

Kanorado citizens look for options to keep office

By Tom Betz

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 Kanorado citizens gathered at the Senior Citizen Center on Tuesday evening to discuss options about the proposed closing of the community post office before the "official" meeting with a U.S. Postal Service representative.

More than 50 people attended the community meeting, and Kanorado resident Sally Pettibone said the idea was to review things to ask the Postal Service person about the closing process and to prepare the citizens about what to expect from the meeting.

Hazel Estes asked if the person who was coming to Kanorado could answer questions about the operation of the post office. She wondered if the person would be able to tell them what the criteria is to keep the post office.

"Can we do much about this?" she asked.



Mikulecky

Pettibone said the people would not get a lot of answers at the meeting. She said they would be video taping the meeting and putting information together in a packet to send to the postal service to ask that the Kanorado post office not be closed.

Pettibone said people can send letters in support of the Kanorado post office, but there was some question about where letters should be sent.

The suggestion was people should send letters to the Postal Regulatory Commission, 901 New York Ave. Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20268-0001.

A check with Brian Sperry, public relations person for the region, turned up information that the proper address for letters is Attention: LeAnn Tvrdy, U.S. Postal Service, PO Box 199516, Omaha NE 68119-9516.

Another suggestion was to send letters - and copies of letters sent to

the postal service - to U.S. Senators Jerry Moran and Pat Roberts and to Congressman Tim Huelskamp asking them to encourage Congress to pass the Protecting Rural Post Offices Act (S. 1668) introduced last week. Sen. Moran is a co-sponsor of the bill.

The bipartisan measure would prohibit the closure of post offices if the closure would result in more than a 10 mile distance between post offices, measured on roads with year-round access. The bill is important because three sponsors - Moran, Jon Tester (D-MT) and Mark Begich (D-AK) are members of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

Pettibone said part of the proposal for closing the post office was that all the post offices being considered for closure do not have enough work for more than two hours and are not bringing in \$27,500 in revenue.

"We are an eight-hour post office," she said, "and not a two-hour post office."

Estes said she sees lots of people going to the post office on a daily basis.

"We get the best service at our post office," she said.

One man said he was concerned about getting his medications.

"Are we going to have to stand out in the cold and wait for the mailman?" he said. "I have to sign for my medications. What if the mailman is running late?"

Kanorado Postmaster Connie Sheldon said the 55 box holders in the post office would be the ones affected by the closure. She said they would have to put up their own mail box and apply to be an extension of the rural route if there is a place within a quarter mile of the existing mail route.

She said if the mail box is small and packages have to be delivered the carrier can put them at the front door, put them in the mail box if it is large enough, or put a notice in the box to have the recipient call the Goodland post office to set up delivery or go to Goodland to pick

up the package.

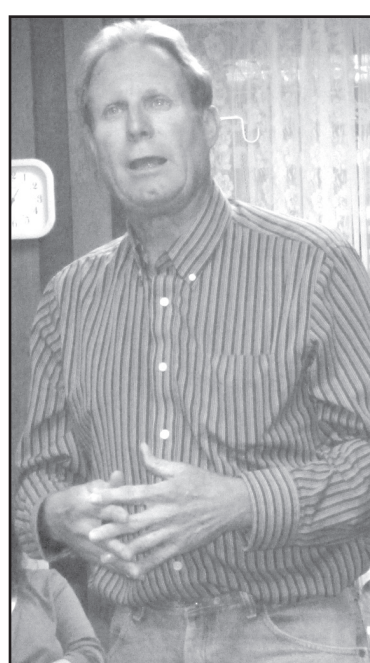
Pettibone said they will take all the information presented and make sure it gets sent to the postal service along with the surveys mailed out to each postal customer.

Everyone at the meeting agreed it would be a hardship on the older people living in the community, and that closing the post office would be a blow to the future of Kanorado.

The postal service will take the information and review it to see if there are possible reasons to keep the post office open, but if it decides to close the post office a notice will be posted in the post office giving 60 days warning before the office is closed.

When such a notice is posted the community has 30 days to file an appeal with the Postal Regulatory Commission asking for a review to see if the postal service followed procedure in the closing review process.

