

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

Members of the Chase County Schools' board of education spent some money at their recent meeting on June 9.

An upgrade to the computer network, new carpeting, a new phone system, providing matching grant funds for football field crumb rubber, as well as higher salaries for teachers and classified staff were all approved at last week's meeting.

The board will also be considering bids on new laptops for the high school students in July.

In addition, the board directed the administration to begin advertising to hire three additional teacher aides, mainly to assist with the new Reading Mastery program being instituted in the elementary grades this fall.

While the purchases were all approved last week, not all of them came on a unanimous vote.

### **Computer network upgrade; new laptop bids in July**

The board unanimously approved a proposal from Allo Communications to upgrade the school's computer network.

Allo currently has the school contract for the computer network and laptop program management.

The board approved a \$39,507 expense for two new servers, new switches and software. Nick Colton of Allo said the school now has three different servers that are from four to 10 years old, and lack of space on those servers has become an issue.

The two new servers will have more storage space than the three old ones, he said, and should serve the school at least four years.

Colton said the switch should improve Internet access at the school, especially when an entire classroom is logged into the same site.

Supt. Matt Fisher said budget dollars, technology funds and money from the school's depreciation fund will be used for that expense.

Jerel Fortkamp, also with Allo, visited with the board about different laptop styles to consider as the school plans to bid new laptops for its high school students.

The board will seek bids on both PC and Mac laptops for a vote in July.

Fortkamp said a total of 185 Dell laptops were returned after the past school year, 110 of which are in good condition.

The school plans to buy out the \$18,000 lease on the laptops, using some of them elsewhere in the school and junior high. The balance of them are being sold.

The teachers will continue to use the laptops they now have. Only new ones for the students will be bid in July.

### **Phone system upgrade**

Board members voted 9-0 to replace the school's phone system, which is the original one put in almost 20 years ago.

The new system will have speaker phone capability, will convert a voice mail to email to the school employee if the voice mail isn't picked up and will transfer calls from the main school to the bus barn and Wellington site, which can't be done now.

The proposal from Business Telecommunications Systems of North Platte for \$14,635 was

approved.

The price does not include wiring and includes trade-in of the old system.

### **Crumb rubber on fields**

Voting 8-1, the board approved acceptance of a 50/50 Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality grant for applying crumb rubber to the East 9th St. football fields at a cost of \$14,220 to the school.

Application of crumb rubber was also done on the Wellington football field several years ago. Kent Silvester said it has provided a better, softer playing surface, which drains better and requires less resodding.

The school's matching dollars included paying someone to install the crumb rubber, but school staff can install it themselves, according to Supt. Fisher. With those dollars saved, the school plans to buy a \$7,400 Aera-vator, which will be needed to prepare the ground for the crumb rubber.

The school will retain ownership of the Aera-vator, which can then be used in other areas, such as softball field prep, playgrounds and lawns, according to Fisher.

He said building fund dollars, which total about \$450,000, will be used for this expense.

Board President Sheila Stromberger voted against the grant acceptance and application, saying she was concerned whether the money was there to spend and whether there was a guarantee the fields would benefit.

### **New carpet in elementary area**

A total of \$31,835 was spent for installation of new carpet in the elementary hallway. The price will include removal, repair of any floor cracks underneath, carpet installation and faceboard.

It will replace the original carpet in that hallway. Supt. Fisher will see if they can use squares in the cross hallways, to compare how it wears versus the roll carpet.

It passed on an 8-1 vote with Penny Strand objecting.

### **Other school board business**

Classified staff members will receive an across-the-board 50-cent raise for the 2009-10 year. With a 5% increase in the school's health insurance package, in which classified employees can take part, the package equates to a 5.4% overall increase, said Supt. Matt Fisher. With the minimum wage increasing in July to \$7.25, board member Todd Burpo suggested that the board consider more of an increase to those employees at that level. Supt. Fisher said the school's classified wages are in line with other employees in the community, in addition to the insurance package. The vote was 8-1 to adopt the 50-cent increase, with Burpo voting no. With the motion was a \$1,400 raise for maintenance supervisor Kent Silvester, who is the single classified employee on a salary. He'll be paid \$46,400 next year. Most classified employees received at least a 50-cent raise the past year, with some receiving 70-cent per-hour increases.

State aid to CCS next year will be \$55,314 lower than the 2008-09 school year. With some corrections made by the state, CCS will receive \$511,076 next year in state aid. "It's better news than what it could have been," said Supt. Fisher, whose last projections from the state showed CCS could have lost as much as \$108,000 next year.

Only three applications had been received for Becky Mousel's grade 5-8 special ed. position, said Supt. Fisher, which he said is his biggest concern with all of the restaffing necessary for the

coming school year. There were three applicants, but as of last week, no candidates to recommend. If a certificated staff person can't be found, they may consider hiring someone not fully endorsed, try to cover with other staff or hire someone at the semester, if available, Supt. Fisher said. There are also several coaching positions yet to fill, a bus driver, a bus mechanic and teacher aides.

Phyllis Mock, who has been a school route and activity bus driver since 1995, resigned from her position at the end of the past school year. The board accepted her resignation.