

Board member questions raise

NEGOTIATIONS, from Page 1

Kathy Russell, head of the board's negotiating team, said the district's 86 teachers voted on the agreement and of the 54 who turned in ballots, all voted "yes."

Schilling asked Superintendent Marvin Selby what the district will do if the state doesn't come through with the \$20 and cuts aid to schools in the middle of the year.

"Then we cut," Selby said. He said non-certified staff, such as cooks, janitors and secretaries, may be laid off.

The district can't let go of teachers in the middle of the year, Selby said,

because they all have one-year contracts.

He said the district will also have to spend reserve money.

Selby said a new law the Legislature passed this year lifts restrictions on how money schools are required to set aside for emergencies is spent. He said the law takes effect July 1.

The superintendent said the district needs to make provisions. He added that every school administrator is worried about next year.

"We won't be the only ones hurting," he said.

Selby said the district is already having to make cuts to cover a raise for non-certified staff and increases in

health, property and car insurance.

No administrator is getting a raise this year, he said, and there may be no new buses or textbooks.

Selby said he's asked the five principals to cut 10 percent from each of the schools' budgets.

Money will be tight, he said, but the district will get by without raising property taxes locally.

In the future, Selby said, if enrollment continues to decline and the state gives schools less money, Central Elementary School on Main Avenue will have to be closed and an administrator will have to be let go.

"We don't want to do that," Selby said. "We don't want to see another

empty building on Main Street."

There was a bright spot.

Earlier in the meeting, Selby said although there were 28 less students in the district at the end of the school year than enrolled at the start, enrollment was stable during the last three months. He added that 18 more kindergarten students enrolled in school this year than last.

"Hopefully," he said, "we'll start to see enrollment stabilize."

Before voting on the negotiated agreement, Schilling told the board he just wants to do what he thinks is right.

"I'm not voting against you or the teachers," he said, "but I don't think we can pay the raise."

School decides to buy tanks, fuel

The Goodland School Board decided Monday to spend \$2,500 to put two 1,000-gallon fuel tanks at the district's bus barn so employees don't have to waste time driving to and from the gas station.

At the meeting, members also gave Superintendent Marvin Selby permission to take bids on gasoline and diesel fuel to fill the tanks.

Since the bus barn lost two full-time employees this year, Selby said, the duty of filling gas tanks has fallen on Bob Harkins, the supervisor, and Kent

Scofield, the only other full-time employee at the barn.

Harkins said after the meeting that he and Kent have taken up the duties of the full-time mechanic and bus driver that left to help the district save money.

Teachers and coaches often use the district's suburbans and activity buses, Selby said, and some mornings Harkins and Scofield will have five or six vehicles to refuel.

It can take up to 45 minutes to fill each vehicle, Harkins said, noting that

it can take more than 15 minutes to drive from the barn across town to Frontier Equity Exchange, where the district buys its gas.

"It's just time consuming," he said.

The board decided to buy the two tanks, one for gas and one for diesel fuel, from Don Weis Conoco, the low bidder. Frontier Equity submitted a \$2,878 bid.

Selby said Harkins has researched environmental and safety rules and will install the above-ground tanks himself.

The price includes a pump and meter, an automatic nozzle, a tank gauge and a break-away hose.

Responding to a question from member Mike Campbell, Harkins said the tanks will be shut off every night and gas consumption will be monitored to make sure no one is stealing the fuel.

He said there were underground fuel tanks at the barn 15 years ago, but the Environmental Protection Agency made the district remove them.

Enjoying the flowers



Ray Fixsen took a moment to stop and admire his flowers Wednesday morning at 539 W. 13th after an evening shower.

Photo by Judy Harper/The Goodland Daily News

Wind shift helps crews fight fire; homes still in danger

WILDFIRES, from Page 1

acres were charred.

"These folks haven't had significant snow or rain in a long time.

When you superimpose wind on top, it goes like gasoline," Martin said after a community meeting in Woodland Park.

