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City not ready to support joint 911 plan

By Tyler Elyson

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Council tables issue until further research is completed

COLUMBUS — A proposal that would create a joint 911 dispatch center for city and county public service agencies is still alive. But there are some important details to work out before anything is finalized, including where the communications center would

be located and how much it could cost to operate. Columbus City Council members revisited the topic Monday night, agreeing the plan should be further researched without taking formal action. The Platte County Board of Supervisors has been

quicker to act on the idea, but their vision doesn't match a proposed city project. The county board approved a resolution in May expressing support for a consolidated 911 dispatch center that would be located inside the Nebraska Public Power District building and

operated by an independent body consisting of elected and administrative representatives from the city and county. This proposal was one option presented in a feasibility study completed by GeoComm Inc., a Minnesota-based public

safety consulting firm that recommended creating an emergency communications center that serves all public service agencies in Platte County. In its resolution, the county board identifies NPPD headquarters as the preferred site for the dis-

patch center since space is available to lease in a secure area capable of withstanding tornado-strength winds and the utility is offering access to the statewide radio system. The current dispatch center inside the police station does not meet these standards, the resolution notes.

■ See 911, A2



Julie Blum/The Columbus Telegram

Traffic passes by Tuesday afternoon on the two-lane stretch of U.S. Highway 81 south of Columbus. The Platte County Board of Supervisors voted to provide funding for a study that will show the impact of expanding the highway from two to four lanes from York to south of Columbus.

Platte pitches in to fund Hwy. 81 expansion study

By Julie Blum

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COLUMBUS — A study on expanding U.S. Highway 81 from two to four lanes has financial backing from the county.

The Platte County Board of Supervisors voted Tuesday to kick in funding for an impact study on expanding a stretch of the highway from south of Columbus to York, per the request of 4 Lanes 4 Nebraska.

The board was approached during its regular meeting by Josh Moenning, executive director of the advocacy group that is comprised of industry and business representatives pushing for the modernization

of Nebraska's transportation infrastructure. The group wants to accelerate the expansion of the state's expressway system, including completing four-lane projects on highways 81 and 275.

The study will cost \$15,000 and three counties — Platte, York and Polk — are being asked to pitch in \$5,000 each to cover the costs. York and Polk counties were targeted because that is where the highway expansion hasn't been completed.

The group already has been successful in getting an impact study done on Highway 275, and Moenning said the study on Highway 81 will be similar. Linking Nebraska commu-

nities to an expressway system by constructing four-lane highways that connect them to Interstate 80 is a project that first started in 1988. Of the more than 600 miles in that system, about 170 miles are still unfinished decades later.

Moenning said two major portions of the unfinished work are expanding 48 miles of Highway 275 from east of Norfolk to northwest of Fremont and the 43 miles of Highway 81 from York to 7 miles south of Columbus.

Finishing the expressway system is not only an overdue obligation by the state, Moenning said, but it could have a positive economic impact on the state and provide safer

travel. According to the Highway 275 study, an expansion to four lanes would add more than \$145 million to the state's gross domestic product each year. The study also shows that converting to four lanes from two lanes reduces accidents, on average, by 40-60 percent.

York County already agreed to give financial support to the study and Moenning said Polk County will be asked, as well. When funding is secured, the study will start right away and results could be ready before the end of the year to share with state lawmakers.

The Platte County board voted 5-2 to support the study, with Supervisors Jerry Micek

and Ron Pfeifer voting against the motion because they didn't feel the study would have a big impact on getting the stretch of highway finished.

In other business, the board approved:

- setting tax levies at 9:10 a.m. Oct. 6,
- spending \$6,300 for fire-wall subscription renewal from Applied Connective Technology,
- giving a raise of 50 cents per hour to the weed department superintendent. The superintendent's current pay is \$14.50 per hour, and
- spending up to \$4,271 to repair the drive-through gate at the Platte County Detention Facility.

Local farmer part of trade delegation to Japan, China

By Christina Loeffring

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COLUMBUS — Bill Luckey returned home late Monday night after spending time in Japan and China as part of a National Pork Board trade delegation.

The local hog producer and farmer took part in the trip organized by the U.S. Meat Export Federation, a nonprofit trade association that advocates abroad on the behalf of U.S. red meat producers.

Luckey said the trip was designed to build relationships between American, Japanese and Chinese importers, pack-

ing plants and producers. It also allowed U.S. agricultural organizations to learn how to handle trade hurdles so the U.S. can increase pork exports.

Japan is the No. 1 importer of U.S. pork by value amount because it imports more expensive cuts. Because of shipping advantages, the U.S. and Canada are the only countries able to sell chilled pork to Japan. Chilled pork is preferred over frozen pork.

However, last year's porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV) outbreak and the Los Angeles/Long Beach dock slowdown over

■ See TRADE, A2

Dierman known as passionate educator

Former CHS principal died Friday at age 79

By Elizabeth Anna Valla

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COLUMBUS — Robert Dierman was more than a respected principal, colleague and die-hard New York Mets fan.

Those who knew him best describe Dierman as a renaissance man.

The New Jersey native,



Dierman

who became Columbus High School's principal in 1979 and did not retire until the turn of the millennium, passed away Friday at the

age of 79.

"He promoted anything that would be seen as improving education," said Brad Hansen, the CHS assistant principal under Dierman for many years.

Hansen had just left David City Aquinas, where he was principal for five years, when

he joined Dierman at CHS, which added students in 1988 when ninth-graders were shifted to the building.

"I learned more from him in one year than all of my previous experiences together," the 63-year-old Hansen said. "He was just so well-rounded. He knew a lot about a lot of things and he had this presence about him; very knowledgeable, very articulate."

Dierman was not only the CHS principal, he was also a coach for American Legion baseball and had Hansen's son on one of his teams.

■ See DIERMAN, A2

Weather

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