

from our viewpoint...

District asking for \$14.9 million bond

More than 120 people crowded into the high school cafeteria Thursday evening to hear the presentation and cost estimates on the proposed bond to renovate North Elementary into a K-6 and the Goodland High School into a 7-12 building.

The school board members listened and had some questions for the presenters Cris Joy and Richard Hawks of Architecture Etcetera, Mike Ayars from Ayars and Ayars and Dustin Avery of Piper Jaffray.

Superintendent Shelly Angelos said the board had been working on this issue for nearly three years. She said the district was facing another cut of at least \$122,000 from the state this year, and potentially another larger cut for next year.

The Goodland School District is operating West Elementary, Central Elementary, Grant Junior High, Goodland High School and the administration building and cannot afford to continue with five buildings. The recommendation made several times – since the district began looking at the building problem – by a task force, an architect and the superintendent is to reduce the number of buildings to two plus use Central for the district offices.

North Elementary has been closed this school year, and gave the district an estimated savings of about \$150,000 for this year. Closure of West, Grant Junior High and the administration building should increase the savings to about \$450,000 a year Angelos said.

The K-6 proposal would use the existing North Elementary and add a metal and brick facade building to expand it to handle the combined classes and include a tornado shelter. The estimated cost of the renovation and expansion is about \$8 million.

A question was asked about building a new K-6 building instead of keeping the old building. Ayars said he felt keeping the existing building was a good idea and in his opinion a new building would cost 25 to 30 percent more bringing it to about \$10 million.

The high school renovation was estimated at \$3.7 million, and would include a complete upgrade of the building electrical system. The school district has \$1.4 million in bonds already committed to do the windows and lighting at the high school.

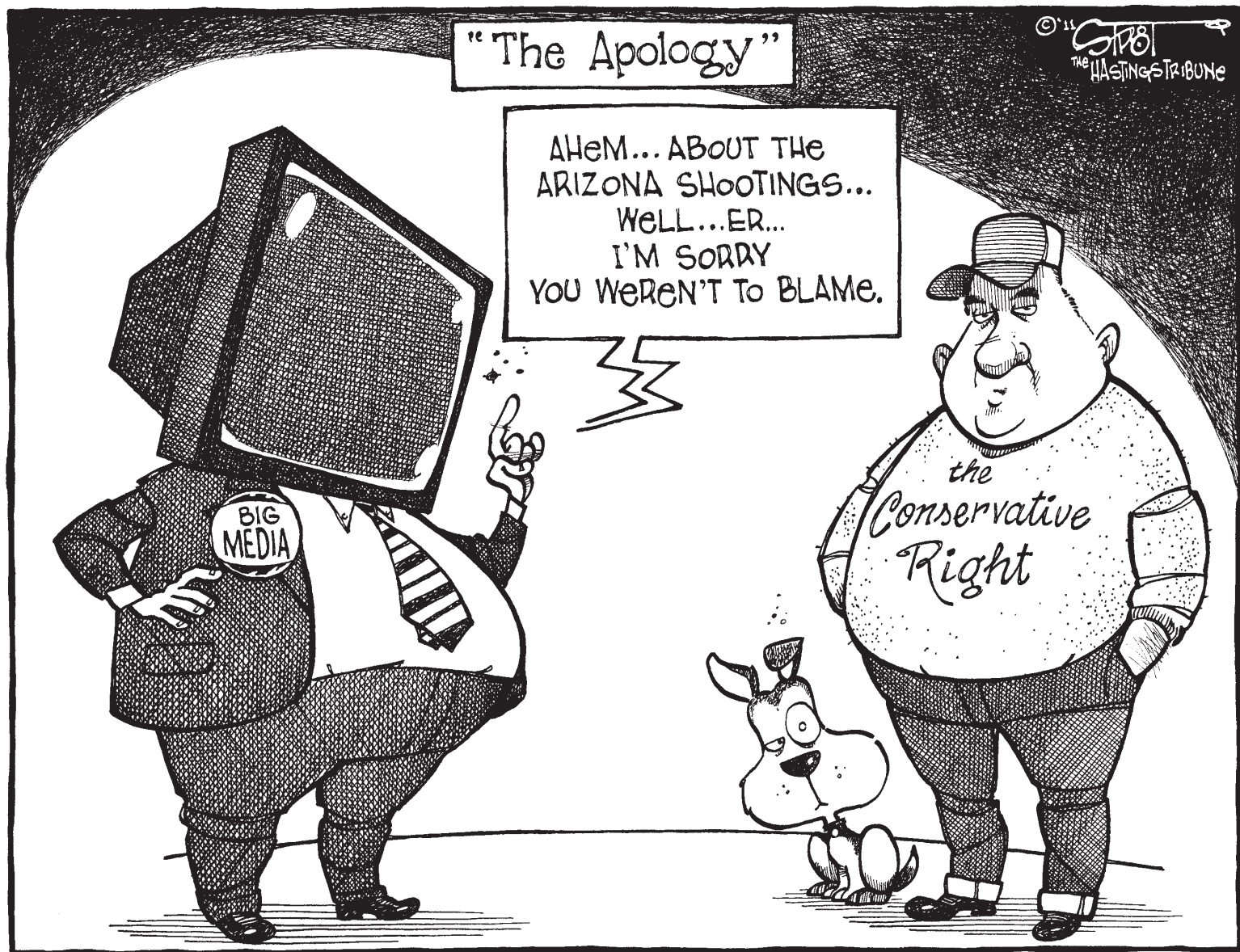
The administration building would be closed and the district office moved to Central, plus some other offices could be consolidated into the building.

