



Letter to the Editor

We chose a new direction b electing Mayor McDonald. He ha worked to streamline governmen increase transparency, and challeng the status quo. Notably, he propos a budget that would have reduce taxes for the first time in memor but the City Council rejected it.

Mayor McDonald has faced re sistance from the beginning. Rathe than embracing voters' will, some city leaders seem more focused on political opposition than on con-structive problem-solving. That rais-es an important question: Is Mayor McDonald truly the source of the dysfunction, or is he exposing prob-lems that have existed for years?

Before Mayor McDonald, our city suffered three personnel lawsuits. And we watched the city's unsuc-cessful attempt to bully the City Lake Association.

Leadership is not about avoid-ing conflict. It is about confronting challenges honestly and taking re-sponsibility for the outcomes. When a highly public disagreement arose with the Chief of Police, Mayor Mc-Donald addressed the matter pub-licly and ultimately took the profes-sional step of reinstating the Chief. He demonstrated a willingness to lis-ten, reconcile differences, and move forward in our best interest.

Mayor McDonald is undoubtedly strong-willed, but he is also willing to listen. He expects positions to be grounded in facts and sound reason-ing. He does not simply accept the way things have always been done, and that is the kind of leadership we need.

This recall is harming our commu-nity. Political infighting, controver-sy, and attempts to overturn a legiti-mate election create uncertainty and signal instability. When investors and developers see turmoil, they are not inclined to invest their time and money here.

Mayor McDonald brings energy, fresh ideas, and a commitment to fiscal responsibility and economic growth. We should allow the mayor we elected to continue the work vot-ers sent him to do.

Vote NO on this unnecessary and divisive recall effort.

Kelley Judd

Sweep week 5

(Continued from Page 1)

team with eight tackles. Owen Kel-ley recorded three tackles, including one for a loss, a sack and a fumble recovery. Elijah Cosgrove added three tackles.

The fifth grade team turned in a strong offensive performance against Riley County, with Brody Jarvis rushing for 174 yards, scoring two touchdowns and adding a two-point conversion. Kade Shearer contributed 105 rushing yards, includ-ing a 30-yard touchdown run, and caught a 40-yard touchdown pass from Colton Messer.

Messer also completed a two-point conversion pass, while Kannon Gearhart contributed a two-point conversion, an interception and three tackles.

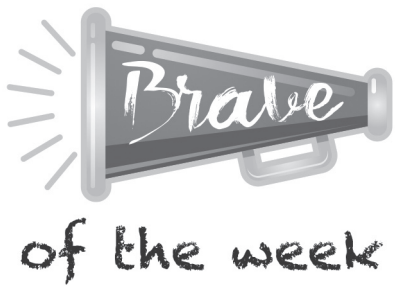
Defensively, Odyonn Beamer led with five tackles, two assists and a tackle for loss. Benjamin Blue re-corded three tackles, including one for a loss. Villalobos, who helped the fifth graders because they had only 13 players available, contribut-ed an interception, a tipped pass and a fumble recovery.

"It was a team win! There's plen-ty of boys that had key blocks and contained on defense that might not make the stat sheet. I'm super proud of these boys!" said assistant coach Ben Jarvis.

The sixth grade team secured an 8-0 shutout over Riley County be-hind a strong rushing performance and solid defense. Wyatt Gursky led the offense with 112 rushing yards while also recording a team-high 11 tackles.

Quarterback Kreyton Ander-son rushed for 48 yards, scored the game's touchdown and added the two-point conversion. He also passed for 25 yards and recorded three tackles from his safety posi-

Council Grove Elementary School



Paislee Yadon
Paislee is a student in Colleen Booker's 6th grade class. Her favorite color is blue and the best gift she has ever received is a saddle. Paislee says her favorite thing to do on the weekends is sleep in, and if she had a Superpower it would be to be invisible.

tion.

Silas Barnes contributed 17 receiv-ing yards, while Axl Ashlaw record-ed two tackles and a sack.

