By Carolyn Lee
The Imperial Republican

The Chase County Schools board began a new year Tuesday evening by electing officers, welcoming a new member and discussing safety issues and repairs to the school.

The board elected Jeff Olsen president, replacing retiring president Charley Colton. Other officers remained the same—Gregg Smith, vice president; Tom Gaschler, secretary and Penny Strand, treasurer.

New board member Willy O'Neil was sworn into office. He was elected in November to fill Colton's spot.

Committee assignments were made, with a new technology committee formed with Olsen and Dirk Haarberg as members.

Safety concerns

In light of the December mass shooting of students and staff at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, CCS is reviewing safety issues. A safety committee has been meeting regularly for the last several years.

Superintendent Dr. Brad Schoeppey said the committee is discussing several things "that need to happen. I won't go into detail now," as he is still receiving costs, but the measures will be discussed at the next board meeting.

One example would be how to lock classrooms from the inside. At present, a teacher needs to go into the hallway to lock the door with a key.

Smith brought up the fact that substitute teachers aren't issued keys at present. He also brought up the possibility of an agreement with local law enforcement to patrol the school and establish their presence.

Other board members pointed out that police already monitor traffic before and after school, and are also frequently in school for presentations and body conditioning.

Other safety concerns brought up for review included students carrying backpacks throughout the day instead of checking them at their lockers; exterior doors propped open; alarms on doors that are opened when they shouldn't be, and intruder drills.

Dr. Schoeppey said intruder drills haven't been held this year. He wants to wait to conduct one until the
Sandy Hook tragedy isn't so recent so as not to create a panic situation among young students.

Dr. Schoeppey said the tragedy is "One of those things you think will never happen at our school. We want to make sure the school is as safe as we can make it."

Although a determined intruder won't be deterred by locks, Dr. Schoeppey said the goal is to "Try to slow a person down until we can get the police here. We'll try to make it as difficult as possible" to gain access to the school.

Roof repair

The board is reviewing a summary of remaining repairs needed on the school's roof. At the next board meeting members will decide which repairs to tackle this summer.

Dr. Schoeppey said money was left in this year's budget's building fund for the repairs. In addition there is about $150,000 in the general fund for the project.

He said the school could finance about $300,000 in repairs this summer, with about that much more to be done the following summer.

Roof areas still in need of repair are the band/vocal at $100,000; the high school gym at

$140,000; the high school hall at $60,000; the kitchen at $100,000; the center main at $290,000 and the elementary gym at $70,000.

Although no decisions were made Tuesday night, board members agreed that the band/vocal roof should probably be repaired this summer, as some leaking has occurred.

Gym floors

It was Dr. Schoeppey's recommendation that the elementary and high school gym floors be totally sanded down and repainted this year.

"In the life of a floor you can only sand it a couple of times," he noted. The floors are 20 years old and although the elementary gym floor was reportedly sanded shortly after installation, both gym floors now need work.

Dr. Schoeppey said bleachers being rolled out over the floors, plus water damage around drinking fountains, required the work.

He has received three bids from companies in Sidney, Doniphan and Wyoming that are fairly comparable at around $30,000. They include sanding and painting lines and logos. The board will discuss the bids at the next meeting.

Pay schedules

The board also discussed changing the pay date of classified personnel from the first of the month to another date or the tenth of the month, when certified (teacher) personnel are paid.

The change was proposed because overtime, sick leave and personal leave run the 16th of a month to the following 15th of the next month, so aren't included in the proper pay period for classified personnel.

In addition, a new financial system makes the payroll procedure quicker, so there is no longer a need for two separate pay periods.

Although no action was taken, the board agreed that if personnel are given enough notice concerning the change, they will be able to adjust their automatic bill paying accordingly.

The big change will only be the first time they receive a check following the date change.

In other business, the board approved the hiring of Andres Huicochea as director of maintenance, effective Jan. 2. Six candidates were interviewed for the position.

The board also approved, on a 7-1 vote, a sabbatical leave for English Language Learner teacher Connie Thompson. She will take the 2013-14 school year off to take care of family matters.

School policy mandates that a teacher return to teach for a year following a sabbatical.