School board members decided on a bond figure of \$14.9 million cutting out a few things and adding more brick to the K-6 building. Avery estimated property tax increase for district taxpayers would be about 12.8 mills for \$15 million.

School district voters will have their chance to decide the question on the Tuesday, April 5 election. Many questions remain to be answered, and undoubtedly the conversations on this will be lively.

The district will spend about \$10 million dollars maintaining buildings in the next 10 years. With the existing buildings the district will not be able to afford to do the needed improvements to Central, West and Grant. The high school will get by, and possibly the seventh and eighth grades could be moved there without much additional cost. The same \$10 million would be more than two thirds of the cost of the proposed renovation and reduction in the number of school buildings.

Voters need to have questions answered and know what they are voting on before they enter the booth in April. — Tom Betz



Neighbors find way to recycle Christmas tree

My husband and Pastor C are fighting over Christmas trees.

Well, that's not totally true. They both had their eye on a neighbor's tree, though, and when she put it out on the curb, they both planned to grab it.

Steve was faster. He ran the half block to the neighbor's house and nabbed the tree, dragging it back over to our back-porch area.

Pastor C, who lives up the alley from us, was driving by, noted the tree sitting against the back of our house and stopped by to talk about it.

She said she hadn't put up a tree this year and really missed having one. She had noted the neighbor's tree on the curb and had planned to recycle it.

Pastor C said she wanted to put the tree up with bird food in it and use it until spring as a kind of fancy bird feeder. She said she hadn't



cynthia haynes
• open season

counted on anyone else wanting a used Christmas tree.

Steve planned to take the tree out to the new lake at Sappa Park and sink it for fish habitat. He had already talked to some other people with real trees who were also planning to recycle their dead Douglas firs, Scotch pines and spruce trees into the bottom of the lake for fish family apartments.

So, I checked with Steve. The fish would be fine, it seemed to me, if they didn't get a new apartment until spring. The birds, on the other hand, would be needing help long

before that.

Steve agreed and within the hour, Pastor C had liberated the tree from our back yard with the promise to return it in the spring.

That's going to be one well-used Christmas tree.

This all happened a week ago.

On Sunday, just before the snow started falling in earnest, Steve and I removed our lovely pinon pine, that was still in excellent shape, from our front room to the area near the back porch reserved for used Christmas trees and other large recyclable items.

I'm just wondering if it will stay there until we can get out to the lake or if it will move up the alley to serve another covey of birds. You never know around our neighborhood.