The CGYF teams will travel to Wamego Saturday, October 17, for their next round of competition. The third/fourth grade team will play at 8:30 a.m., followed by the fifth grad-ers at 10 a.m. and the sixth graders at 11:30 a.m.

Information was provided by CGYF coordinators Tanner and An-drea Messer.

School Board

(Continued from Page 1)

board to consider students' perspec-tives, recalling their involvement in supporting the district's previous bond campaign.

"Being different isn't automatical-ly being behind, and changing some-thing isn't automatically improving it," he told the board.

Hickman urged board members to explore alternatives that would preserve both elementary schools. Although the school's approximate-ly 73 students could physically be accommodated at Council Grove Elementary, she questioned wheth-er consolidation would adequately meet their educational needs, particu-larly those requiring individualized instruction.

Sheryl Crooks emphasized the school's importance to families in the northern portion of the district. She expressed concern about longer bus rides, the effects on economical-ly disadvantaged students and the loss of a community institution. She also noted that Prairie Heights is the district's newest school building and does not face the maintenance chal-lenges of some older facilities.

Scheduling Committee Continues Review

The board approved the consent agenda, including minutes of the September 14 and October 6 meet-ings, financial reports and payment of bills totaling \$1,115,826.71, do-nations and gifts, disposal of dis-trict equipment, and adoption of the JHC Student Organization Policy.

Eslinger reviewed district finances and introduced a new reporting sys-tem designed to give board members a clearer picture of revenues and ex-penditures.

He explained that substantial cap-ital outlay expenditures early in the fiscal year reflect roofing and other facility improvements, while regular operating expenditures remain be-low comparable levels from a year earlier.

During board member reports, Pat-

Stories & Songs of the Flint Hills

by Annie Wilson – named the "Flint Hills Balladeer" by the Kansas Governor

Weda Skirts – Music is Medicine

"An all-girl band? That'll never last!" some predicted in 2009 when the Weda Skirts began playing together, centered in Chase County in the heart of the Flint Hills. Now many years later, these five women have proven those naysayers wrong, showing they are as devoted to caring for each other as they are to creating their music.

Their supportive bond is illustrated in an anecdote from their first-ever studio recording session. In that stressful situation, when one girl became overwhelmed and tearful, the other four immediately put down their instruments and formed a tight huddle to comfort and encourage her. (Pretty sure this doesn't happen in all-male bands.)

For the majority of their adult lives, these women have shared joys and sorrows as they faced life's critical steps – careers, marriage, children, losses – forming both a sisterhood with each other and a family of devoted followers inspired by their music and spirit.

One time, right before a Weda Skirts show in Winfield's Walnut Valley Festival, I asked the young man sitting next to me if he knew the upcoming band. He answered

incredulously: "These are my people!" and proceeded to sing along to every song, knowing all the lyrics.

What is the magic of this group? What inspires such devotion in their fans?

First, yes, their music is gorgeous. The rich blend of instruments and "soaring harmonies" of their clear, female voices alone can bring me to tears. But their sincere message is what most touches the heart and lifts the spirit: it's about how, in an often-frightening world, music can be "medicine" – helping us find joy and solace in nature and in each other.

Most of their songs are written by lead singer and founder, Elexa Dawson. A member of the Citizen Band Potawatomi Nation, her songs embody Native American values. In "Many Moons," she sits by the fire and gives thanks to the Earth. In "Glad We Came," she pledges loyalty and friendship: "We might not be family but we're kindred just the same."

All the other women write songs, too, and for all the joy they spread with their smiles and often light-hearted tunes, each is also deeply thoughtful, responding honestly to the serious anxieties of our time.



In "Love and Light," Melissa Tastove feels helpless confronting the world's many crises by herself, concluding, "I need all my people beside me" where we can "stand together... Guided by our love and light we won't give up." In "Sometimes," my daughter Emily Wilson Barnes writes of how we can pretend to be OK but sometimes want to "scream and cry out loud, make the sounds of anguish of our people."

