

# Revitalization tax program explained at meeting

By Karen Krien

karen.k@nwkansan.com

Helen Dobbs, Cheyenne County Development Corporation director, was at the St. Francis Board of Education meeting on Thursday evening and at the commissioners' meeting the following morning. Her mission was to explain the Neighborhood Revitalization-Tax Rebate Program.

The plan, she said, is to promote the revitalization and development of the county by stimulating new construction and the rehabilitation, conservation or redevelopment of areas. The promotion is done by offering incentives which includes tax rebates.

She said there must be a minimum of \$5,000 invested to receive a tax rebate for commercial or residential. The rebate will be based on the increase in assessed value following the first full year of completion. The tax rebate is a refund of the property taxes which are paid on the actual value added to the property.

A qualifying improvements includes new construction, rehabilitation and additions.

Some of the benefits of the program includes:

- Provides incentives for improvements.
- Doesn't interfere with current property tax revenues.
- Creates new long-term tax revenue with creating a fiscal

burden for cities, schools and county.

- Helps create jobs because, historically, jobs follow development.
- Helps reverse the outward migration.
- Helps stabilize land values.
- Provides a limited window of opportunity for participation.
- Will encourage housing, commercial and industrial development.

Mrs. Dobbs said both Rawlins and Sherman counties, bordering Cheyenne County, have adopted the program. By joining, said Rod Klepper, Bird City, the message is "this county wants to grow." If we don't join, he said, if I were looking to come to the county, I don't think I would build here.

Dolores Jenik, county treasurer, was present at the commissioners' meeting and said she was concerned that once the full taxes were due, people wouldn't realize how much they were. Mrs. Dobbs said that program is a rebate - in other words, the people pay their taxes and then the county gives the rebate, noting each year, the rebate is less.

Rob Schiltz, St. Francis Schools superintendent, said it would affect the board's capital outlay fund, the local option budget and recreation commission budget. He said he personally was not for the program.

Commissioner Dale Patton looked at it as a long-term investment. However, he noted that established businesses won't have the advantage.

Commissioner and businessman, Andy Beikman, said now he can expand his business with the tax discount.

Mrs. Dobbs said there are a number of counties that have been enrolled in the program for several years. One of those counties is Rooks County. Roger Hrabe, director of the Rooks County Economic Development, said since adopting the program in 2001, over 468 applications have been processed and the county has had well over \$2 million of added assessed value in the county.

From 1995 through 1999, there were 29 new homes built in Rooks County. After the implementation of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, there have been 44 new homes constructed between 2000 and 2005; and 38 new homes from 2006 to 2008.

The plan has also given the county a way to offer some financial incentives to retail businesses.

Having the plan, he said, has given the county the tool to offer incentives and several new retail businesses located in Rooks. The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, he said, was the difference between locating in our county or not.

Cathy Domsch, Century II director located in Bird City, said that she and her board obviously support the plan. We look at it as we do not lose but will gain revenue.

Anyone who is thinking about starting a new business or building a new home or adding on to their business or home should stop by the Cheyenne County Development office in St. Francis or the Century II office in Bird City and talk to the directors. They have additional information and are willing to do the paperwork required.

# School board accepts teachers resignation

By Karen Krien

karen.k@nwkansan.com

The St. Francis Board of Education accepted another teacher resignation when they met on Thursday. They also talked about new staffings and contracts.

Gloria Cassidy turned in her resignation. Mrs. Cassidy had taught St. Francis Elementary for 38 years.

In past meetings, the board had accepted the resignations of Ramona Raile, Sandy Smull and Lynnette Nolan, along with some coaching positions. Before Mrs. Cassidy's resignation, the board had agreed to hire two new teachers. (Both Mrs. Cassidy and Mrs. Smull are part-time teachers).

Shirley Swihart, who presently teaches kindergarten, will move to second grade, now being taught by Mrs. Raile. That leaves the kindergarten and fifth grade open.

The openings had been posted and Rob Schiltz, superintendent, reported that between 20 and 25 applications had been received. There are three local applicants, he said.

After considerable discussion, the board agreed to a "hiring committee" consisting of Mr. Schiltz, Scott Carmichael, principal, Derrick Tice, board president, and Robin Burr, elementary resource room teacher. It was noted that when the interview process begins, board members will be notified and they are welcome to sit in on the interviews.

Alice Kinen, food manager, had also resigned. There are two school cafeteria kitchens. Barb Holzwarth was asked to manage the junior-senior high school kitchen and Loretta Ford was asked to manage the grade school kitchen. It would require 8 more hours. They were offered their regular 40 hours with time and one-half for the additional 8 hours.

