

# Big sound



Devin Keister, a tuba player for the sixth grade band, blew on his instrument during band practice on Wednesday afternoon at North Elementary. The band, along with the fifth grade, junior high and high school bands, will give a concert at 7 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 18, at the Goodland High School auditorium. Paul Garrison and Tom Miles are co-directors of the bands. Photo by Janet Craft/The Goodland Daily News

# Gripes about school policy aired at Brewster public forum

By Patty Decker  
*The Colby Free Press*

BREWSTER — Brewster residents at a public forum following a special school board meeting Tuesday night complained about school policies and handling of discipline they said were causing ill feelings in the district.

Moderating the forum was Mayor Mike Baughn, Brewster principal from 1976-81, who said he wanted to address the issues and promote communication in order to keep the school the best it can be. Baughn also is Thomas County undersheriff.

“The recent incident in September was a catalyst that has brought some unrest to this community,” Baughn said, referring to the alleged illegal use of a school suburban and other still undisclosed incidents involving students at the school.

Issues at the forum included complaints about in-school suspensions, concerns of patrons not reaching the school board, dress code policy, morale and on whether or not to change how board members are elected.

“We need to get the calm back into the community,” said one person at the meeting. “Maybe that requires a common-sense approach from 25 years ago in disciplining students.”

Another person said that they believe detention and suspension are overused and abused in the district.

“Discipline should be equal across the board and sometimes discipline (by the administration) is handed out for too minor of infractions,” she said.

Baughn said that 25 years ago, discipline was handled more in the classroom, but today because of state and federal laws, that has changed.

One person said he was disappointed with the board members, the bickering and management of the school.

“It just seems like every time you turn around the rules change,” he said.

Regarding complaints about con-

cerns falling on deaf ears at board meetings, Baughn asked the 75 people attending the public forum, “How many of you know when the site council meets and who is on it?”

Most people said they didn’t know, even though it was pointed out that the school pocket calendar and weekly sheet gives the dates and times of the meeting.

He also suggested a weekly newsletter could be another solution brought forward to the board.

The dress code issue was another area that many said they see as being connected with the detention policy.

“In one classroom, it might be OK to wear a ballcap,” said one person, “but in another room, a student wearing a ballcap could get detention.”

Another person pointed out that this was just another example of rules changing from hour to hour.

One teacher said that it is difficult for the teachers to enforce a dress code with nothing to back them up from the school board.

On the issue of board structure and representation, Baughn noted that if there is an interest in changing to an “at-large” representation from the current district format, that’s something that could be considered and voted on by the people.

One person said they were unhappy with the majority of the board because they are doing “more micro-managing then policy-making.”

“I have lost some trust in the board representing the patrons who elected them,” he said.

One man who said he has been in the school system, in one way or another, since 1933 said he was saddened to see how much the “gulf has widened between the board and its patrons.”

“Our board members need to accept the responsibility of the job and realize what they are doing is a tough job,” he said. “One piece of advice I received

after accepting a position on the board years ago was that it would help if I kept my ears open and paid attention to the problems.”

On morale, one man said that values, self-esteem and respect are issues that need to be taught in the home and not by teachers.

On the other hand, he said, grace, mercy, compassion and understanding should be practiced by the staff and teachers.

Regarding the “underlying turmoil,” the September incident, which one person pointed out amounted to “joy riding,” was again brought up.

“This is a time to do away with rumors about the students and school,” Baughn said, adding that when the incident occurred and the suburban was returned, it would be difficult for law enforcement to prove intent of theft.

“The school board had options and they looked at what they believed was the best way to constructively change the behavior,” he said. “I respect them for their decision.”

Baughn did agree that it’s important to separate facts from fiction.

In response, one man queried that, although it is only rumor, he heard that there was an “attempted cover-up” prior to the board knowing the details of the September incident.

Bough said he knew of no such cover-up, but would ask the board to investigate.

Baughn said he urged people in Brewster to communicate.

“If there is a venue to address,” he said, “I encourage parents to get on the school board agenda and, if necessary, when dealing with names and privacy issues, use the executive sessions.

“If people believe the process is flawed, they should elect new board members at the proper time. That’s our democracy. Let’s not allow problems in the future to fester to the point where we need to ‘burst the boil.’”

