

THE CHARGER

Board votes to close Paxico Middle School

Emma Alderman | news editor

The USD 329 board met January 11, and focused on the closing of Paxico Middle School and the results of the bond survey giving to community members. Here are some highlights from the meeting.

Principal Hutley Report

WHS will stay with two guardians at sporting events until discussions with county health and board. "We will stick with up to two parents per participant regardless of what (KSH-SAA) says until we have discussed it with the health department and have time to roll out a plan if there is a different one," Hutley said.

Principal Craighead Report

A first grader tested positive on January 11. That room will be deep cleaned and the first grade will continue with the modified program. They will return to normal on Tuesday January 19. "They're deep cleaning the first grade classroom and the annex. We're going to go on to the modified program like we did before. It will be this week and by the time we get back to school Tuesday it will be back to normal," Craighead said.

Closing of Paxico Middle School

"We're going to close it to help cut district expenses by reducing district building square footages at the end of the 2020 school year," Superintendent Brad Starnes said.

The fifth graders will be placed at Alma Elementary School or Maple Hill Elementary School. The sixth graders will be placed at Wabaunsee Junior High. Research has been done and there is room for these moves. The plans for where the fifth and sixth graders will be moved to are not set in stone and could be changed.

"So based on what has been published in the paper and the resolution itself we are not tied to the specifics to what happens after it closes," Board member Jim Vapita said.

Results of the Bond Survey

About 400 people out of 2000 voters have responded to the survey so far

The biggest issues about the bond reported in the survey were a tax increase, tearing down WHS limestone building, closing Maple Hill Elementary, closing Ohio street in Alma, not sharing a detailed plan.

"It's nice to hear from those willing to fill it out what direction they'd like us to head because that's what we need to know," board president Justin Frank said.

Superintendent Discussion

A survey of USD 329 staff found 78% are willing to take the COVID-19 vaccine. 13% said they would not take the vaccine, and 9% said they might.

Resignations

At the end of the school year Marilyn Workman will resign as the Wabaunsee High School counselor and Tracy Capoun will resign as the high school headvolleyball coach.

WINTER ROYALTY



Seniors Eli Mumpower, Kendyl Bolinder, Alex Warner, Emma Frey, Derek Wallin, Karlee Feyh, Isaac Lira and Jordan Magette pose after the Winter Royal crowning Friday night. Wallin and Feyh were crowned king and queen. Photo by Amy Cassell.

Capoun resigns as WHS volleyball coach

Jacob Meseke | sports editor

Head volleyball coach Tracy Capoun resigned last week, ending her second run as Charger head coach with a 188-61 record, including four state appearances — 3rd place in 2020, 2nd place in 2018 and a state championship in 2019.

Capoun shared her thoughts on her time leading the Charger volleyball program, as well as advice for whoever takes the reins next season.

What was your favorite memory while coaching at Wabaunsee?

It's hard to top going to state four times and placing the last three yrs; 1st, 2nd and 3rd. But I will never forget when Alexis (Hafenstine) went on a 13-0 serving run to get us from 8-16 to 21-16 and within reach of the championship.

Why did you decide to resign and what factors went into your decision?

There's never a good time to retire... I never want to leave any of the girls. Even the last time when I decided to move on, the reason was the time and wanting more personal hours to spend on family and photography. I hope everyone understands the time that a committed coach puts into a high school program.

Could you talk about the team that the next coach will be inheriting?

They are an unbelievable bunch of athletes. A new coach shouldn't have a problem having to rebuild a program or worry about talent. There's a lot of experience on all levels and each has a load of HEART.

What are you going to miss being a coach at Wabaunsee?

Coaching in general. If you've coached, you understand it's in your blood. So literally every bit of coaching... I'll miss everything but the hours.

What advice would you give to current and future volleyball



Coach Capoun celebrates after the 2019 state championship match. Capoun compiled a 188-61 record as head coach, including four state appearances.

players at Wabaunsee?

Don't just play volleyball, watch volleyball. Watch yourself play volleyball too. Also volleyball is a team sport, and you're only as good as the person next to you. Tearing them down will not be beneficial to you. Lift them up, be their cheerleader and don't focus on their mistakes nor yours. That head game is a losing battle.

What made you come back to coaching after four years off of coaching?

It is very hard to find coaches. Not many people can take off of work in the middle of the afternoon to coach. Plus, knowing the game and teaching the game are two different things. I knew just like the first time that I left, that the team went through a tough situation by losing a coach. I hoped I could be the bridge between keeping the program on track and getting a more permanent coach.

Safety still important after a year of COVID

With the coronavirus having been in the United States for a year now, and life-changing safety precautions put in place not long after, many people are

growing fatigued and are ready to see a normal life again. Because of this, many people have lost sight of what is important, which is doing your part to slow the spread of this virus.

With lots of misconceptions and dispute surrounding the rules and recommendations, I spoke with Wabaunsee County health director Ray Finley about the current safety procedures. Here is what I learned:

Masks are required in public settings. According to Finley, masks have been proven to help tremendously. "You've had positive cases get to the school, but since you guys have mandatory masks and are excellent about keeping those on, we have seen literally no transfers of the disease inside the school. They've all been connected outside. Even when it's been transferred from friend to friend in the high school, it's been traced back to outside of school in a setting where masks were taken off. That has shown us that the masks work."

Social distancing and frequent handwashing are recommended. Finley suggests carrying hand sanitizer in your vehicle or purse when you are out. Big trouble areas are commonly touched surfaces, such as gas pumps. "When you're pumping gas, how many other people have touched that before you? So, it's just as simple as pump your gas, use the hand sanitizer," Finley explained.

Keeping groups small and avoiding large gatherings is strongly recommended.

The standard KDHE statement on close contact is to be within six feet of someone for ten minutes or greater. This does not have to be ten consecutive minutes, but can be an accumulation. "You may have talked to somebody for three minutes, but then came back and talked to them for seven minutes. That all adds up to ten minutes, and if you've come within six feet (of a positive case) for that time, then you need to quarantine." The rule for close contact is the same with or without masks on.

In Wabaunsee county, the quarantine period has been reduced from 14 days to 10 days. The CDC still states that the virus's incubation period is 14 days, but, according to Finley, research has shown that less than 3% of those who contract the virus develop symptoms after the 10th day. This means that if you have had potential exposure to the virus, you must quarantine for 10 full days, meaning you are released on the 11th day, so long as you are not experiencing any symptoms. You should still be cautious and attentive through the 14th day, as it is not impossible for symptoms to start.

"With the vaccinations being released I think we see the light at the end of the tunnel," Finley said. "Within months, we should start seeing a turn around, so be vigilant with masks and social distancing and not gathering in large groups. We need to stay with that. Were all tired of it, I'm tired of it, and not just dealing with it as the health director, but I canceled a lot of trips last year too because of COVID, and I'm ready to go back to doing some of those things."

Continuing to be diligent in following these safety precautions is so important right now. Although this virus has gone on for such a long time now, it is not the time to get lazy. Following the rules is just as important now as it was in the beginning. It is crucial that we all do what we can to slow the spread and protect ourselves and everyone around us.



Kendyl Bolinder | editor in chief