

School board to tour Central school and talk with teachers

By Rachel Miscal

The Goodland Daily News
After touring Central Elementary School on Monday, the Goodland School Board plans to discuss the high school's television capabilities and will hear how students here stack up against others in the state.

Members usually hold the second meeting of the month at one of the district's five schools to check out new technology and programs. Next week, the board will meet at 7 p.m. at Central, where they will tour the school and talk with teachers.

Sharon Gregory, Central principal

and the district's school improvement specialist, will tell members about her goals for the future and review "building report cards," which compares students' performance here with others in Kansas.

The board will again discuss ending the Interactive Television program, which was shut down this month when the district's contract with a telephone company providing the service ended. The program has been the main topic of discussion at the past two meetings.

Some teachers and administrators say the program, which allows stu-

dents to tune into classes at other schools and teachers to teach classes elsewhere, can be valuable, but others say it benefits no students here and never will.

The district paid Southwestern Bell about \$24,000 a year for five years, the length of the contract, but Superintendent Marvin Selby said the program was rarely used.

Under a proposed 10-year contract with S&T Telephone, based in Brewster, the district would pay \$1,500 a month. Though a Spanish teacher and the district's technology coordinator were in favor of the program, Selby

said he didn't want the board to regret signing the contract a few years down the road.

Harvey Swager, the high school principal, said the program benefits no students, while board member Mike Campbell said the district could charge businesses or other districts to use the program.

At the last meeting, the board asked Selby to negotiate with S&T, which provides the service to 14 other districts in northwest Kansas, for a lower price. Selby said today that he hadn't received information from S&T, but hoped to have it Monday.

Selby said the board should conditionally accept a \$69,907 bid from SolutionsPros of Lenexa, represented by a Goodland man, to install telephones in all of the district's classrooms and teachers' rooms.

Members temporarily accepted the bid, which was the only one they received, at the last meeting, asking Selby to investigate prices on the computerized telephones.

Selby said after talking to colleagues, he found that the price was reasonable.

The board won't officially accept the bid until March, when the district hears

if it qualifies for a federal program that will refund 68 percent of the cost.

In other business, the board will:

- Evaluate Selby in a closed session.
- Discuss selling a broken-down hydraulic press.
- Approve high school juniors taking classes at the Northwest Kansas Technical School next school year.
- Review bids from companies wanting to build tennis courts near the city's swimming pool, which is still under construction. Selby said the district and the city have agreed to split the cost, which could amount to more than \$60,000.

Pork producers sue U.S. Department of Agriculture in checkoff battle

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP)—A coalition of pork producers has sued the U.S. Department of Agriculture after thousands of the nation's hog farmers voted to end the government's \$54 million pork-checkoff program.

The program, which started in 1986 and is supervised by the USDA, is financed through a mandatory fee, called a "checkoff," of 45 cents for every \$100 of a pig's value when it is sold.

On Jan. 11, the USDA released the

results of a referendum held last year in which hog farmers voted 15,951 to 14,396 to kill the program. Opponents say the program has done little to stimulate pork consumption and mostly benefits meat processors and large corporate farms.

The National Pork Producers Council, the Michigan Pork Producers Association and various independent pork producers filed the lawsuit the next day in U.S. District Court in Grand Rapids. It seeks a temporary restraining order

and a preliminary injunction that would keep the checkoff program alive.

Based on the referendum vote, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman wants the program terminated and has directed the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, which supervises the agency's promotions boards, to do so.

The money for the program goes to the quasi-governmental National Pork Board, which contracts promotional services through the National Pork Producers Council, one of the lawsuit's

plaintiffs.

The program is best known for its promotion of pork as "the other white meat." The fees collected from U.S. hog farmers are also used for financing research and consumer information.

In a news release issued Thursday, council officials said they expected other state pork organizations and independent producers to join them in the legal battle.

The news release said the "USDA acted unlawfully in holding a binding

referendum despite having no legal authority to do so."

"Pork producers should be outraged at such mismanagement of the referendum and intervention into the pork checkoff by the government," said Craig Jarolimek, the council's president and a pork producer in Forest River, N.D.

Susan McAvoy, a USDA spokeswoman in Washington, D.C., declined to comment specifically about the lawsuit. She said, however, the agency's inspector general, Roger C. Viadero, investigated claims by the National Pork Producers Council of referendum irregularities and found no evidence supporting them.

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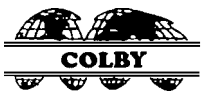
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