However, the cooks felt this was not enough money. Mr. Schiltz said they both do a good job and they can be depended on. He also noted that there is a lot of paperwork they would be required to do and the paperwork could increase in the future.

Mr. Schiltz was given permission to work out something that was agreeable to them and the administration.

After 30 minutes of executive session, the board agreed to not renew the contract of Nathan Smith, head football, track and wrestling coach and physical education teacher. No further discussion on the matter was held out of the executive session.

Other coaching assignments were discussed but no decisions were officially made.

School calendar

Next year's school calendar

was approved. The first day of school will be Tuesday, Aug. 21, and students will be dismissed at 11:35 a.m. The following day will be a full day of school.

There will be five days allowed for Thanksgiving, starting Wednesday, Nov. 21. Christmas vacation will begin on Saturday, Dec. 22 and end after the New Year's vacation, with classes starting on Thursday, Jan. 3.

Spring vacation will be March 11 through March 15. The last day of school will be Tuesday, May 21.

There are eight built-in snow days.

New boiler

The high school hot water boiler project was again on the agenda. Mark Zimmerman, engineer with Salina Supply Company, had suggested that both a 1,000,000 BTU boiler and a 600,000 BTU boiler be installed. He felt that they were an adequate size, 93- to 94-percent efficient compared to those now installed which are about 70-percent efficiency. They automatically turn off or turn on as needed. As soon as the specification letter is ready, Mr. Schiltz will send it off to contractors.

Kansas Assessments

The St. Francis schools are now required to have 91 percent of the students meet the Kansas Assessment standards. Next year, they will be required to have 94 percent of the students meeting the standards.

It was noted that smaller classes makes it harder to achieve the standards. If one student doesn't meet the standards, it could easily find the class not meeting the Kansas Assessments.

The preliminary results found three classes with 100 percent of the class meeting the standards. They included the third grade reading class, and seventh grade reading and math.

The staff and students, Mr. Schiltz said, do a wonderful job!

Scholarship Committee

The Scholarship Committee made up of board members, Derrick Tice, Sherry Weeks and Mila Bandel; Mr. Schiltz and Mr. Carmichael will have the list of seniors receiving scholarships at the May meeting.

Revitalization/tax rebate program

Helen Dobbs, Cheyenne County Economic Development director, presented the Neighborhood Revitalization/Tax Rebate program. (See related article for more information). The board will make a decision at the May meeting.

Next meeting

The next board of education meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday, May 10, in the board room at the high school.



CLAY KELLER get some training on vehicle extrication under supervision of Chief Dan from Osage City. Herald staff photo by Tim Burr

# Training held for area firemen

Firemen from around the three-state area gathered in St. Francis over the weekend for a Kansas State Fire Fighters Association meeting. There were over 70 firemen and emergency medical technicians attending the training.

The weather on Sunday hampered some of the training, but overall, the people with the State

Fire Fighters Association were very pleased with the turnout.

They worked on vehicle extrication, wild fires, firefighter safety and survival, explosions in grain elevators and fire behavior. The association had brought in the burn trailer and many of the firemen were able to experience what it is like to be in a house fire.

A hog roast was held Saturday for lunch. The city of St. Francis and the county helped sponsor the meal and other expenses for the day.

We had some good training and good classes, said George Harper, St. Francis fire chief.

The State Fire Fighters Association provided the training and some of the equipment.

# AARP Driver safety program planned for Monday morning

The AARP Driver Safety program will be held on Monday from 8 a.m. to noon, then starting back up from 1 to 5 p.m. at the St. Francis Senior Center. Lunch will be available at the center.

This is the nation's first and largest classroom refresher course geared especially to your safety needs, said Elmer Kellner.

Instructor will be Don Keihl. Participants will learn defensive driving techniques, new traffic laws, rules of the road and much more. They will find out how to adjust their driving to age-related changes in vision, hearing and reaction time.

One of the bonuses includes getting an insurance discount. Auto in-

urance companies in most states provide a multiyear discount to AARP graduates. (Consult your insurance agent.)

Participants do not have to take a test.

For more information, contact Mr. Kellner at 785-332-2950 or 332-5226; or call Mr. Keihl, 890-6638 or 821-0305.

## Coming

# Hometown Heros

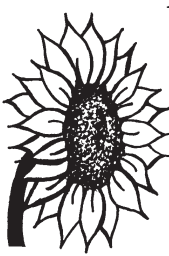


Hometown Heroes

Submit the name of someone you think should be featured as a "Hometown Hero" and why.

Starting in June, The Herald will begin a "Hometown Hero" regular feature. Advertiser are needed to sponsor what will be a best read series

For more details, contact Tim Burr at the Saint Francis Herald at 785-332-3162



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