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Historical Society Reps Tour Downtown District

Representatives from the Nebraska State Historical Society, (from left) Ruben Acosta, National Register and CLG Coordinator; Lissa Schwab, NSH Preservation Office, and Kelli Bacon, Preservation Archivist, State Historic Preservation Office, and Arnold Economic Development Director Sandy Hicks, discuss the facade of the Rialto Theatre on Thursday of last week. The group traveled to Arnold to view the Finch Memorial Library, which has just been placed on the State Historical Registry and will now be eligible for the National registry after forms are submitted by Hicks. The group, which included Patrick Haynes, Historic Building Survey Coordinator, who photographed details of the buildings, then toured the downtown district, which Bacon said has a very good chance of meeting criteria for the State and National Historic Registry. "They were looking at the integrity and significance of the buildings and were impressed. They were really surprised at how much was in place. The group ended the two-hour tour by discussing the possibilities for the former and now vacant Archie's café building. Bacon said that if the downtown district qualifies for the national registry, there is money available to preserve the buildings. As far as the Finch Library, Bacon said it is a "slam-dunk" for the National registry. With this information, Director Hicks said she will be confident in starting the downtown district application process. (Janet Larreau photo)

School's Tax Asking Gives Tax Payers a Break

The Arnold School Board approved a budget of \$2,372,784.28 for the 2014-2015 year at the regular meeting held on September 9. The request is down from the 2013-2014 year's asking of \$2,447,584.88.

The tax rate for 2014 is also down. The board approved a rate of 0.699020 for the General Fund and 0.024769 for the Special Building Fund, compared to the 2013 tax rate of 0.922494 for the General Fund and 0.031535 for the Special Building Fund.

Superintendent Pat Osmond explained that over the years, the district has accumulated funds, and rather than ask for more taxes, it will spend down the cash.

Real estate and property valuations in the district have gone from \$256,542.195.00 in 2013-2014 to \$327,827,986.00 in 2014-2015 - an increase of 27.78 percent - resulting in a lower

tax rate for both funds.

"My philosophy is that you are better off with regular small increases each year in what you ask for taxes to build up cash in case it is needed," said Osmond. "We basically have plenty of money and can give tax payers a break."

Superintendent Search

Both Arnold and Callaway boards recently listened to presentations by superintendent search firms and then met later for discussion. As an agenda item at Tuesday's meeting of the Arnold board, a motion was made and seconded to sign a contract with the firm NRSA (Nebraska Rural Schools Association). Beshaler and Eggleson voted no, and Bowers, Coleman, Cool and Nelson voted yes. The motion passed 4-2.

Substitute Teacher Reimbursement

At the board's regular meeting held in August, a small group of substitute teachers requested

that the board might consider giving subs a raise. Consideration of the raise was moved to an action item at Tuesday night's meeting.

Subs are currently paid \$85.00 a day, and the last raise they received was maybe seven or eight years ago. Mr. Osmond said that he was very sympathetic to giving them a \$5.00 raise.

Board members discussed how often subs are used, what the subs do in various classrooms, and compared substitute teacher wages of area schools before voting unanimously to give them a \$10.00 raise to \$95.00 a day.

Superintendent Resignation

Mr. Osmond read his letter of resignation to the board effective at the end of his contract on June 30, 2015. He said it has been an honor to be a part of one of the most progressive school districts in the state.

"The Arnold Public School

district possess an outstanding faculty, an exceptional principal, a support staff that is second to none and a Board of Education that is committed to providing the best education possible for all of the students in the district. My single regret is that my tenure at Arnold will only be five short years," he said.

After reading the letter, Osmond told board members: "There hasn't been a day I haven't looked forward to coming to Arnold. We've done things here that just amaze me. I have to thank Duane (Bowers) for talking me into staying one more year."

Principal's Report

Mrs. Lewis reported that when combined with the school's verified preschool population that the district serves, the number of students reported to the state will be 139. One new student came in the

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Village Approves Applying for FEMA Grant

The Village of Arnold is now in the process of applying for a FEMA grant to purchase a backup generator for the community center. The decision to submit an application to the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program was made at the regular board meeting held on September 8.

Superintendent Bill Moser has been appointed the authorized representative for the program and has been working tirelessly on filling out the 22-page application by the deadline of mid-September.

In its notice of interest for funding, the village stated that it needs to improve adequate generator backup in case of emergency. The community center is the area where there is room for people to stay and be fed in the case of emergency. This area is needed to have heat or cooling and a kitchen area to help people in need during an emergency. If the power is out, a generator will keep this area operational.

Custer County and the state of Nebraska has a Hazard Mitigation Plan in place, and that is one of the requirements of applying for the grant.

"All of the communities in Custer County got together and put this plan together," said Moser. "A risk assessment was done, and Arnold has six probable risk out of the data gathering. We are using the mitigation plan to justify requirements of the FEMA grant."

Since 1994, there has been three-quarters of a million dollars in damage to the town due to storms. Chairman Glen Bowers said purchasing the generator will put precautions in place.

The village will be applying for a little over \$55,000.00 in funds. FEMA will give 75 percent of that amount, and the village has certified that it can provide 25 percent of matching funds. Moser said the goal is to come in under budget if funding is received.

Law Enforcement

Glen Bowers reported that he, board member Aron Olson and clerk Patty Lamberty recently attended a meeting where several Custer County communities expressed interest in sharing the cost of a deputy to patrol these towns on a rotating basis. The towns of Arnold, Callaway and

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Red Cedar Has Met Its Match New Mechanical Method Mulches Invasive Tree



Using a new mechanical method, Scott McDowell of Loup Valley Construction, Inc., mulches a red cedar. The quick process will give landowners another option in controlling the invasive tree. (Kendra Veirs photo)

Juniperus virginiana has become an increasing problem in many fence rows and pastures across the Midwest. The very common tree, known to locals as the Eastern Red Cedar, was once limited to rocky bluffs, deep canyons and other areas where fire did not historically occur, but has become increasingly invasive to pastures used for grazing around the area over the past few decades.

Arnold business Loup Valley Construction, Inc. has taken on a new venture providing an alternative mechanical way to remove this native plague from the area - cedar tree shredding. Besides mechanical methods, the only other two removal methods are fire and chemical application on small trees.

Scott McDowell, owner of Loup Valley Construction, announced this summer that their services now include tree shredding.

"The old mechanical method of cutting and piling trees requires pushing trees to piles and burning them in the winter months, or using the cut trees as kindling to burn canyons," McDowell explained.

The shredding is a one-step process. With one pass you can cut the tree off at ground level and shred trees into small

enough pieces that there is no clean up required."

And how did the new business venture come about for the

would be a good addition to the business and that it would be a good winter job for when the ground is frozen," McDowell said. "The trees actually shred better in the winter when the sap is frozen."

Even though the shredding is hard on equipment and requires a lot of maintenance, McDowell said a four-inch tree can be done in roughly 45 seconds. At this point, Loup Valley can shred up to an eight-inch tree.

"Hopefully by the time the winter season rolls around we will have a machine capable of mulching much larger trees," McDowell said.

Loup Valley Construction was started in 1990 by Scott's parents, Margie and the late Kendall McDowell, to provide earth moving services to local farmers. Scott, who graduated from Arnold Public School in 2001, officially joined the business in 2004, but remembers running equipment and assisting on various jobs at a very young age. Scott also continues to run the earth moving business and he and his wife, Sheila (Preston), a 2006 APS graduate, reside in Arnold.