

Teachers, board negotiate

At the teacher contract negotiating meeting Tuesday:

- School board negotiators agreed to shorten the staff grievance process, but refused to bring in an outside mediator. Story on Page 1.
- Negotiating teams for the board and teachers union discussed changing how the district handles complaints from parents and students. Details at right.
- Negotiators talked about changing the district's technology requirement so it benefits more teachers, but didn't come to an agreement.
- The teachers team withdrew a proposal to include the starting and ending times of the workday in the 2002-2003 agreement, but said the times need to be written correctly in the staff handbook.
- The union team agreed to let the board remove language saying teachers have until June 10 to quit, if the board reduces the penalty for a late resignation. The board negotiators said they will consider it.
- The teachers agreed to let the board make extra duties outside the class-

Grievance process shortened

CONTRACTS, from Page 1

board team, said board members are elected to run the district and feel it is their duty to resolve disputes at the local level. She said members want to find fair solutions and aren't scared to punish administrators.

Teachers can take their complaint to court, Russell said, but the district will not bring in a mediator or arbitrator.

The board team did agree to shorten the grievance process by taking out one step, a formal meeting with the principal, and reducing response times by a day for each step.

After talking in private, the teach-

ers agreed to the compromise, but said they were disappointed the board couldn't see the value of having a mediator.

The teachers team also suggested changing how complaints against staff by parents or students are handled by erasing a written complaint that didn't result in punishment after five years and giving teachers a chance to change their behavior before they're fired or suspended.

The board team didn't respond to the proposal, but has said before that written complaints shouldn't be erased in case the same complaint is made in the future.

room mandatory, if the board promises not to force music teachers to put on more than three concerts a year. Board negotiators said they'll think about it.

• The board team refused to discuss

giving teachers forced to move to a new grade level money for new supplies, saying the district already helps those teachers. Board negotiators aren't legally required to discuss that topic.

No drivers needed for these tractors

URBANA, Ill. (AP) — A tractor loaded with the latest technology cuts a straight line through an Illinois corn field, planting crops along a two-mile stretch before making a U-turn and heading back the other way.

There's just one thing missing: a driver.

Well, at least a human driver. An assortment of gizmos, including a gyroscope and a global positioning system, are doing the driving.

The technology was developed by University of Illinois agricultural engineers who have spent the last three years working with two of the country's largest farm equipment makers to create a completely automated tractor.

"What we needed, so to speak, is an artificial human. Basically we're mimicking a human — eyes, brain and hands," said Qin Zhang, who headed the university's research.

Zhang and his research team equipped four Case IH tractors with a gyroscope, GPS, video camera and computer, enabling the tractors to guide themselves — turns and all — through corn and soybean fields used to test the system.

The GPS receives positioning sig-

nals from a satellite, the camera tracks the path of the tractor relative to the crop rows, and the vehicle motion sensor monitors speed, pitch and implement use. The information is fed into a computer, which steers the tractor through the field.

One of the tractors operated without a human driver for the past two planting seasons. In one test, researchers programmed the tractor to drive itself from garage to field, where it planted several acres of crops before returning to the garage — all on its own.

Zhang worked on the self-guidance system with researchers from CNH Global, one of the largest manufacturers of agricultural tractors and combines in the world. The university is currently working with John Deere to conduct further research into autonomous farming equipment.

"All the tools are there to do it. We've shown that. It's really to the stage of making some refinements," said John Reid, who helped design the system and is manager of intelligent vehicle systems at John Deere.

Researchers stress the technology is intended to help farmers, not replace them with a fleet of tractor drones.

Tractors using the self-guided tech-

nology could operate at night and in the fog. They also go faster and, because of the GPS system, are accurate within a couple of inches, meaning higher yields because farmers can plant more rows of crops.

Companies such as John Deere and CNH Global have begun to release scaled-down versions of the technology. Currently, farmers can buy GPS-guided equipment that helps with positioning on straightaways, though the farmer still has to sit in the cab to turn the tractor. Robotic machinery similar to that being developed for tractors also has been used in high-risk mining for several years.

Few doubt the technology works, but the question is when it will be ready for commercial use. Issues of safety and cost must be solved first.