# Stained glass to go in courthouse

GLASS, from Page 1

has been in office for 11 years, filled the officials in and they agreed to let Chatfield go ahead.

Vice Chairman Chuck Frankenfeld said the commissioners thought it was a good idea.

“It’ll be a benefit to the courthouse,” he said. “We’re glad to get it and we appreciate her efforts and everything.”

Chatfield said the blue, red, orange and yellow windows are now at Dependable Glass on Main Avenue, waiting to be installed. Debbie Craig, who

works at Dependable, said no date has been scheduled, but it’ll have to be one that’s warm and still.

Chatfield said she started doing stained glass to keep her mind off her husband, but now she said she’s found a way to have her hobby remind her of good times with him.

One of the first stained glass pieces she made was an 8-by-10-inch piece that still hangs in the picture window in her living room. It’s a bright orange sunset behind white clouds, green hills and blue water.

She calls it, “Lake Wilson,” she said,

because it reminds her of a lake near Russell where she, her husband and her daughter, who lives in Russell, used to visit.

“I loved that lake,” she said.

She said the stained glass that will be in half-moons above the courthouse doors will serve as a reminder, too.

When the glass is installed, she said, she’ll dedicate it to her husband’s grandfather, L.A. Chatfield, who made important contributions to Sherman County.

But, she said, she’s saving that story for the dedication ceremony.

# Ham operators get chance to strut stuff

RADIO, from Page 1

tions.

On Friday and Saturday, the weather office will open its doors to operators from Goodland, Colby, and eastern Colorado, Mentzer said. The operators will try to contact as many people as they can around the world on amateur radio frequencies.

Last year, the first for this event, operators were able to contact 550 people in all but one of the 50 states, he said, and as far away as Japan and Europe.

Darel Graves, president of the Goodland Sunflower Amateur Radio Club, said two of the group’s 10 members will be able to participate. Some get awards out of the event, he said.

“I don’t care much about the awards,” Graves said. “I just do it to see who we can contact and have fun.”

Graves said he started his hobby in the 1960s and the Sunflower club was started in 1995.

The event will give the operators the chance to see the range of their equip-

ment and how many people they will be able to contact.

On relatively low frequencies in the winter, Graves said, he has been able to contact people in Phoenix and Palm Springs Calif.

The competition started last year not only to show appreciation to the operators, Mentzer said, but to drill for any disasters should anything happen during the Year 2000 changeover.

He said this year, the Goodland office will use the event more for fun, but some other offices participating might use it to do some drills.

# Highway patrol to hold meetings on pay, safety issues

HAYS (AP) — As they cruise Kansas highways, motorists might wonder why they don’t see more state troopers.

Officials of the Kansas Highway Patrol are happy to answer that question — and any others that citizens might want to pose at 29 town hall meetings being held around the state through the end of December.

The officials will convey a message of their own — that the patrol has a staffing shortage and that its relatively low pay, especially in a tight job market, is keeping good candidates away. The public sessions fulfill one of the goals set by Col. Don Brownlee when he was appointed superintendent by Gov. Bill Graves in March 1999.

“One of the biggest things Colonel Brownlee wanted to do was open the lines of communication, not only with individuals inside our agency and between the Highway Patrol and other law enforcement agencies, but between our agency and everybody we come in contact with,” Lt. John Eichkorn, the patrol’s spokesman, said Wednesday.

Since they began Nov. 4 with a session in Salina, the town hall meetings have attracted varied levels of interest. About 30 people turned out for a session Tuesday night in the Wichita area, while attendance at a meeting in an-

other community was zero, Eichkorn said.

The meetings were scheduled for late in the year because the patrol will be pushing for better salaries in the legislative session that begins in January, Eichkorn said.

“Pay will probably be the flagship of legislative topics for us,” Eichkorn said. “We need grassroots support as a statewide agency, and this was one of the ways the colonel felt we’d be able to get that.”

A survey of salaries for Highway Patrol troopers and their counterparts in neighboring states showed Kansas at the bottom, with starting pay of \$26,016 a year. The starting salary in Colorado is \$34,326; in Missouri, \$31,512; in Nebraska, \$28,500; and in Oklahoma, \$26,460.

