

Prices/ from page 1

has put in for funding to help with a making improvements to their web site," he said.

MidAmerican also provided funding that helped VCDC personnel attend a conference that involved the Governor's Office of Economic Development. Howe also participated in an economic development conference involving 10 Midwest states. "It's a one-on-one with a number of major site selectors, and the information that you get is invaluable. Steve has gone the last couple years and has been very excited with the results that he has gotten by being able to talk to these people directly."

"Some of the things that we are going to be looking at, and looking to MidAmerican to help fund, are things such as a virtual spec building," Howe told the city council. "What that basically involves is getting everything ready except for the actual building. You have all the plans in place, you have all the infrastructure in place—that's a concept that is becoming more popular in economic development marketing."

MidAmerican Energy can also assist the VCDC with a variety of other programs,

ranging from web site improvements to lending financial assistance to help Vermillion representatives attend marketing and trade shows.

"They (MidAmerican) have been really involved in the Vermillion community, and we really do value them as a partner," Howe said. "We are looking forward to continue working with them."

"In 2009, we had another good year for customer satisfaction," Zanter said.

"MidAmerican was ranked first in a study by J.D. Powers and Associates in the midwest region," she said, "in electric, residential, business and gas commercial customer satisfaction studies, and second in the nation for gas residential service."

Zanter said there has been no major change in the energy company's staffing in the region.

"We have a construction crew that works out of Vermillion; we also have a construction crew that works out of Yankton," she said. "We have a total of five service personnel who cover the area. The one service personnel who covers the Vermillion area primarily lives here in Vermillion, so we've got somebody locally. The

other groups also cover the area, so we always have somebody on call to respond to emergencies and gas leaks. And among our crew, our crew foreman also lives in Vermillion, so it's nice to have somebody local who knows what's going on in the community."

MidAmerican Energy was called to 169 gas leaks in 2009, and personnel had an average response time of approximately 22 minutes. "That's a fairly quick response, and a little quicker than it had been in previous years," Zanter said.

MidAmerican Energy's major projects in Vermillion in the past year include the retirement of gas mains that had served a trailer park in the area of the city where the Coyote Village student housing is currently being constructed.

"We ran a new service to the Coyote Village building, and we also installed new mains and service to the new wellness center on the USD campus," Zanter said. "We were also happy to see Cherry Street completed, and have our work done there as well. We also had 11 new residential services and five non-residential services that we ran in the past year."

Safety/ from page 1

fire department created an ordinance with minimum construction standards relating to building regulations in Fire Zone 1, which includes the central business district.

Many of the buildings constructed in the central business district were built years ago, with construction standards that required buildings to be fire rated on the exterior to prevent the spread of fire from one building to another, or, at the very least, slow the spread of fire until firefighters arrive on the scene.

Christensen noted that the majority of buildings in the downtown area are constructed with a brick exterior, and told the city council that city staff believes that same construction type should be the minimum standard for the central business district, particularly if buildings are allowed to be built up to the property line.

Other materials, such as

metal and wood, do not provide proper fire ratings, he said.

The ordinance approved by the city council also includes other minimum standards designed to prevent the spread of fire and secure public safety. Depending on the use and type of building, the standards contained in the building code may be more restrictive, Christensen noted, and because of that, the proposed requirements in the new ordinance represent a minimum standard to be used only if the building code does not require more fire resistant construction.

The ordinance sets regulations calling for more than brick exteriors. It calls for a possibly more protective roof assembly in some cases, based on fire exposure or building use or type. Roofs also must be separated by a parapet wall.

Decks, balconies, exterior stairs and covered outdoor

seating shall be constructed of non-combustible materials, according to the ordinance.

Exceptions to that rule include the replacement or repair of not more than half of legally constructed existing decks, balconies, exterior stairs or covered outdoor seating.

Roof overhangs extending more than 10 inches from exterior walls are to be protected with one-hour fire resistive materials. Fascias are required and shall be protected on the backside by materials approved for one-hour fire-resistive construction.

These standards don't apply when all portions of an eave or overhang are greater than 16 feet above grade, or when the eaves or overhangs are above non-combustible patios, sidewalks, or driveways which extend at least five feet above the roof drip edge.

Rounds: extra federal aid could help budget

By Chet Brokaw
Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP)— South Dakota could get help in solving its budget problems if the federal government decides to give states another round of stimulus money, Gov. Mike Rounds said Tuesday in his state of the state address to kick off the Legislature's 2010 session.

As part of the proposed health care reform measure, Congress is considering providing states with extra money to cover steep increases in Medicaid, a state-federal program that pays health care costs for low-income people, the Republican governor said.

However, Rounds said he and state lawmakers couldn't count on the extra money when putting together the next state budget.

The governor urged the Legislature to hold down spending in the next year and use reserve funds to balance the budget. If the economy recovers and tax collections increase, the budget can be balanced in future years, he said.

"No matter what Congress or the national economy dumps on us in the next year, I'm optimistic," Rounds said. "We will recover. We will have more jobs and we will continue to improve our quality of life here within our state."

Rounds, who cannot run for re-election this year because he has reached his two-term limit, will likely be remembered for his efforts to improve the economy and education. He spent much of his final state of the state address outlining what he and the Legislature accomplished since he became governor in 2003.

