

School Board Has Busy December Meeting

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE

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The Vermillion School Board had a very busy meeting Monday night wrapping up several project from the past year and beginning the discussion on new ones. However the one topic that may have the biggest change on the district is a decision that was made recently at the federal level.

The new Every Student Succeeds Act – officially part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – was signed into law by President Obama on Dec. 10, one day after it was passed by an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote in the U.S. Senate, which followed broad passage in the House. With his signature the No Child Left Behind standards that have been in place since 2002 will be replaced. This is the seventh reauthorization of the ESEA, first passed in 1965.

According to Superintendent Mark Froke, the new ESEA Law will provide more flexibility to states and school districts.

“The general components of the ESEA law include affirming that the state will have control of the standards,” said Froke. “The Federal Government will no longer mandate standards. It also ends the mandates on teacher evaluations and provides resources to support teacher quality including staff development grants.”

Froke emphasized that there will still be a focus on reading and math, but that there may be changes in the standards.

As for Common Core, which was adopted by the state in 2010, Froke said only time will tell if it will go away. He added locally it may delay the implementation of a new math curriculum that the district is currently investigating.

“The ESEA replaces ‘adequate yearly progress’ with a state designed system to identify and support struggling schools,” Froke said. “State will

use multiple measure of assessment and will eliminate unnecessary testing.”

He added that there will still be assessments for grades 3-8 and once in high school, with three years including science testing.

“The actual bill is more than 1,000 pages long,” said Froke. “I honestly don’t know everything about it at this point. But, moving control to the state and local districts is a positive move.”

Froke said that No Child Left Behind will official end in June of 2016. Next fall there will be a soft implementation of the new ESEA rules and in school year 2017-2018 full implementation will roll out.

Another topic covered that will affect the Vermillion School District long-term is the results of the innovative planning session held by the VSB earlier this fall.

Froke said that while the school doesn’t have the final results yet, they have received the main goals identified by the process. They include:

- Long-range facility planning;
- Collaboration time for faculty;
- A social worker to serve unique student needs;
- A long-term goal of reinstating programs; and,
- Communication improvement with community members.

The board also discussed the possibility of reissuing the VSD’s 2011 Limited Tax General Obligation Refunding Certificates dated May 24, 2011.

A representative from D.A. Davidson and Company, who serves as underwriter for the bonds, said that the district can attain a significant savings if the board would choose to refinance at this time. He advised now is the time to do it as interest rates are very favorable as is the timing.

The board agreed to move forward with the reissuance with the understanding that they will not refinance unless the district will see a savings of more than \$89,000 after all deliver day

expenses.

The board also updated three policies during the meeting.

They held a second reading on the Student Communicable Disease and also the Epinephrine Auto-injectors for School Administration Policies.

Two community members spoke with the board asking that the district’s stance on how a student who has been determined to have Lice is handled. Specifically asking that there be a standard policy addressing notification of other parents. The board chose to look into the issue and come back at a later meeting with a potential plan.

The board also held the first reading of the new Wellness Policy. New federal regulations have changed how the district policy must be written and what items should be covered in a district’s Wellness plan, which forced VPS to update their plan.

Other business at the meeting included:

- Authorizing the preliminary planning of the high school locker room refurbishing and Austin school heating system;
- Hearing a report from Mike Hubbard on regarding the final punch list items on the high school project;
- Hearing a report from Patty Larsen on Dual and concurrent credit numbers at the high school;
- Approving the bid from Office Advantage for a 48 month contract to provide six copy machines to the district. The new contract offers a savings of nearly \$400 per year to the district;
- Approved a minimum wage increase for select classified employees; and,
- Approved a contract with the Pacesetter Basketball Tournament for the use of the Middle School Gym March 5-6 at a reduced rate of \$125.

The next meeting of the Vermillion School District will be held January 11, 2016 at the Al Neuharth Media Center.

Area Drug Court Graduates Three

BY REILLY BIEL

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This month’s drug court graduates heard from a speaker who understands the trials of addiction.

The Yankton County Drug Court program held a ceremony for three graduates, one from Clay County, at the Yankton County Courthouse & Safety Center. Together, the graduates completed 1,654 days of sobriety, attended more than 730 support group meetings and paid more than \$10,000 in fines and restitution.

Drug Court is reserved for people who haven’t been successful with traditional methods of attempted treatment. The program is a last resort for those facing a felony for a drug-related offense.

The featured speaker was retired judge Mary Dell Cody, who resides in Yankton during the warmer months.