Even finished firs provide fresh forests for our feathered and finned friends. (Now say that really fast three times!)

How far does an education take you?

It is engrained in the heads of the youth you must go to college to get a good job.

While overall that is good advice, some graduates are finding their \$100,000 educations haven't provided them with the necessary skills for the modern work world.

College is more expensive than ever forcing students to pay more than 400 percent more for a college education today than 30 years ago. And as a result of increased tuition costs, students are carrying mountains of debt and aren't finding the high-paying, coveted jobs promised to them upon graduation.

In fact, an article by the Competitive Enterprise Institute highlighted the trend of useless college degrees and cited a study that showed "60 percent of the increase in the number of college graduates from 1992 to 2008 worked in jobs the (Bureau of Labor Statistics) considers relatively low skilled – occupations where many participants have only high school diplomas and often even less."

The article went on to say, "Of the nearly 50 million U.S. college graduates, 17.4 million are holding jobs for which college training is regarded as unnecessary. The number of waiters and waitresses with college degrees more than doubled in the years 1992-2008, from 119,000 to 338,000, and cashiers with college degrees rose from 132,000 to 365,000."

What happened to the American Dream for the youth of America?

It's simple. Because of the push for American youngsters to get college degrees through government subsidies, a four-year degree is becoming less valuable in the working world. Therefore, students graduating with a bachelor's degree are finding it necessary to get a master's degree or even a Ph.D to set themselves apart from the masses in order to find a relatively good job that requires their degree.

This new reality, coupled with rising tuition



from other pens
• commentary

costs, leaves students with a mountain of debt. How are the "5,057 janitors in the U.S. with Ph.D.'s, other doctorates, or professional degrees" ever supposed to pay off all that accrued school debt?

The Project on Student Debt estimates 206,000 Americans graduated from college with more than \$40,000 in student loan debt during 2008. Also shocking is a statistic printed in the Business Insider stating, "Americans now owe more than \$875 billion on student loans, which is more than the total amount Americans owe on their credit cards."

And what does the government do about it? It further encourages children to go to college getting any degree necessary to graduate while pushing financial assistance, which often comes in the form of a student loan. And cash-strapped states have no problems upping the tuition for public universities in order to obtain more revenue while at the same time cutting faculty and class options.

America is failing its college students by teaching them it's okay to take on a mountain load of debt in an economy where there is no guarantee they'll be able to pay it off.

"There are 2.37 million unemployed college graduates. That's staggering," says Bill Wilson, president of Americans for Limited Government. "The number rises to 5.6 million when you look at those with some college or an associate degree. We are doing a true disservice to our youth by pushing them along a path that offers no guarantee of success. The government's continued push to educate America by any means necessary has only

caused an education debt bubble, much like the housing crisis bubble, which we are still recovering from."

An article in Forbes suggested America would be better off with much less government subsidies for education. One of those reasons, "The statistical correlation between state government higher education spending and economic growth is negative, not positive, suggesting the positive economic spillover effects of governmental university aid are non-existent and maybe even negative."

The author says despite more youth attaining higher education, "voter participation has not risen, volunteerism has not dramatically increased, and other alleged social positive spillover effects of more higher education are not apparent."

Instead America has created a glut of college-educated young adults facing a debt burden that has possibly pushed them even farther from the American Dream than before their college days.

As students work their way through college, they need to ask themselves if they are getting a valuable education. It is the job of both students and parents to hold college administrators accountable and make sure their education is a worthy investment.

Any other product that costs \$100,000 that proves to not meet its advertised claims would not stand a chance in the marketplace. It is time for colleges to increase their value to students and society all while lowering their costs.

Rebekah Rast is a contributing editor to the Americans for Limited Government News Bureau. She worked for three years as a journalist for The Fresno Bee newspaper in California where she spent three years writing, editing and reporting. Americans for Limited Government, 9900 Main Street, Suite 303, Fairfax, VA 22031. E-mail: info@getliberty.org

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e-mail: star.news@nwkansas.com

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nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services
(nt.betz@nwkansas.com)

Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkansas.com)

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