



INDEPENDENT ELLSWORTH COUNTY REPORTER

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Wilson discusses administrative review

BY CATHERINE DOUD
Ellsworth County I-R

WILSON — Many community members gathered on the evening of March 17 at the Catholic Parish Hall, but not to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. The topic was the proposed closing of Wilson Elementary School.

Mike Kratky, one of the meeting's organizers, greeted people at the door and explained the purpose.

"It's to inform them about the administrative review and get feedback from them, and that will go to the Kansas Department of Education, which will conduct the review and send it to the Kansas Board of Education," he said. "And the board votes on the review and then it goes back to the local board. It's about the decision to close the school. A new law came in effect of Jan. 1 of 2024."

On Feb. 23, the Central Plains USD 112 Board of Education voted 5-1 to close WES effective at the end of the current school year. The meeting was held in Claflin.

Prior to the vote, a public hearing was



Mike Kratky and Roberta Meier discuss the possibilities of a request for an administrative review hearing during a meeting on March 17.

CATHERINE DOUD/Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter

held Feb. 16 at Central Plains Elementary School, Holyrood, to gather public feedback.

During the regularly scheduled March 9 BOE meeting in Wilson, community members provided feedback from the community against closure of the school.

The closure is subject to the possibility of an administrative review under the new law.

Kratky explained the purpose of the new

law.

"It gives the patrons in the district some say-so about the district," he said. "My feeling is that if you build a new school, everyone gets to vote on it, but if you close a school right now, it only takes four out of seven (on the board) to close the school, and I think that is wrong, and I told them that. I think it should be the school board makes the recommendation and I

think it's up to the patrons to vote to close or not close.

"All we have right now is an administrative review. It's a new law that we didn't have two years ago. Legislative law is never retroactive," he said.

By "two years ago," he was referring to the closure of Wilson High School by the USD 112 board.

The Wilson school may be the first test case of the new law.

"The administrative

review report is like five pages. We'll be going through this tonight and explaining it to people and opening it up to questions," he said. "We hope we get some good feedback."

Kratky opened the meeting with an explanation of the situation.

"Wilson is known at the Capitol and the board of education. I've testified at the Capitol three times and I've been before the board of education

five times. I was there just a week ago last Tuesday," he said.

Kratky said he talked to representatives, but the people on the State Board of Education will be the ones making the decision on the administrative review.

Discussion became heated with the talk of the loss of the school, jobs and community support.

"Let me ask you this. By a show of hands, raise your hand if you're in favor of an administrative review, because that's the only voice you have," Kratky asked toward the end of the meeting.

A majority of the room raised their hands.

Going forward, a group of supporters met March 24 to review comments received at the meeting. The deadline for submitting the document is April 9.

"We have to have 5 percent signatures, and it comes up to about 122," Kratky said. "We'll have more than that. I think we had over 300 last time, but we won't wait that long."

"The state has 45 days to do their part after we give it to them. That's the process. That is where we are at."

Katzenmeier hearing rescheduled

BY CATHERINE DOUD
Ellsworth County I-R

SALINA — The scheduling conference in the case of Dennis Katzenmeier, Ellsworth, previously set for March 16 in Saline County District Court has been rescheduled to 3 p.m. April 20 in Courtroom 301 in the Saline County District Court Building.

Katzenmeier is accused in Saline County case SA-2025-519 of obstructing apprehension of prosecution relating to the case of a deadly hit-and-run crash on Aug. 8 in Saline County involving his granddaughter, Kayla Errebo, who faces multiple charges, including second-degree murder, in the death of Deanna Sommerfeld.

Errebo's preliminary hearing was held on March 10 and 11 in Room 301 of the Salina County District Courthouse. At the conclusion of that preliminary hearing, during

which Katzenmeier testified, she was bound over for district court arraignment on May 4.

During that hearing, prosecutors admitted body camera footage from the Saline County Sheriff's Office in which Katzenmeier told law enforcement he picked his granddaughter up from the scene. The footage also showed that Errebo called in her vehicle as stolen to the Ellsworth County Sheriff.

According to Saline County Sheriff's reports, just before 5:30 a.m. Aug. 8, a Jeep Grand Cherokee driven by Errebo was westbound on Kansas 140 at South Reese Road in rural Saline County. The Jeep entered the east-bound lane and struck a Chevrolet truck driven by 61-year-old Mark Sommerfeld, Brookville, head-on.

A passenger in the Chevy, Deanna Sommerfeld, 55, from Brookville, was pronounced dead at the scene.

Kanopolis is background for movie

BY CATHERINE DOUD
Ellsworth County I-R

KANOPOLIS — A visitor to Kanopolis on the morning of March 14 may have imagined they stepped in a time warp. A two-block area near the intersection of Ohio and Wyoming streets was cordoned off and populated with a large group of people wearing authentic 1874-era military uniforms and Native American garb. Horses milled about on the grounds while 1870s era military tents and equipment surrounded one of the buildings at the Fort Harker Guardhouse Museum Complex.

Greg Heller, historian and interpreter at the museum complex, had the explanation. A film crew was in to shoot the movie "Under the Painted Sky." The Screen Actors Guild set was closed to the public, with no photos or videos allowed. Bystanders could see many of the actors as they moved from the Kanopolis Community Building, where actors checked in and prepared costumes and make-up, to the movie set itself.

"The documentary is



KAREN BONAR/Ellsworth County Independent-Reporter

The Commanding Officers' Quarters at Fort Harker in Kanopolis served as a location for the March 14 filming of the upcoming movie "Under the Painted Sky."

directed by Ken Spurgeon," Heller said.

Spurgeon has directed multiple successful independent films, one of the most recent being "Sod and Stubble." That film is on Amazon Prime and had a public viewing Oct. 4 at the Holyrood American Legion.

"Under the Painted Sky" tells a true story, based on the book "The Moccasin Speaks."

Written by Spurgeon and Deb Goodrich and directed by Spurgeon,

the film recounts the saga of a pioneer family caught in the violence of the 19th-century Plains Indian Wars on the High Plains.

The cast includes Mo Brings Plenty ("Marshals," "Yellowstone") as Stone Calf; Barry Corbin ("Yellowstone," "Tulsa King," "Lonesome Dove") as Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano; Buck Taylor ("Yellowstone," "Gunsmoke") as Rufus Brown; Mary

McDonough ("Sod and Stubble," "The Waltons") as Lydia German; Darby Hinton ("Sod and Stubble," "Texas Rising") as John German; R.W. Hampton ("Sod and Stubble," "Peace River") as Gen. Nelson Miles; Wyatt McCrea ("Sod and Stubble," "Floating Horses") as Col. Frank Baldwin; and Dodie Brown ("Sod and Stubble," "Queen Sugar") as Mrs. Miller.

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Ross Janssen's
Weather

March 25-31

WEDNESDAY 90/51
Sunny

THURSDAY 89/62
Sunny, breezy

FRIDAY 57/40
Mostly sunny

SATURDAY 63/30
Partly cloudy, breezy

SUNDAY 76/49
Partly cloudy, breezy

MONDAY 77/57
Partly cloudy

TUESDAY 75/58
Partly cloudy, windy

NEWS A2, A3, A5, B1 LEGALS B2, B3

OBITUARIES A3 CLASSIFIED B3

OPINION A4 PASSAGES B4

KID SCOOP A10 CHURCH B5