The sensory equipment on experimental tractors isn't advanced enough to detect obstacles such as stray cows, said Bingching Ni, a CNH project engineer who worked on the university project. And legal hurdles would have to be overcome before regulators would allow a fully automated tractor loose in a corn field, Ni said.

Cost may be a tougher issue, with Zhang estimating a self-guiding sys-



Rewarded for reading

Craig Lawson (above) supervised a tug-o-war between fourth graders Friday at Smoky Gardens, while Dana Belshe, county extension agent, gave fishing tips to Dillon Trachsel (from left) and Jeremy Mills. Third and fourth graders at Central Elementary earned a reward goal for meeting their reading goal of 2,000 books. Photos by Karen Colip



Mowing decision not unanimous

The Goodland City commissioners chose a contractor to mow high grass and weeds at a meeting Monday. It wasn't a unanimous decision with one commissioner saying the city should hire the person with the lowest bid.

Jon McLean, Goodland High School teacher and coach, won the contracting rights with a bid of \$25 an hour.

McLean was last year's mower, and City Inspector Jerry Nemechek said he had done a satisfactory job.

The city's inspection department sends out notices to people who have weeds higher than allowed by city code. If the property is not cleaned up in 10 days, the city sends out the contracted mower.

Other than McLean, the city received four bids to mow high weeds on personal property within the city: Alan Langness, \$20; Stan and Dawn Kibel, \$25; Mike and Cindi Yarger, \$25; and Scott Weber, \$40.

Weber mentioned in his bid he has several large commercial mowers, and could take care of properties in half the time of regular mowers.

Commissioner Rick Billinger made a motion to accept Langness' low bid, which died when it could not find a second. Commissioner Curtis Hurd said that Langness might be the low bid, but "who's to say he won't take twice as long?"

The motion to approve McLean's

bid was made by Commissioner Chuck Lutters, who said since there had been no problems with him the previous year, he was a logical choice.

"Are you sure he's the quickest?" Billinger asked. "There are three guys bidding this price. If you want a guy who fast and has big equipment, there's one here."

"All I based my motion on was he did the job last year, and he did a satisfactory job," Lutters said.

Billinger said if the city sends out bids, it should accept the lowest one, and cast the lone vote against McLean.

"Otherwise, what's the point?" Billinger said. "We'll just hire the guy we had last year."

Explore the wide world of the Web

We have new high speed digital lines!

nwkansas.com is your key to the Internet. We offer reliable service, fast digital connections and full access to the Internet, the World Wide Web and E-mail all in one package for one low monthly fee*. We have knowledgeable customer service people to help you get connected, and plenty of lines to take your calls. We are your local Internet Service Provider with people who can answer your questions. In most cases, you can be hooked up today. We have the newest digital incoming lines, and a high speed frame relay to carry your traffic.

*Special rate offer

With a payment of \$99.80 (four months base service) we give you a month of service free and free set-up (\$19.96 per month average rate. We are offering an annual rate of \$198 (four months free service).



We can connect you tonight... not next week!

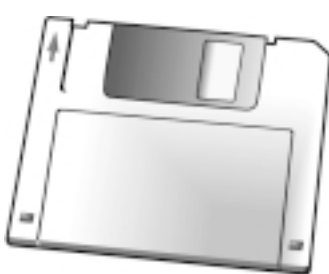
Infinite variety on the 'Net

There's a whole new world waiting out there. Whatever you're interested in, the Internet, with its millions of postings and services, has it. Weather, time of day, art, archives, news, hobbies . . . If you can imagine it, someone has put it on the Internet.

Use it for business. Use it for school. Use it for pleasure. Use it just to find out what's out there. Pick a topic and search the entire World Wide Web for it ... in just seconds.

E-mail for fun and profit

E-mail is fast, affordable and inexpensive. From your computer, you can send and receive messages anywhere in the world . . . for no charge . . . once you have an Internet connection.



nwkansas.com

Local Tech Support • Same-Day Connection* • Friendly People to Help

The Goodland Daily News • 1205 Main, Goodland, Kansas, 67735 • 785 899-2338

*In most cases; we'll try anyway.