

Ag education instructor hired

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Guy Kuntz has been hired as the ag education instructor for Holyoke JR/SR High for the 2012-13 school year.

Approval was given by the Re-1J board at its May 1 meeting.

Additionally, the resignation/retirement was accepted for elementary Title I teacher Nancy Kennedy and resignations approved for band director Shauna Close and elementary secretary Tammy Kroeger.

Kuntz grew up in Otis and is currently completing his student teaching at Olathe High School for his B.S. degree in agricultural education from Colorado State University.

Kuntz served as a Colorado State FFA officer following his high school graduation. While at CSU, he has spent time at both Preston Middle School in Fort Collins and at Platte Valley High School in Kersey prior to his student teaching experience.

Sincere appreciation was acknowledged for Kennedy's career in the Holyoke School District.

Also in the area of personnel discussion, Jim Gribben voiced concern for the local volleyball program and the turnover of coaches. He cited in the 41-year volleyball history at HHS, there has been 18 coaches.

Gribben suggested the board find someone who's had some success with volleyball coaching who would be a teacher and stay on staff for a number of years to build a winning volleyball program.

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Budget priorities reviewed

Budget priorities for 2012-13 were presented from the budget and facilities committee by Supt. Bret Miles. The board later discussed those priorities to create budget parameters for the July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013 fiscal year.

Further discussion and approval of the budget parameters is scheduled for the May 15 meeting.

The following were among the priorities cited by the budget and facilities committee:

—fund step increases for all employees.

—fund the increased employer PERA contribution.

—increase employer's health insurance contribution to cover rising costs.

—protect staff to greatest extent possible, only considering eliminating positions through natural attrition.

—evaluate class sizes annually and adjust internally to meet instructional needs.

Increased class sizes are a common occurrence throughout the state, and Supt. Miles said it's not likely the district will be able to go back to smaller class sizes.

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The budget priority suggested the district continue to use scheduling as a strategy to decrease class sizes in critical instructional windows such as the reading block.

If additional staff can be added, the committee noted it understands the administration will make tough choices between adding homeroom teachers or specialists, such as more English Language Learner (ELL) support or counseling services.

—maintain the technology implementation schedule.

—stay flexible with capital projects budget.

The committee suggested funding capital projects at less than \$180,000 which was a longtime expectation.

—maintain an ending fund balance of no less than \$1.2 million.

—continue focus on increasing revenue.

The budget and facilities committee recognizes attracting students in the region—not just in the district boundaries—will be important as the district wishes to maintain enrollment and sustain programs.

Health insurance increases

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Reporting on increased costs for health insurance and research into potential changes, Supt. Miles said his recommendation is to stay with the Colorado Association of School Board's (CASB's) BEST health plan. This received support from a majority of the health insurance committee.

With high utilization this past year, Miles said the district's claims loss ratio was 171 percent. As a result, it wasn't a surprise they're facing a 22 percent increase in premiums.

Having thoroughly investigated the possibility of leaving BEST this year, Miles said he can't recommend it and still meet other budget goals.

Miles asked the board to allocate an additional \$70,000 (approximately) for health insurance benefits to cover the rising costs rather than increase the employee's payment responsibility for the premiums.

Board involvement in setting athletic goals is summer retreat topic

Not wanting to micromanage extracurricular or athletic activities, board president Jeff Tharp opened discussion last week on the board's role of setting goals for athletics.

The value of setting goals and defining expectations was addressed. Some felt rules are already addressed in the handbook, but others pondered a clearer board directive to lend strength to coach/athletic director decisions.

What are the reasons for recommending coaches for rehire? What is the philosophy for athletics?

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With such diverse discussion, it was agreed to add this topic to the summer retreat agenda. Supt. Miles suggested having conversations with people to get additional input.

Other business

In other business May 1, the Board of Education:

—noted two calendar changes: a 9 a.m. late start Friday, May 11 and dismissal of students at noon the last day of school, Thursday, May 24.

—acknowledged an anonymous donation of \$150 to Holyoke FFA from a local Pioneer Seed yield contest winner.

—approved first reading of grading and report card policies and regulations.

—heard from Partners in Education (PIE) representative Tiffany Watson that PIE is awarding seven classroom grants totaling \$3,000 with funds raised from the recent carnival.

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