Cody, who served as a Magistrate Judge for the First Judicial Circuit in Yankton for more than 30 years, summed up the struggle of battling addiction.

“To turn around addiction, envision turning a battleship around,” she said. “That’s how hard it is.”

Cody noted that the perception of addiction is slowly changing in society.

“I’ve seen a change in law enforcement,” she stated, using Lt. Todd Brandt as an example. “He still has a belief in crime and punishment, but now has a compassionate heart. He sees addiction through different eyes.”

Cody touched on her own struggles with alcohol addiction, emphasizing that she understands the struggles addicts go through.

“When you look at an alcoholic, you don’t think of illness because people don’t have a disease in that way,” Cody said. “They think of it in a negative, shaming way. “I’m not ashamed of being an alcoholic,” she added. “I’m not proud of it, but I am proud of my recovery.”

She praised Yankton’s Drug Court for having an



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Retired Judge Mary Dell Cody spoke at Wednesday’s Drug Court graduation. Three graduates celebrated completing the program that will help them achieve lifelong sobriety.

amazing team and judge.

“She (Bern) has to have the patience only surpassed by Job,” Cody said. “The people in the program are rebellious and want to do things their way. However, they found themselves in a situation where they couldn’t make decisions for themselves.”

Cody hopes to continue informing people that addiction is a disease of the mind.

“These addicts are exactly like me on the inside,” she said. “They’re driving to do something they don’t want to do. They have to fight, work and change their way of thinking and come to a new understanding.”

Drug Courts began in South Dakota after a judge from the Northern Hills district started it in his county. After the program proved effective, the state judicial system started sanctioning courts and determining, based on the number of substance abuse arrests, where to implement such

programs. Yankton County was one of the chosen places.

Yankton’s Drug Court program began in 2013. Since then, there have been a total of eight graduates, according to Drug Court judge Tami Bern.

“We had to prepare for 18 months before starting the program with a lot of training and groundwork,” said Bern.

Each Drug Court team is compiled of a judge, defense attorney, court services officer, support specialist, a member of law enforcement and one or two treatment specialists.

“Our mission statement is to reduce crime and societal issues that occur as a result of substance dependence through targeted treatment, supervision and judicial intervention,” Bern explained.

She added that completing the program is far from

easy, and the Drug Court graduates will be the first to say so.

In addition to the aforementioned requirements, graduates had to comply with curfew checks, perform countless hours of community service and attend mandatory court sessions.

According to Bern, the drug court programs save the state over \$600,000 a year. More important than that, however, is the work that goes into helping addicts overcome their addictions.

“In addition to our mission statement, we have a saying that Drug Court requires three things: that you show up, are honest and try,” Bern said. “These people are role models for having done that.”

Follow @ReillyBiel on Twitter.

Thank you

We want to thank all of you in this caring community, for all your kindness, for all your emails, cards, gifts, food and beautiful flowers. The Daryl and Craig Johnson families for your kindness. Howler's, Jon and Carol and staff for the delicious dinner. To granddaughter, Stephanie, for all her help. Rifa Eidem for her thoughtfulness. The Kober Funeral Home, Pastor Fowler, Christy Kimball (organist), and the police escort out of Vermillion to the cemetery. Curtis was Rod's life. He will miss and love him always. We know Curtis is at peace with our heavenly father.

God Bless All of You.
Rod and Betty, Clark and Angie

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 7th Annual Parade of Lights, Community Tree Lighting, Writing Contest, Coloring Contest – Lunch With Santa and Pictures With Santa a great success!

City of Vermillion	Sierra Whitlock –	USD ROTC Color Guard
Vermillion Street Dept.	Aflac Independent Agent	Nate & Krista Welch
Vermillion Light & Power Dept.	Sanford Vermillion – donating the Community Christmas Tree	Howard & Alice Willson
Vermillion Police Dept.	Hy-Vee – sponsoring the coloring contest & lunch with Santa	CorTrust Bank/CorInsurance – serving hot chocolate
Vermillion Fire Dept.	USD Fine Arts Dept.	Peterman Photography – Pictures with Santa
Vermillion Public Library	USD Carolers	
Mick Breske – American Family Insurance		

All of the Parade Participants:

USD ROTC Color Gaurd	USD Admissions Office	Walmart
Louie's Cleaning & Disaster Restoration	Broadcaster/Plaintalk	United Way
Sanford Vermillion	Vermillion Public Transit	Diamond 'C' Ranch
Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity	The Pride of Vermillion	Kappa Alpha Theta
CorTrust Bank	Marching Band	Vermillion Area Farmer's Market
	Bank of the West	Vermillion Fire Department

On behalf of the VCDC Holiday Events Committee:

Kimberley Andres	Stacey Allen	Ann Breitag
Laurie Siegel	Barb Martin	Tim Bellis

 

USD Students Advance To World

Finals In Thailand

A team of three University of South Dakota computer science students will compete next spring in Thailand with some of the most prestigious schools in the world, including Harvard and Stanford universities and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

USD is among 23 universities that will represent the United States and Canada at the 2016 World Finals for the ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest (ACM-ICPC) May 15-20 at Prince of Songkla University, Phuket, Thailand.

