteria
11 a.m. to 1 p.m. CST
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There will also be a "Bake Sale."
Take-out meals will be delivered within the city limits between 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. on May 4. Contact Grade School, 785-332-8143 or Robin Burr, 785-332-3433
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