

Legislators talk to constituents about taxes, fuel, roads

LAWMAKERS, from Page 1

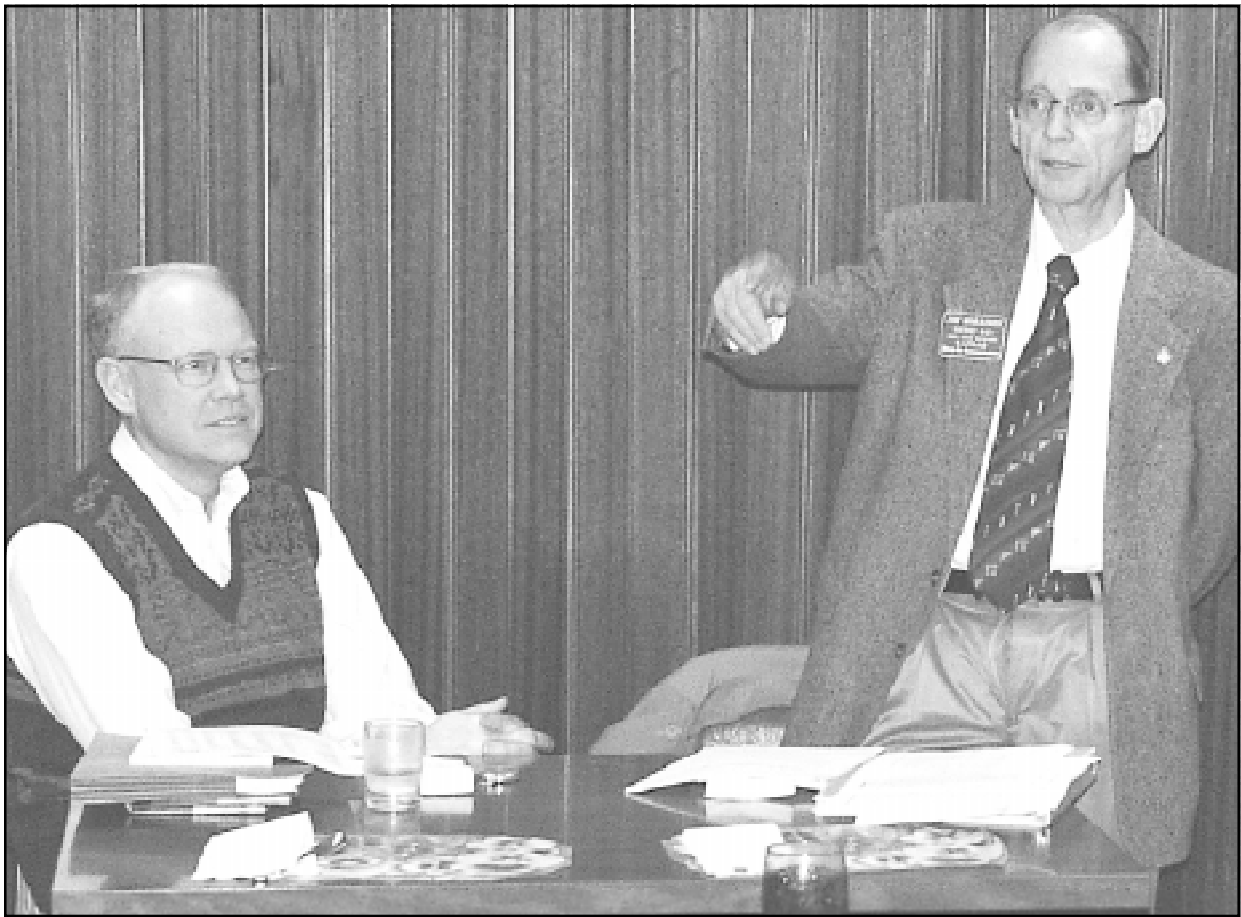
years, up from \$770 million in 1991 to \$1.819 billion in 2000. Since the local option budget program has been available to districts, the amount raised has increased to \$375 million. Total spending on education has increased from \$961.7 million in 1991 to \$2.297 billion in 2000.

During the same 10 years, the number of students in state public schools has increased by 5.4 percent, but there have actually been decreases in the past two years. There were 424,737 students in school in 1991. That number increased to 448,926 in 1998, but has fallen to 447,700 in 2000. In contrast, the number of certified teachers has increased from 34,578 in 1991 to 39,789 in 2000. With the drop in students, though, the number of teachers had actually dropped by 241 in the past year.

Looking at property taxes, Clark presented figures which show that residential property taxes have increased from \$4.766 billion in 1989 to \$8.768 billion in 2000. Commercial property taxes have gone from \$3.775 billion in 1993 to \$6.131 billion. The residential property taxes account for 42.2 percent of total property taxes and the commercial part for 29.5 percent.

Agriculture land collections have remained fairly constant, from \$1.490 billion in 1989 to a low of \$1.294 in 1996 and \$1.433 in 2000. In 1898, ag land accounted for 10.5 percent of the total while it has dropped to 6.9 percent in 2000.