“This is the best achievement for our students so far. It shows that our students work hard and have the ability to compete with the elite group of universities around the world,” said QuocNam Tran, Ph.D., professor and chair of USD’s Department of Computer Science.

USD sponsored three teams that took part in the 2015 ACM North Central America regional contest. The USD team comprised of Kurtis Van Gent, of Sheldon, Iowa, Ben Ericsson, of Slayton, Minnesota, and Mitchell Peterson, of Centerville, South Dakota, solved five problems, which put it in the top four universities among 223 teams and qualified USD for the international competition.

Legislature to Hold Memorial Service

PIERRE – Each year the South Dakota Legislature conducts a Memorial Service honoring the memory of legislators who have passed away during the previous year. The service honoring legislators who passed away during 2015 is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, January 21, 2016, at 3:00 p.m. (CT) in the House Chamber.

The committee in charge of the Memorial Service is seeking the names of former state senators and representatives who passed away during 2015. Anyone with such information can contact the Legislative Research Council at 500 East Capitol, Pierre, South Dakota 57501; 605-773-3251; or via email at cindy.tryon@state.sd.us.

Legislators

From Page 1

badly but the efficiency issues, the teacher ratio impacts every one of these and every one of my school districts is under that 600 (student) figure so they’re going to have different numbers than you.”

One thing agreed upon was the need for more funds, and not just pulling from Capital Outlay.

“We need to get new state money funding education,” Ring said. “We’re close to last in our percentage in our state share of funding elementary and secondary education. I hate to say it but when I say new money I think it means increase in tax rates. Like Shannon said we can’t afford to do without that capital outlay. They’re going to have to cut back on some things like computers and that sort of things if they take half a million away from capital outlay.”

A big challenge for legislators with this goal of new money to fund education is the other state legislators who will vote against anything which involves raising taxes regardless of the cause.

“They say my kids are all gone and my grandkids don’t live here so it doesn’t directly impact me but there are other people paying taxes for my kids going to school,” Rusch said. “I feel it’s my civic responsibility but there are legislators who are against everything.”

According to Ring our state is at a four percent

sales tax rate, on the lower side of most states.

“I think that’s part of the reason we’re providing such a low share of the total for elementary and secondary because we don’t have a lot of state resources,” he said. “Maybe it’s time for the state to bite the bullet and say we need to provide a reasonable amount of government services generally but particularly education we’re probably going to have to find another source of revenue or use to a greater extent the resources we have. Just about the only thing that’s available is the sales tax. We’ve been saying we need to do more to fund education and the Republicans will also say that but somebody’s going to have to take a leadership role and be bold and maybe pay the consequences and say ‘look Gov. Daugaard, it’s time to do something.’”

Both Rusch and Ring expressed desire for the public to become active and involved in the process.

Anyone is free to contact them through the state legislature’s website.

“The people that are from my district, I try to respond to that one way or another,” Rusch said. “I don’t always agree with their position. I try to explain to them why not. Particularly last year there was a gun issue and I had people from the district contact me about that one way or the other. I tried to call them or email them back.”

To contact Rusch or Ring visit <http://legis.sd.gov/>, choose the 2016 session under the Legislative Sessions tab then select Legislators.

The Eagles Auxiliary will host a

Christmas Candy Goodie Bake Sale

Select from the cookies to create your own tray!

Saturday, Dec. 19th

11 am - 2 pm

All proceeds go to benefit local charities

114 W. Main • Vermillion

Vermillion Area Farmers Market

Winter Market Season

New Location For Our December Market

Saturday, December 19

National Guard Armory • 9:30-12:45

January 9 4H/Extension Building 10:00-1:00

February 6 4H/Extension Building 10:00-1:00

March 5 4H/Extension Building 10:00-1:00

Crafts, Holiday Decorations, Gifts, Knitting, Sewing, Herbs, Fresh Produce, Woodworking & More! We accept SNAP and debit.

www.vermillionfarmersmarket.org