

County hears green-heat proposition

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I apologize," said chairman Ken Christiansen. "Hasn't your help been there only six months? And didn't we just give permission to raise her after she passed her probation period? And hadn't she chosen to not have her office to be on the new computer system?"

"I guess that's why I didn't even think about your office."

Steele said the trainer for the new computer system had told them her company expected the treasurer, county clerk and appraisers' offices to each have two people who could be trained together and be responsible in the event one of them would be gone. Volk's office isn't that busy, he said, and she is still on the old system.

The commissioners told her she had a valid point. Come budget time, they said, all salaries

will be looked at again.

Ambulance Director Kenneth Gatlin reported that the ambulances have passed their annual state inspection and now it's time to renew the license for four ambulances for \$160, with a \$100 fee to renew the service's license.

He said a proposal in the Legislature would require all emergency medical technicians to go through security screening and background checks. He said he believes that has always been the case, but they are evidently changing the wording. When he was hired, he said, he went through all of that.

He told commissioners he will have five or six new people training as emergency medical technicians in the Brewster area and two from Rexford.

In other business, commissioners:

- Read a letter from Pam Rundel concerning the payment of her children's premiums at

last year's county fair. Rundel's husband, the late Bob Rundel, had removed his children's pig from the fairgrounds early and they were denied the premiums. Rundel objected, saying that horse owners had been allowed to take their animals early. Her letter suggests that either the fair board pay the children their premiums or take back the premiums from the horse owners. The matter is on the agenda for the Thomas County Fair Board meeting tonight.

- Heard from Larry Struckmeyer that High Plains Mental Health officials will be coming for their annual visit on Friday, April 16.

- Reviewed a letter from Lynette Koon, director of the regional recycling agency, saying that the agency has started recycling used clothing

- Reviewed a permit renewal for the household hazardous waste collection program.

Legion commander against budget cuts

From "VETERANS," Page 1

ting veterans' benefits.

Schumacher talked about continuing attempts get the federal government to add a flag amendment to the Constitution that would ban people from desecrating the U.S. flag.

He said former South Dakota Sen. Tom Daschle had voted against the flag amendment and veterans organizations rallied to help Daschle lose his re-election

campaign in 2004.

"That's the power of veterans," said Schumacher. "We're going to protect the flag of our country."

Getting an amendment passed would require a two-thirds majority vote in the Congress and three-fourths approval from the states. The last attempt to ban flag desecration was in 2006. The Senate voted 66-34 for the measure, one vote short of the two-thirds required.

Kansas City, Mo., school district to close 29 schools in time for fall term

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Kansas City's school superintendent said Thursday the plan to shutter nearly half the district's schools, while "painful," will move forward quickly so the closures will be complete by fall.

The school board narrowly approved the plan Wednesday night to close 29 of the district's 61 schools to try to stave off bankruptcy. The closures have angered parents, students and teachers, but administrators say they had no choice because without them, the district would have been in the red by 2011.

"It has been a difficult and painful and emotional process that affects our entire community," Superintendent John Covington said at a news conference. "No one likes closing schools."

Now officials have to focus on the massive job of downsizing the district — reworking bus routes, figuring out what to do with vacant buildings and slashing payroll.

Covington said he has been working on the transition plan for several weeks and it would be in place for the start of the school year. He gave few details, but said

the plan would likely involve staggering start and class times for middle school students, who would attend school with high school students.

"We will be moving forward with deliberate speed," Covington said, "to put together a transformation plan that we will be using to make sure that the quality of educational opportunities and the services that we provide for all children in the Kansas City schools that will remain open is of high quality."

Administrators have said the closures are necessary to keep the district from

plowing through what little is left of the \$2 billion it received as part of a groundbreaking desegregation case.

Although other districts nationwide are considering closures as the recession ravages their budgets, Kansas City's plan is striking. In rapidly shrinking Detroit, 29 schools closed before classes began this fall, but that left the district with 172.

Board member Duane Kelly told the crowd of more than 200 people Wednesday, "This is the most painful vote I have ever cast" in 10 years on the board.

Kansas City Councilwoman Sharon

Sanders Brooks said the closure plan had prompted some housing developers to consider backing out of projects.

"The urban core has suffered white flight post-the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision Brown v. the Board of Education, blockbusting by the real estate industry, redlining by banks and other financial institutions, retail and grocery store abandonment," Brooks said. "And now the public education system is aiding and abetting in the economic demise of our school district. It is shameful and sinful."

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