



# THE CHARGER

## 329 to vote on \$17.95 million bond

Heather Baker, Payton Wurtz | staff writers

Wabaunsee voters will have an opportunity to weigh in on the future of the district next month as USD 329 seeks to pass a \$17.95 million bond.

If passed, the bond will provide necessary changes and repairs to keep the district running smoothly, while moving all students to a K-12 campus in Alma.

Superintendent Troy Pitsch said the result of the election will have a large effect on the district's plan for the future. "We are headed down a very difficult path that is going to drastically impact the district in the next three years. We are going to look different as a district whether the bond passes or not," he said.

USD 329 tried to pass a bond in 2020, but it failed 57 percent to 43 percent. The bond, worth \$24.65 million, sought to fund renovations and maintenance of district school buildings, and would

have created a K-6 building in Paxico and a 7-12 building in Alma.

For the current WHS building, which would change to a 7-12 building, the bond would provide renovations to the original high school, a link between the old and new buildings, new bathrooms, a new roof for the old gym and renovations for the shop.

Improvements to Alma Elementary School, which would become PreK-6th grade, include a building addition and renovation, a new elementary gym, reroofing for the annexed building, and a secure main entrance into the building.

For the district overall, the bond will provide a new campus kitchen at the elementary school, district office relocation and the addition of a football locker room near the field.

As with any bond issue, an increase of community members' taxes is a concern. The district included an estimated list of tax increases on its web-

site and a flier that was sent to voters earlier this month.

"The point is instead of trying to get people to vote based on fear, the reality is the stakes are high, but it is truly up to them (the voters) how they see the district," Pitsch said. "Do they see it as a district that is financially bankrupt and is struggling to pay its bills, having to reduce its size by force, or a district that capitalized on an opportunity to make a business decision for the benefit of the students."

"This is a community bond, it's not my bond. It's up to them to decide what they want the future of the district to become. We are a high performing district, but can we keep that up if we are under financial distress? I don't know if that's something I want to find out."

Information, maps, estimates and frequently asked questions can all be viewed at [www.usd329.com/page/bond-issue-2022](http://www.usd329.com/page/bond-issue-2022).

## Counselor seeks to make a difference in student's lives

Baylie Tharman | staff writer

New WHS counselor Wendy Leenerts joined the district thanks to the Alma Elementary principal Robert Schawo.

"I had never been to Wabaunsee. I used to work with the principal who works at the Alma Elementary School and he knew I was looking for a job so he told me about this opening," Leenerts said.

Leenerts said her role as a counselor is being there for the kids. "I'm working with kids on their social and emotional well being. Like how they're doing and if they struggle with anxiety and depression," she said. Leenerts job isn't just working and helping students. "The first month I scheduled a lot of classes which I did not know how to do until I came here since I was an elementary counselor last year."

She hasn't always been a counselor. She and her husband have fostered children for 11 years. "When we had fostered kids in and out of our house, they had a lot of trauma and I didn't know how to help them," she said. She kept asking her social workers what she could do to help the kids, but no one had the answers. So she decided to go back to school and get her degree in counsel-

ing. "I'm not done yet, but I'll be done in May with school counseling and clinical counseling then I'll be able to help kids and make a difference," she said.

Before her job at the high school, Leenerts worked with autistic children. "With autistic children there were lots of different challenges," she said. She talked about the challenges that the kids faced when they tried to communicate with someone. "Some of them could use an iPad to communicate and some of them couldn't communicate at all. So they got frustrated very easily."

Leenerts isn't all about work. In her free time she likes to do any activity with her kids, and eat and hangout with her friends. Since being at Wabaunsee, Leenerts has had lots of positive things to say about the school. "The kids at Wabaunsee are very easy going. They are very friendly, and they are willing to answer any questions that I may have," she said.

Last year she worked at Highland Park Central Elementary in Topeka. "It was more multicultural. So I miss that part of it, but there are more issues with the kids because they come from very hard backgrounds. So there's a lot of behavioral issues," she said.

## Tennis ends season at regionals

Danielle Murphy | social media editor

The tennis team ended its season at regionals Saturday, with a doubles team finishing just shy of a trip to state. The team finished in a tie for 6th out of 11 teams.

Sophomore Meredith Denton and junior Baylie Tharman placed seventh, defeating KC Christian in both sets, 6-0, but losing in a super tiebreaker to #2 seed Hesston and losing to #6 seed Marysville 1-6 and 0-6.

"I think we did really well, I'm happy with how far we made it and I can't wait to see how far we make it next year," Denton said. "We were close to making it to state. Hopefully we can make it further along with the rest of the team next year," Tharman said.

Although he was disappointed to end the season early, coach Brendan Praeger said the team performed well. "They competed really well in one of the toughest regionals in the state. I wouldn't be surprised if all of the teams from our region placed at state. Baylie and Meredith played a really good tournament and they improved a lot throughout the year."

Sophomore Ava Huske won her play-in match 9-2 against Alaina Motes of Sacred Heart, and advanced to play the fourth seed Magdalene Raucholz of Smoky Valley. "It was a tough seed, and I think a few wins in the regular season could have put her in a better position to advance," Praeger said.