Sgt. Rick Langdon, spokesman for Troop D in northwest Kansas, will be presenting those and other relevant numbers at the town hall meeting scheduled Dec. 7 at the Ellis County Fairgrounds in Hays.

Langdon said he is often asked by members of the public why they see fewer troopers on the road. His reply is that the agency is trying to stretch its people and resources to provide more specialized services, with too few employees to do everything and be every-

where.

Of Troop D’s 33 troopers, according to Langdon, six are supervisors and 22 are assigned to specialized duties that include strategic response team, critical highway accident response team, pilot and drug dog handler.

“We don’t just work traffic, radar and accidents,” Langdon said. “And we do have a manpower shortage. In this area we have 18 counties, and six counties don’t have anyone assigned to them.”

SCHOOL, from Page 1

our board and administration.

Although there are several areas of concern about the way the board and administration have handled issues, we are going to focus on one.

Recently, some of school property was stolen and then returned; the law was broken. We understand an attempt was made to cover up this incident. We realize this is only rumor; however, there is some substantial evidence to support its truth.

Right now, our concern isn’t that justice was served, but rather that it was not served in a fair and proper way. Are we sending the right message to our youth by saying it is OK to break the laws? We feel it is time for the board and administration to stand up and do what is right, if there was an attempt at covering up this incident.

The board’s written response said an incident occurred on the evening of Sept. 16 and early morning of Sept. 17 on school premises.

At the time, the board said, it appeared that only one student was involved. During the school day on Monday, Sept. 18, rumors of all sorts surfaced.

In handling the situation, the board said that on Monday afternoon, Sept. 18, the administration reported to the president of the board that the law had been broken.

The board president asked the principal and a board member to find out what happened.

The board, Mills’ statement said, is prevented by law from divulging infor-

mation about students or staff. While no names were released, Mills said that the board had two options with respect to the incident.

Mills said the board decided in closed session they could take “passive action” through the Juvenile Code sanctions or “aggressive action” through “school law” sanctions.

They chose school law, he said, hoping it would be more effective.

In juvenile code action for first-time offenders, his statement said, the punishment would be to be interviewed by the sheriff and appear before the county attorney.

Past practice, according to the board’s response, has been to allow a juvenile to enter a diversion program. If the program is completed, the juvenile would have no record.

Under school law, the board noted, action could include suspension from school and extracurricular activities, loss of school credit, written assignments, restitution, letters of apology, counseling and lengthy community service.

“Would it be in the best interests of the student to go before the county attorney and be on the sideline ready to play the next game?” the board asked. “Would a short-term fix of diversion be a long-term solution to prompt better behavior? Would the integrity of the community be compromised for that kind of action? Would the students be subjected to verbal or physical threats from the community for getting off so easily? Would that type of reaction be in the best interests of our students...or the school...or the community?”

The board said it decided that it would be better to set an example for both those involved and other students if severe long-term consequences were applied.

“This would be more effective in deterring future incidents and preserve the integrity of the community and the school,” the statement said.

After reviewing the illegal behavior, the board decided that charges could have included criminal trespass, burglary, theft, criminal deprivation of property, auto theft, and aiding and abetting a crime.

After the board decided to handle the situation locally, information was reviewed to determine a severe but fair punishment for each student involved, Mills read.

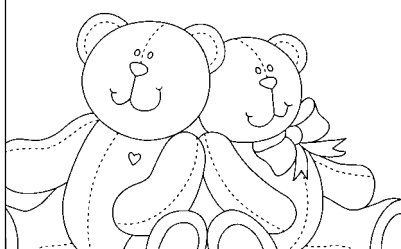
While the board’s response did not specifically say how many students were punished or what each received individually, it did say that the punishment ranged from suspension from school (out of school four days, in-school three days), loss of school credit (0’s in all of their classes for out-of-school suspensions), completion of written work assignments (five pages per day), loss of eligibility to participate in school activities (range from 4 to 11 games), restitution, letters of apology and community service (ranging from 14 to 42 hours).

“Some of the students’ punishment were more severe than others depending upon the age of the student, their role in the incident, the legal severity of the crime, based on the criminal sentencing guide, and the cost value involved,” Mills read.

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