A number of similar meetings have been held in surrounding communities in Kansas and Colorado



State Representative Rick Billinger spoke at both community post office meetings.

and at least one, Arapahoe, Colo., has received a notice of closure.

People turn out at meetings to save local post offices

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we make it through the sale of our products."

He was asked what was the biggest financial problem facing the postal service.

Mikulecky said the biggest problem is the health and retirement prepayment being required by Congress. He said the law was signed by President Bush in 2006 saying the postal service had to prepay this. If this prepayment had not been required, the postal service would have at least come out even.

Asked in Kanorado if that could be changed, Mikulecky said only through Congress.

"We are a quasi-government agency," he said, "and we are obligated to follow what Congress has approved."

At both community meetings members of the audience said they felt losing the post office would hurt their town.

Mikulecky said an option would be a "Vil-

lage Post Office" that would be a contract between the postal service and a business in the community that would be able to handle the mail, sell stamps and take packages. He said it had to be a business that was open to the public during regular hours.

Schilling said he had letters from U.S. Senator Jerry Moran about Section 10 of the Postal Code that says the postal service cannot close a small post office for running a deficit.

He said Edson was not a village and hoped the post office would remember Edson was a town and the people need their post office.

Mikulecky said all of the statements made at both meetings would be submitted to his headquarters for their review.

At Edson he said he would make sure the question about the carrier coming out of Goodland rather than Brewster was something to be looked at by the area manger.

A person at Edson asked if the rural carrier route could be split with those on the east

coming from Brewster and those on the west from Goodland.

Mikulecky said he did not know, but thought it would be one carrier.

State Representative Rick Billinger spoke at both meetings and said the postal service is talking volume when talking about the loses. He said Abilene is losing money as well, and there is more of a loss in Abilene.

"I am going to tell you they need to look at all the options," Billinger said. "Maybe sharing a postmaster with another town, or having the rural carrier be in the post office for an hour or two would work. Many are elderly in these towns and do not drive and do not have the Internet."

"We need to get that word back to Washington that the people in Kanorado and Edson deserve a post office as much as the people in Abilene."

Billinger suggested at the Edson meeting another option to help the post office cut costs was if the community could provide

a cost free building to reduce the rent and utility costs to the postal service.

In Kanorado Sally Pettibone said the people who are making the decisions have "never set foot in our post office," she said. "I don't think that is how they can do that. I feel they need to come out and see our town. We are angry because we need to keep our post office."

Mikulecky said the postal service believes closing the 3,700 post offices will save about \$200 million a year.

A bill in Congress co-sponsored by Moran would save rural post offices that were at least 10 miles away from another post office. Under that proposal Kanorado could be saved, but Edson would lose because it is less than 10 miles from Brewster.

In Kanorado one person said they felt the postal service could save lots of money by not delivering all the junk mail.

Mikulecky said that is not junk mail to the postal service it is business mail and they make money on that.

Chelsey Gillogly, Moran's representative from Hays, was at the Kanorado meeting and said the senator is working to save as many rural post offices as possible.

A check of the 137 Kansas rural post offices on the closure list reveals that Moran's 10-mile plan would save about half the post offices on the closure list. The bill has been introduced, but remains in committee at this point.

Gillogly said the bill needs to get traction and more supporters to get it moving.

"I do not know what it will take," she said. "It needs to get a majority in both houses. Nothing ever moves fast in Congress."

Mikulecky said the meeting in Edson was the 21st he had done, and hopes the one in Herndon on Thursday is the last in this region.

People who want to comment on the potential closing of Kanorado or Edson post offices can write to: LeAnn Tvrdy, U.S. Postal Service, PO Box 199516, Omaha, Neb. 68119-9516.

Goodland schools state report card improves, needs more work

By Ava Betz

The Goodland Star-News

Goodland School District's report card for 2011 was handed out to school board members at Monday's board meeting. Despite significant gains over last year's scores in math and reading, and overall student scores in those areas which exceed the national goals, the report might be paraphrased by those time-honored report card phrases, "needs improvement" and "not working up to ability."