Senate Republican Leader

Dave Knudson, who is running for governor, noted that Rounds proposed no new programs.

"The speech was thin on any solutions to our budget problems," Knudson said. "I think the heavy lifting on budget issues is being left to the Legislature."

Leaders of the Democratic minority criticized Rounds for increasing the number of state employees in the past seven years. State government spending has grown by an average of 5.5 percent a year, but it should be held to the 3 percent limit imposed on schools and counties, they said. Across-the-board budget cuts also are needed, Democrats said.

"As things stand right now, state government isn't working very well. State government is broke," Senate Democratic Leader Scott Heidepriem said.

The governor last month proposed a state budget that would not increase aid to schools or give state employees a pay raise. The main increases in spending would be for Medicaid, and he proposed using \$32 million in reserve funds to balance the budget for the year starting July 1. Rounds said the gap between ongoing revenue and spending could widen to more than \$100 million in the year that begins July 2011.

Rounds said Congress is talking about increasing the federal share of the Medicaid program for part of next year, which would give South Dakota an extra \$36 million or more. That could allow the state to avoid spending its reserves to balance the budget in the year beginning July 1, he said.

The governor said if lawmakers want to trim state spending, they must propose specific cuts to programs. He said he will not accept across-

the-board cuts that call for agencies to provide the same level of services while reducing spending by a certain percentage.

The governor also chastised lawmakers who complain that the number of state employees has grown too much. He said many of those positions, the equivalent of 861 full-time employees, have been added at state universities to support increased student enrollment and research.

The key to South Dakota's economic growth is keeping more young people in the state, Rounds said. New scholarship and advanced degree programs, additional research and increased university enrollment have helped that effort, he said.

Rounds also asked lawmakers to back a plan that could eventually establish a new state park at the Blood Run historical site, an area straddling the Big Sioux River on the South Dakota-Iowa border where up to 6,000 Oneota Indians are believed to have lived from 1300 to 1750.

The Blood Run historical site was designated a national historical landmark in 1970. South Dakota now has an option to buy a critical piece of land at the site with a combination of state, federal and foundation money, he said.

First baby of 2010



Sanford Hospital Vermillion is pleased to report the birth of the first baby of 2010. Landon James Miller was born on Jan. 6, at 9:21 p.m., weighing 9 pounds, 10 ounces and 21 1/2 inches long. Proud parents, Sarah Kozak and Cody Miller and big sister Harmony of Vermillion were very excited to learn that Landon was the first baby of the new year born at Sanford Vermillion. Congratulations Sarah, Cody, Harmony, and Landon!

Make strides to end cancer at annual Relay for Life



Ever feel like you're just going in circles? Why not do it for a good cause? You can circle the track at the DakotaDome as part of the Clay County Relay For Life and raise dollars to fight cancer. The Relay is Sunday, Jan. 31, from noon to 6 p.m.

"Sometimes, people ask how this benefits our community," said Wess Pravecek, event chair. "Did you know that ACS (American Cancer Society) volunteer drivers in Clay County have put in more than a million miles taking patients to and from treatment centers? Dozens of people in this area have had counseling, support, advice, health aids and even wigs and cosmetic help from ACS."

"You only have to walk around the track at the Relay, and look at the luminarias with hundreds of names of people who have survived cancer or died of cancer, to know that this is an issue that affects every one of us. The community should be proud to know it has contributed to help for patients and their families right here at home, as well as research efforts across the world."

Individuals are encouraged to form teams for the Relay to raise money, and cancer survivors are asked to participate and inspire the community. If you know someone who has battled cancer, donate \$5 and you can honor or remember that person by putting their name on a luminaria placed along the track for the event.

To participate all you have to do is form a team of up to 15 and get a team packet, by contacting Wess Pravecek, 605-624-5352 or going to www.relayforlife.org/USD <<http://www.relayforlife.org/USD>>; join the survivor activities by calling Barb

Above: Walkers take a break at last year's Relay For Life to learn about the health effects of smoking at one of the information tables. Below: USD President Jim Abbott and Collette Abbott were among the walkers at last year's Relay For Life.



Kronaizl, 624-8929; or purchase luminarias at the Nook 'N Cranny, the Civic Council store and the Vermillion Beauty Shop, all in downtown Vermillion, or the Vermillion Federal Credit Union at Cherry and Dakota. They also will be sold at the Relay.

The event is presented by the Clay County Chapter of the American Cancer Society and the USD Chapter of Colleges Against Cancer. It is made possible locally by a number of major sponsors. They include Walmart and Classic Hits 106.3/Sports Radio 15.70 AM - The Ticket at the \$1,000 level; the Broadcaster/Plain Talk, Vermillion Medical Clinic, Randy

Hammer, and Sanford Health in Vermillion at the \$500 level; and the Vermillion Civic Council and Hy-Vee Vermillion at the \$250 level. To join them, call Wess Pravecek at 624-5352.

Having cancer is hard. Finding help shouldn't be. As a nationwide organization, the American Cancer Society helps everyone facing the disease, when and where they need assistance. Dollars raised through Relay For Life are providing hope to people in the Clay County. For cancer information, day-to-day help, or emotional support, call 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

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