Clark said the agriculture lands would see an increase in valuations this year based on the state formula and that would mean an average increase of 4.8



State Rep. Jim Morrison (right) and Sen. Stan Clark visited with about 30 citizens at Ray's Cafe on Saturday afternoon about events in the legislative session and listened to questions about K-27, energy development and school finance.

Photo by Tom Betz / The Goodland Daily News

percent for lands in Sherman county, 7.6 percent in Cheyenne county, 4.4 percent in Thomas county and 6 percent in Wallace county.

Questions from the audience centered on school finance, including higher education, energy conservation and encouraging alternative fuel development. There were complaints

from businessmen about the state plans to close K-27 north of Goodland this summer.

On the question of the future of school finance, Morrison said they expect to increase the base per pupil by \$50 this year, but that the state formula will see a change over the next three years.

"There is not be a change in the formula this year," he said, "It will take about three years and the study received this year is the first part of the process. We want to be sure what changes are made have the effect we want. There will be no consolidation in northwest Kansas, but we do not know how much additional will be needed."

Exchange students visit Goodland, experience farm life

EXCHANGE, from Page 1

ing at Bowladium Lanes and had a video party afterwards.

On Sunday, they ate lunch at Gambino's before they said their good-byes and headed for Denver to fly home.

Goodland club members who opened their homes to the students were Alyssa Mason, Michelle Kibel, Abby Scheopner, Scott Randolph, Rachael Hagerman,

Janet VanDonge and Josef Felver.

A foreign exchange student from Sweden, Annika Jagevall, who is living at Norton came down to participate in the event as there is no exchange club at her school. She stayed with Jenna Roane while in Goodland.

Porterfield said this is the 11th year for this program. Between six to eight Goodland club members are to be in East Troy on March 29 through April 2.

She said the students seem to enjoy the exchange. They get to meet new kids and visit a new high school and learn the geography and customs of the area they visit.

Also, they learn what's different and what's the same in different parts of the country.

"We try to show them as much as is typical for the rural area," Porterfield said.

Porterfield said the Goodland students are juniors and seniors and are chosen by application, interview, evaluation and from points earned while being in the club.

She said when they do the exchanges they try to look for some place that's different in some way and choose a different school every time.

"We've been from Montana to New York," she said.

Clark said the state is continuing the process of reorganizing higher education and additional money had been built in to give professors raises. He said a hiring freeze by the major universities came because of the higher utility bills which are squeezing the universities, who are under state orders to cut expenditures by 1 percent this year.

Morrison answered a question about tax incentives for ethanol production by pointing to House Bill 2011, which was passed on Thursday, extending the ethanol incentive program until 2011. The bill also provides incentives for new production of ethanol at the rate of 7.5 cents per gallon.

Clark said there are four of the alcohol plants in Kansas now and more on the way. He said a recent demonstration of the use of hydrogen power has possibilities for developing multiple uses, which include powering vehicles and even power plants. Clark said a man from Great Bend is currently getting patents on his process and is looking to work with the City of Russell about developing a power plant using his hydrogen process.

Morrison said there would be an important hearing in the utility committee in the next two weeks to look at how to help other developing energy technologies, including wind power.

The manager of Wal-Mart, Scott Schroller, and at least two fast-food

restaurant managers said they were dismayed at the Kansas Department of Transportation plans for closing K-27 this summer without providing an adequate detour. Schroller said that the St. Francis, Bird City and Atwood area was the third largest customer base he had and that the plans would certainly hurt his business.

Clark and Morrison said they had been in contact with the transportation people about this situation, but that they did not see much of a change coming from the top of the department.

"This is a new policy of the department which came in with the new administration, and they do not seem to be willing to listen to other suggestions," Clark said.

"You need to keep up the pressure," Morrison said, but he agreed that this policy was coming from Topeka and not from the regional office at Norton.

City Commissioner Rick Billinger asked if there was any indication the state would put up detour signs on the unpaved local access routes?

Clark said he did not think that would be in the plan because the state did not want to be responsible for accidents — especially during the harvest season when the semis are trying to pass each other.

After the meeting, the legislators spoke to those present individually and prepared to head to their next session.

Employees get half-day

SCHOOL, from Page 1

save money on running busses.

• Gave Selby permission to give hourly employees a paid half-day off the day before Thanksgiving. Selby said in the past employees were not

paid for the time off.

• Decided to allow Mandi Bellamy, a high school junior from Sharon Springs, to attend school in Goodland.

• Took no action after a six-minute closed session to talk about personnel.

• Approved paying \$13,040 in bills.

T-Rex visits Sternberg Museum

HAYS (AP) — About 200 people attended the opening of the traveling exhibit, "A T. rex Named Sue" on Saturday at the Sternberg Museum of Natural History.

The exhibit, which includes a replica of the largest and most complete Tyrannosaurus rex fossil ever found, was

opened to museum members and the public Saturday morning.

The 45-foot long fossil at the Fort Hays State University's Sternberg Museum is an exact replica of the original fossil, which remains on permanent display at the Field Museum in Chicago.

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