"We have a lot to be proud of," Superintendent Bill Biermann said

on making a PowerPoint presentation of the district's Adequate Yearly Progress report, released earlier this month to Kansas school districts by the Kansas Department of Education at the State Board of Education meeting in Topeka. However, he cautioned the board, the district still needs to continue to work on improving math and reading scores so that all students in the district meet the national standards.

Annual Yearly Progress is a method for determining if schools, districts and the state have made

adequate progress in improving student achievement under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Progress is based on participation and performance on state assessment tests, attendance rates and, for high schools, graduation rates. Each year the standards set for attaining progress are raised, so that eventually all students nationwide will achieve an acceptable standard of education.

Goodland students' assessment test scores in reading as a whole reached 86.9 percent, exceeding the 86 percent standard set for 2011. But

all subgroups in the district did not reach 86 percent. Students identified as economically disadvantaged by the category "free and reduced (lunch program)" tested at 78.4 percent, students with disabilities tested at 65.3 percent, English language learners tested at 67.7 percent, Hispanic students tested at 72.7 percent and white students tested at 91.0 percent.

For perspective, in 2005 the sample group that year as a whole tested at 65.5 percent. Between 2006 and 2009 reading assessment

scores rose from 58 percent for the Goodland student body to 76.7 percent. Last year the group score was 81.3 percent.

Math assessment scores for Goodland students have shown similar improvement, Biermann pointed out. This year the overall math assessment score was 86.8 percent - up from 46.8 percent in 2005 and over this year's nationwide target goal of 82.3 percent. Unfortunately, again all subcategories did not test to that level. Free and reduced tested at 79.4 percent, students with disabilities at 74.3 percent, English language learners at 77.4 percent, Hispanic students at 80.8 percent and white students at 88.3 percent.

A quick check of the Internet site for the Kansas Department of Education (www.ksde.org) shows that for the 2010-2011 school year, education in the state of Kansas did not make successful annual yearly progress either, like Goodland, because of state-wide testing scores below target for some of the sub-categories.

Other statistics pointed out to the Goodland board Monday evening are that the Goodland School District currently lists 183 employees. Students who qualify for free lunch number 395 and 170 students ride the bus an average of 2.5 miles along five bus routes. The student body statistics for Goodland are: 48 percent considered economically disadvantaged, 77 percent white and 20 percent Hispanic.

School board members given homework assignment

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of potentially two years' involvement with the college on the part of the student was paid for by the school district. If a junior enters the program, it is at a part-time status for the two years, hence only one full year would be paid by the district. A senior might participate as a full-time student for a year, but then graduates from high school, and the school district does not pay for the second year.

"We'll work to get there," Biermann said about the problem, adding, "Where we'll arrive at, I don't know."

Goodland Learning Center, a program for at risk students and persons over age 18 seeking a high school diploma, also came up for discussion. Currently there are 85 person of all ages enrolled in the program, which is run by a private company, ESSDACK, based in Hutchinson with a branch located on Main Avenue in Goodland.

Could such a program be offered through the school district? Are some high school students opting out of traditional classrooms to attend Goodland Learning Center? These are some of the questions board members discussed. Controls are currently in place to prevent high school students

from moving to the learning center at will, Biermann said, but noted "We have to work harder at the high school to meet their needs" if students are to be kept within the district.

And then there was discussion on combining seventh and eighth grades with the high school. If the board wants to reconfigure the classes next year, a plan must be suggested by the first of the year, Biermann said. And if such a plan is favored, what is to be done with the sixth grade? "That's the kicker in that whole thing."

Biermann said he was not pushing the idea of change for next year, but if a change is going to be made in 2012, "I'm just saying we need to decide by then. We can't wait until April." He asked the board to consider the problem and to discuss it with the community.

He also shared with the board that Goodland has the possibil-

ity Center and other community organizations. The grant would be \$200,000 the first year, \$100,000 for the next four years, and after that it would be expected to continue on its own. The district would probably have to hire someone to run the program if it becomes reality, he said, adding, "I think we've got a really good shot at it."

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