

**By Jan Schultz**  
**The Imperial Republican**

A change in how Chase County Schools contracts for its fuel for busses and other vehicles will change during 2009.

Based on the vote at the Dec. 9 meeting, the board of education has contracted with Frenchman Valley Co-op for a different fuel price each month, versus one locked-in price throughout the year.

The volatility of the fuel market resulted in the change, said Supt. Matt Fisher.

Actually, for 2008, the school did not sign a contract on locked-in fuel prices because of a delay in the bid process last year and the high prices then that board members hoped had peaked. Consequently, school busses and vehicles have paid the daily price at the co-op pump this year.

However, next year, a locked-in monthly price is set for both diesel and gasohol in the school's contract, starting in January at \$2.31 for diesel and \$1.77 for gasohol. The prices change every month until December, 2009, when they reach \$2.69 for diesel and \$2.14 for gasohol.

Supt. Fisher said, "The advantage of doing this is that it's at a locked-in price each month and is considerably less than what we budgeted for."

However, he added, "It's all a gamble, but at least it takes us out of the fluctuations of the market and we know what we'll be paying."

The down side is that prices could continue to fall for several months yet, making it cheaper at the pump.

The contract excludes the months of June, July and August for diesel.

Dianne Way of the co-op said the prices in the contract were set where they are based on the futures market, and are minus the state and federal taxes, which schools do not have to pay.

Frenchman Valley Co-op was the only bidder on the school's fuel supplies for 2009.

The vote on the contract approval was 7-0-1, with co-op employee Tom Gaschler abstaining. Francisca Morales was absent.

**School's contracted fuel prices for 2009**

Diesel—Busses Net Contract

January	\$2.317
February	\$2.385
March	\$2.430
April	\$2.461
May	\$2.501
September	\$2.614
October	\$2.651
November	\$2.669

December \$2.693

Gasohol—Other school vehicles Net Contract

January \$1.775  
February \$1.846  
March \$1.986  
April \$2.026  
May \$2.066  
June \$2.096  
July \$2.106  
August \$2.146  
September \$2.076  
October \$2.096  
November \$2.096  
December \$2.146

**Other school board business**

- The bleacher situation with CBS Contractors of McCook remains unresolved. The school's building committee met since November's meeting and suggested leaving the bleachers as they are (with tongues that attach the two sections in the wrong place and put in permanently vs. being removable). They recommended adding another removable tongue on one end, so they are towable, and make some other adjustments on the railings so they can fold up as originally contracted to do. CBS offered to make the changes if no liquidated damages are assessed. Board members didn't favor that, although Gregg Smith felt more negotiation is needed before a possible lawsuit results. Smith suggested a meeting to include the board committee, engineer W Design and CBS. Supt Fisher said the school is willing to negotiate some, but not walk away without assessing some damages to CBS for missing the completion deadline and not following some of the bid specs. The school is holding out \$41,000.

- Based on information at November's school board convention, Supt. Matt Fisher isn't sure what will happen to Chase County Schools' state aid for the 2009-2010 year, but there will probably be no increase. "The best case scenario is it will stay the same," he told board members. State aid figures will be certified in February, but those figures are often recertified after the legislature meets. This year, CCS is operating with \$566,391 in state aid, compared to \$760,100 for 2007-08. Also attending the convention in Omaha were board members Sheila Stromberger and Tom Gaschler.

- A morning school bus pickup service for in-town students will start the second week in

January, Supt. Fisher said. There has been interest from a couple of people to drive the morning in-town route in a bus separate from those picking up rural students. The driver will be paid \$20 per morning trip. School board members indicated an interest in trying out the service, after a request from parents and a day care/preschool provider this fall. CCS has provided an afternoon drop-off service for in-town students for several years.

- Board members approved a resolution that authorizes the county to work on behalf of the school, as well as for the county itself, in the development of Chase County's hazard mitigation plan. By participating in the plan, the school can then be eligible to apply for grant funds, which could be used toward the cost of the reverse 911 phone system the school is considering or for back-up generators.

- Elementary Principal Nathan Vitosh reported a new K-6 language arts curriculum will be used in the 2009-2010 school year. He and some of the staff will be attending a three-day workshop in North Platte early next year, where they will be able to evaluate different curriculums.

- The board held first reading on a school board meetings policy, making some minor changes, with a desire to be in compliance with Nebraska's Open Meetings Law.

- On a unanimous vote, the board recognized the Imperial Education Association (IEA) as the certificated staff's negotiating body for 2009-2010 contracts.

- Student board member Scott Lakey said he's had some requests from students to ask the board about shortening the eight class periods each day by one minute each, adding the additional time onto the lunch period. Currently, classes are 47 minutes in length. The board took no action on the request. Supt. Fisher said it's the administrators' feeling lunch time is long enough, but there are also required minutes each day that students must be in class in order for CCS to be accredited. On another subject, the board encouraged Lakey to continue gathering input from students on the laptop program, as the board will soon consider whether to continue it or not.

- Signing another two-year contract with the Alliance Public Schools for participation in its holiday tournament for 2009 and 2010 was discussed. Alliance will continue to pay \$500 each year to CCS to help with its travel expenses, according to the new contract the school has received. Board President Sheila Stromberger recalled that holiday tournaments were discussed last year, with some concern about how they cut into the holiday break and interferences with family time. This year's holiday tournament on Dec. 29-30 comes right after the five-day mandated moratorium on any school activities, so teams will have no organized practices before playing in it. Principal Mike Sorensen said all of the other SPVA schools take part in holiday tournaments, and they give teams an opportunity to see other schools they don't play in the regular season. If the school would choose not to be involved in a holiday tourney, it could be difficult to find two other games to replace it, Sorensen added. No clear consensus was given on the 2009-10 contract.

- An informational program on the English Language Learners (ELL) program at CCS was given by instructor Melody Newman and Jamie Garner of ESU #15, which assists the program here.

- Recognition of outgoing board members Cindy Arterburn and Francisca Morales came at the end of the meeting. Arterburn received her plaque at the meeting after serving eight years. Morales, who served a total of five years, will receive her plaque later. New board members are Karl Meeske and Todd Burpo, who will take their oaths of office in January.