Martin told the several hundred people packed into a high school gymnasium that it could take 70 to 90 days to contain the fire.

Authorities initially suspected the blaze was started by a campfire, but investigators said Wednesday they were unsure of its origin other than that it was human-caused.

More than 5,400 people remained out of their homes Wednesday, primarily in mountain towns near the fire's origin.

A small crowd gathered along a highway near Florissant, watching the smoke billow above.

Among them was Garry Helgestad,

55, who was forced to leave his home Tuesday.

He and other evacuees cheered as slurry planes zoomed overhead.

"Come on, buddy!" he yelled, thrusting his fist in the air. "Get 'em!"

About 450 firefighters marched toward the fire as plumes of smoke rose to 20,000 feet, concealing the rolling hills between Denver and Colorado Springs.

"The fire itself is not going to threaten Denver," Gov. Bill Owens

told The Associated Press.

But, he added, "the smoke sure is."

The smoke has receded in the Denver area in the past two days, but it is still obscuring the city's postcard view of the Rockies.

Some residents have swept gray flakes of ash off their vehicles, porches and plants, and others have sought medical help for respiratory problems.

Rain isn't in the forecast in the area until at least Friday, and fire managers worried that the wind might pick up.

"We're still dealing with a wind-driven fire, and some terrain issues. The winds are switching around," U.S. Forest Service spokeswoman Barb Masinton said.

Joe Allbaugh, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, toured fire sites with the governor Wednesday.

The blaze bearing down on Denver "is the worst fire I've ever seen in my life," he said.

"If astronauts are watching it from

the space shuttle, you've got to know it's huge."

Other fires are burning across the state, including a 10,600-acre blaze that destroyed 28 homes near Glenwood Springs, about 150 miles west of Denver.

In southwestern Colorado, a 9,300-acre fire burning out of control north of Durango threatened 60 homes.

La Plata County officials said most residents had left voluntarily.

Palestinian police, security officers celebrate as Israeli tanks roll away around the world

By the Associated Press INTERNATIONAL

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Israeli forces pulled out of the West Bank town of Ramallah, lifting their latest blockade on Yasser Arafat's office, as Secretary of State Colin Powell raised the idea of a provisional Palestinian state.

Palestinian police and security officers ran into Arafat's battered compound and celebrated, chanting slo-

gans in support of the Palestinian leader, as Israeli tanks rolled away from the city-block-sized complex late Wednesday. Early today, Israeli forces raided a village near the West Bank city of Jenin, another of the nearly daily raids made into Palestinian areas.

With the Israeli forces out of Ramallah, the new Palestinian Cabinet

was to convene for the first time this evening at the headquarters, said Arafat aide Nabil Abu Rdeneh.

The meeting had been set for Monday but was canceled because of the Israeli incursion. Arafat announced a new Cabinet on Sunday, trimming membership from 31 to 21 ministers. Palestinian Planning Minister Nabil

Shaath headed to Washington today for talks with Powell and to present the Palestinian position ahead of an expected policy statement by President Bush on the Middle East that could come early next week.

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — A U.S. military plane carrying special forces troops crashed and caught fire after taking off from an airstrip in Afghanistan, killing three Americans. Seven

others escaped with minor injuries.

The crash on Wednesday — the deadliest in the Afghan campaign since seven Marines were killed in January — did not appear to have been caused by hostile fire, U.S. spokesman Roger King said at Bagram air base on Thursday.

A quick reaction force secured the crash site in a hilly region 35 miles southwest of the town of Gardez as officials gathered the remains of the

dead servicemen, King said.

Two of the dead were Air Force personnel; the third was an Army special forces soldier. The seven others on board — five airmen and two Army troops — suffered minor injuries ranging from a broken leg to cuts and bruises. They were taken to a U.S. base at Kandahar for treatment.

The Air Force MC-130H crashed and caught fire about three miles from the airstrip where it took off.

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