"I think I played pretty well, but next year I hope to im-



Sophomore Meredith Denton warms up before playing a quarterfinal match at regional tennis. Denton and her partner finish 7th. Photo by Danielle Murphy.

prove on ground strokes and make it to state," Huske said. Huske lost to Raucholz, ending her season with a 14-16 record.

Senior Danielle Murphy and junior Ava Meinhardt ended their season with a strong fight 3-6, 0-6 against fourth seed Marysville. "We played a harder team, so the outcome wasn't the best," Meinhardt said, "but I think we played one of our best games."

"These two improved a lot throughout the season, and I think their record reflects how far they've both come since August," Praeger said.

Sophomore Emily Meyer ended her season with a 2-9 loss against Annaliese Jorgenson of Hillsboro.

"Emily had a lot more success at doubles this year, but I think it was a good experience to play at regionals, and she did a lot of things well,"

Praeger said.

The team will return five of its six varsity players next season.

Graduating after playing varsity for two years, Murphy expressed her excitement for her teammates in their upcoming seasons. "Tennis is one of my favorite sports, I hate that it came to an end so quickly, it made my heart break in a kind of way," Murphy said, "I am super happy though with how far Ava and I grew as doubles partners, I really am proud of how far the team got this season. I look forward to watching them play in the upcoming seasons."

Wabaunsee will host the 321A State Tournament Friday and Saturday in Topeka, and then look toward the future.

"I think we have a really strong team coming back with lots of varsity experience," Praeger said.

## Letter to the editor | Editorial raises valid points

Dear Editor,

Just a quick note to compliment you on the editorial published in the October 6 edition of the Wabaunsee County Signal-Enterprise.

I'm not sure if one person wrote that editorial, or whether it was a joint effort by your staff, but I thought you made some excellent points in favor of the continuation of live-streaming board meetings.

While it may be true that KASB is recommending a return to in-person board meetings, that does not preclude the school board from continuing to live stream its meetings for the benefit and convenience of their constituents.

As your editorial pointed out, the technology director said that it would not be a burden to continue this practice, as the system is already in place.

In addition, it is doubtful that the hundreds of patrons who have appreciated the convenience of viewing the board meetings live, would be able to afford the time it would take to physically drive to the meeting and attend in person.

During the pandemic we learned that many functions could be achieved through the

use of modern technology, and we no longer needed to be in the same room where a meeting was taking place. Now we can observe a live-streamed meeting from the comfort of our own homes, without having to expend the time, energy, or fuel expense to travel to the actual location of the meeting.

In closing, perhaps your strongest point was the fact that the school board is asking taxpayers to support the upcoming bond issue, which we were recently informed about in a newsletter mailed to district patrons. Now, more than ever, district patrons need to be well-informed, and the information needs to be readily accessible to all patrons, young and old, near or far.

In summary, the decision to discontinue the live-streaming of school board meetings unnecessarily limits access to the decision-making process which affects the lives of parents, teachers, students, and taxpayers of USD #329. I sincerely hope that the superintendent and board members will reconsider this decision.

— Eileen Umbehr

Send letters to the editor to [whscharger@gmail.com](mailto:whscharger@gmail.com).



## SPORTS BRIEFS | Cross country, football continue success

### FOOTBALL GETS ANOTHER WIN AT HOME AGAINST SACRED HEART

Wabaunsee blew out the Sacred Heart Knights Friday with a 42-7 win.

Wabaunsee scored 14 points in each of the first two quarters, and allowed Sacred Heart's only score in the second.

Junior Wyatt Wurtz went 8/14 passing for 78 yards and 3 touchdowns. He has 9 passing touchdowns on the season. Zach Frank added two rushing touchdowns, and Bryton Reves added another.

Defensively, senior

Maverick Havenstein led the team with 7 tackles and a sack, while junior Tate Deever recorded 6 tackles and 2 sacks. Senior Logan Clark added an interception.

The Chargers improved to 5-1, winning 5-straight since an opening loss to Troy. The win guarantees another winning season for the Chargers. Last year was their first since 1997. The team travels to 2-4 Valley Heights Friday.

### VOLLEYBALL STRUGGLES AT SILVER LAKE

Charger volleyball competed at Silver Lake Tuesday, losing both matches.

The Chargers competed in the first, losing 25-20, 25-18. They lost the second 25-13, 25-18. Silver Lake improved to 23-8, and 4-1 in the MEL. Wabaunsee fell to 15-16, and 0-3 in MEL play.

The Chargers have a busy week, traveling to Rossville Tuesday, and playing at home Thursday against Hope and White City. Senior night is October 18 vs. Riley County.

### CROSS COUNTRY: WURTZ WINS AGAIN AT RILEY COUNTY

Cross Country team traveled to Riley County Saturday for a significantly

more difficult course than the previous week at Centra-  
lia. Still, the Chargers had 9 out of 12 runners run better times than last week.

Sophomore Payton Wurtz collected her 6th win of the season, and sophomore Rhett Parry almost broke 20 minutes by 1/800th of a second.

The girls placed 5th as a team, with senior Rebekah Stuhlsatz finishing 11th individually. The boys finished 10th.

The team travels to Silver Lake Thursday for the Mid-East League Meet. "All year long we talk about being our

best for League, Regional, and State and now we get the chance to prove that," coach Roger Alderman said. "Our workouts have been going well and it looks like we're ready to cut times over the next 3 weeks."

The Chargers host region-  
als October 22 on their course near the football practice field.