The group finds the Flint Hills and the Tallgrass Prairie to be the source of their inspiration. In "Strong City," Rachel Allai writes of a land "where the prairie meets the sky." Sarah Bays' historical ballad "Flood of '51" describes the deluge which inundated her grandparents' farm, when "Nature showed us all we are not in control and took us to our knees."

Standing together and supporting each other through life's challenges, the Weda Skirts exemplify the strength of unity – with each other, with their listeners, with the land. Elexa Dawson writes: "I am not just me, and you are not just you. We are something bigger and together we get through."

For more Stories & Songs of the Flint Hills, see tallgrassexpress.com

School grant awarded to the city.

Armbrust said Alta Vista has re-ceived approximately \$680,000 to-ward an estimated \$800,000 project to improve pedestrian safety around Prairie Heights, including side-walks, walking routes and access to the school's designated emergency evacuation location.

The grant requires a 20 percent lo-cal match, and Armbrust asked the district to consider contributing approximately \$75,000 toward the project.

However, he cautioned that the funding is specifically tied to the continued operation of Prairie Heights. If the school closes, the project would no longer qualify, and the city would have to return the state money. Armbrust said he had confirmed that requirement with KDOT.

Although the state has indicated some willingness to extend or mod-ify grant deadlines, uncertainty about the school's future complicates the city's ability to proceed.

Armbrust emphasized that Prairie Heights is an integral part of Alta Vista's community and its long-term planning. His own children attend the school and walk to classes.

Board Considers Consolidation Scenarios

Later, Eslinger presented prelimi-nary enrollment and staffing scenar-ios should the district decide to con-solidate Prairie Heights with Coun-cil Grove Elementary School.

One option would maintain the district's current elementary class-room capacity of 20 students and create additional sections, poten-tially allowing most Prairie Heights employees to transfer to Council Grove. Another would involve larg-er classes, fewer sections and possi-ble staffing reductions.

Eslinger noted that declining en-rollment, particularly in younger grades, is contributing to the dis-trict's financial challenges.

Board members also questioned the wisdom of closing the district's newest school building while con-sidering additional classroom space elsewhere. Talley suggested exam-ining the possibility of transporting some Council Grove students to Alta Vista rather than closing Prairie Heights.

Questions arose about the future use of the building and whether the district was moving too quickly to-ward closure. Eslinger explained that the board is not required to make an immediate decision follow-ing the November 4 public hearing. If members even-tually decide to close Prairie Heights, a separate res-olution would be necessary.

The board subsequently approved the 4-2 motion to publish the hear-ing notice.

Other Board Actions

The board held two executive ses-sions concerning non-elected per-sonnel, with no action taken in ei-ther session.

In open session, members ap-proved the employment of Mack-enzie Wingo as a Council Grove Elementary School cook and the retirement of Prairie Heights music teacher Kathy Lamberson at the con-clusion of the 2026-27 contract year.

The next regular USD 417 Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 9, at a loca-tion to be determined.

Before then, residents will have an opportunity to address the potential closing of Prairie Heights Elemen-tary School during the November 4 public hearing.



CG HOPE
A Proud Member of
Empower Kansas

WIN \$100 OF GASOLINE OR DIESEL!

Help raise Council Grove Christmas decorating funds for the non-profit CG HOPE.



Tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20.



Buy tickets at:

- Council Grove Republican, 302 W. Main, Council Grove
- Saddlerock Cafe, 15 S Sixth St., Council Grove



Drawings will take place weekly through November.
Drawings will take place on Mondays, with the first drawing Monday, October 19.



Adams 66 Service is partnering with CG HOPE in this fundraising effort.



Support the community while entering to win fuel!

MORRIS COUNTY GENERAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



Handicap Accessible

Rides are scheduled on a first come, first serve basis

501 West Main, Council Grove
Office Hours: Monday thru Friday
8:00 am to 4:00 pm

**-Medical Appointments
-Business
-Pleasure**

620-767-5426

This Project Funded in part by the KDOT Public Transit Program