



**Tanagers remain undefeated**

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# PLAIN TALK

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This architect's rendering shows a bird's-eye view of the outer appearance of the Vermillion City Library after its expansion is complete. The addition has been designed to complement the existing Carnegie Library building located next door to the north. "The design incorporates a gable-roofed entry off of the west. We're looking at matching the brick, which is an orange-colored blend which we see around the library, and then accenting that with some quartzite colors, again of brick, but which relate to the historic nature of the Carnegie Library," said Liz Squyer, principal architect with Architecture Incorporated of Sioux Falls.

(Image courtesy of the City of Vermillion)

## City to open bids for library expansion

By David Lias

[david.lias@plaintalk.net](mailto:david.lias@plaintalk.net)

The Vermillion City Council plans to open bids Jan. 19, 2012, for the planned renovation and addition to the Vermillion City Library.

City leaders will be crossing their fingers as the bids are being unsealed, hoping the architectural firm for the project – Architecture Incorporated of Sioux Falls – is overestimating the project's total cost.

The firm estimates the 11,000 square foot addition to the present building and remodeling of the existing structure could cost nearly \$2.7 million.

Bids of that amount would exceed the funding sources available to the city for the project by approximately \$320,000.

"We're just wrapping up the design of the addition and the remodeling of the Vermillion Public Library," Liz Squyer, principal architect, told the Vermillion City Council at its Dec. 5 meeting. "We're looking at an addition to the

north, which is about 6,100 square feet, and about a 780 square foot addition to the south, and complete renovation of the interior of the library.

"Our cost estimate to date is \$2.7 million. That is what we would expect the construction costs to be, or, in other words, what the cost of the bids would be when the bids are opened," she said.

Architects have designed the new addition to the library to complement the existing Carnegie Library building located next door to the north.

"The design incorporates a gable-roofed entry off of the west. We're looking at matching the brick, which is an orange-colored blend which we see around the library, and then accenting that with some quartzite colors, again of brick, but which relate to the historic nature of the Carnegie Library," Squyer said.

The design work by Architecture Incorporated is complete. Those plans were unanimously approved by the city council Dec. 5. Aldermen also agreed to

set the bid opening date for Jan. 19.

"The construction schedule is such that we would allow enough lead time so that if a contractor wished to start the project in April after the frost is out of the ground and avoid temporary heating measures, the lead time is long enough to allow that," Squyer said. "But if a contractor did wish get going this winter right away in January, that would be allowed, too."

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## Sounds of the season



The Vermillion High School Concert Choir, under the direction of Trisha Fisher, performs "I'll Be Home For Christmas," and other songs of the season during the VHS Holiday Concert Monday night in the school's performing arts center. The concert audience heard selections by the Women's Choir, All State Chorus, and Combined Choirs. The VHS Symphonic Winds, under the direction of John Alpers, also performed several selection, and accompanied audience members in a sing-a-long of familiar holiday tunes at the conclusion of the night's performances.

(Photo by David Lias)

## A Time of Waiting, Preparing ...



## Aakre: Christmas may be a 'tearful' time for some

**Editor's note:** This story is the third in a series that focuses on the days leading up to Christmas – a time which may bring difficult memories of past observances.

By Travis Gulbrandson

[travis.gulbrandson@plaintalk.net](mailto:travis.gulbrandson@plaintalk.net)

For many people, the holiday season brings to mind warm thoughts of being with their families. For others, however, it can be a time of sadness.

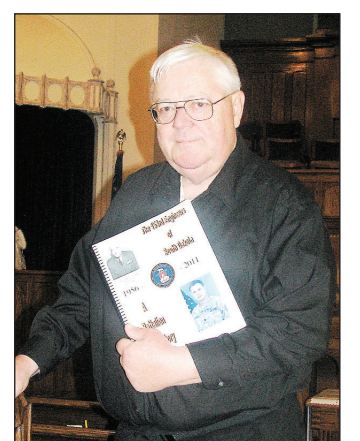
This may be especially true for those who serve overseas in the military.

One local man who has seen this first-hand is Chaplain (Major) Elmer "Sandy" Aakre.

Minister at Vermillion's First Baptist Church, Aakre served with the National Guard from 1988 to 2010. He was deployed several times, the longest being to Iraq from December 2003 to March 2005 with the 153rd Engineer Battalion.

Christmas can be a difficult time when family members are so far away, he said.

"Christmas was a tearful time for these guys," Aakre said. "One guy had a son born on Christmas day. He said, 'I've been gone most of his life. What the heck kind of



CHAPLAIN (MAJOR) AAKRE

## Froke: Ed funding plan 'presents challenges'

By David Lias

[david.lias@plaintalk.net](mailto:david.lias@plaintalk.net)

Superintendent Mark Froke told members of the Vermillion School Board to be prepared for another year of dealing with funding challenges while working on the school district's budget, despite some recent positive news concerning school funding.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard's state spending plan unveiled Dec. 6 includes a 4.5 percent increase in aid to school districts.

Lawmakers during their last session approved a \$52 million cut in state education aid as part of efforts to deal with a

\$127 million state budget deficit. A study by the Associated School Boards of South Dakota found that the drop in state aid prompted public schools to cut budgets by more than \$38 million and eliminate the equivalent of 465 full-time jobs.

"Last year, you'll recall that we had a 6.6 percent cut in state aid in per pupil funding, and we ended up having to make about \$460,000 worth of cuts, so that took a lot of work last year. Now with the governor's proposal, it seemed that people were quite positive about what he proposed, I think, because it was an increase rather than a cut,"

Froke said. "I guess I'm not that positive on what was presented, because it means we will have more work to do with the budget."

The governor has proposed \$22.2 million in K-12 education aid increases for the next budget year.

"The total per pupil amount for Vermillion will be \$43,830, but then you pair that with a \$75,000 cut in per pupil funding due to enrollment decline, and we'll have \$31,170 less in state aid funding that what we had this year," the superintendent told board members Monday. "Also, there will be other budgetary issues both on the expense and the

revenue side that we'll have to deal with, but right out of the chute, we start with a negative \$31,170 in per pupil funding."

Along with an increase of \$9.8 million in ongoing aid, schools would get another \$4 million in one-time help for operating expenses under the plan. They also would get \$8.4 million in one-time money to cover staff training for initiatives to help students improve in math and English.

"The base increase of 2.3 percent was provided in state aid, and then an additional seven-tenths of a percent was added, but that doesn't equate

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