

PLAN

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The current strategic plan was implemented after a community-wide process two years ago that involved more than 400 parents, teachers, administrators and concerned citizens. The result was six goals to lead the district into the future.

"I was very pleased to note that there wasn't a major burning issue as it related to the school system," Gertsema said. "Overall, it seems like people like what we are doing with the school system."

The six goals identified included exploring high school reform, increasing programming for at-risk students at the middle school, identifying desirable class-size ratios, partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to help recruit businesses to Yankton, implementing a plan to have one common facility of all early childhood programs, and building a pre-k-5 elementary school to replace Beadle and Webster.

"As I reviewed the process from the last two years, a couple of the goals are out of reach, a couple have been very successful," Gertsema said. "An issue like student ratio is an ongoing discussion across the country. It is not unique. Likewise, I am glad we are having discussions about reading issues and that we are seeing great results from the programs we are using. Another program that came out of the process was the creation of the freshman academy."

While there have been successful programs to emerge from several of the goals, there are also goals that have been more problematic.

"Goals 4-5, the facility issues, we combined," Gertsema said. "Meeting this goal by 2011 isn't going to happen. It is not a bad idea; it is just coming up with the right situation to meet it."

Gertsema said the need for preschool education is growing faster than the school can address it.

"Preschool education is growing, but it would grow faster if it was funded by the state. It is a tuition-based program," he said. "We had 45 students last school year; this year, we will have 90 students enrolled — it might even be 91. We are getting a lot of requests for the program; it has been driven by the parents. We are not trying to cut into the private sector market, but we get the requests and we want to meet the need. We are just responding."

Because the strategic planning process is one that changes as the needs of the district change, Gertsema said he will again be coming to community members to help plan the future of the school.

"What I am going to do is share with the board in August the six goals that were established by the board two years ago," he said. "The next step will again be to get a cross-representation of board members, teachers, parents and administrators, and tell them where we are in terms of the established goals and ask for their input on any changes or new goals."

Gertsema said funding it still a huge issue.

"The school board's goal for 2010-2011 was to employ as many people as we could, and we are using cash reserves to do it," he said. "We are going to need some help in 2011-2012 budget. It will be critically important that we find a new revenue source or we will have to make some cuts..."

"Another issue we are facing is the opt-out process. We are the only district in the area that has not looked at this in the past. The board may be forced to pursue one."

Because of that, Gertsema said community input would be vital in regards to which programs and goals to target.

"The goals may have to be rewritten ... we are active in being a good advocate for the community," he said. "We need to be in synch with what is going on in the community to help make sure we are meeting the needs in the community. ... At the end of the day we are just trying to provide the best education for our kids, that is our final goal."

Closing Deadline Extended For Homebuyer Credit Purchases

WASHINGTON — Eligible taxpayers who contracted to buy a home, qualifying for the first-time homebuyer credit, before the end of April now have until Sept. 30, 2010 to close the deal, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

The Homebuyer Assistance and Improvement Act of 2010, signed by the President July 2, extended the closing deadline from June 30 to Sept. 30 for any eligible homebuyer who entered into a binding purchase contract on or before April 30 to close on the purchase of the home on or before June 30, 2010. The new law addresses concerns that many homebuyers might be

unable to meet the original June 30 closing deadline.

The IRS reminds taxpayers that special filing and documentation requirements apply to anyone claiming the homebuyer credit. To avoid refund delays, those who entered into a purchase contract on or before April 30, but closed after that date, should attach to their return a copy of the pages from the signed contract showing all parties' names and signatures if required by local law, the property address, the purchase price, and the date of the contract.

Besides filling out Form 5405, First-Time Homebuyer Credit

and Repayment of the Credit, all eligible homebuyers must also include with their return one of the following documents:

- A copy of the settlement statement showing all parties' names and signatures if required by local law, property address, sales price, and date of purchase. Normally, this is the properly executed Form HUD-1, Settlement Statement.

- For mobile home purchasers who are unable to get a settlement statement, a copy of the executed retail sales contract showing all parties' names and signatures, property address, purchase price and date of purchase.

- For a newly constructed home where a settlement statement is not available, a copy of the certificate of occupancy showing the owner's name, property address and date of the certificate.

Besides providing a tax benefit to first-time homebuyers and purchasers who haven't owned homes in recent years, the law allows a long-time resident of the same main home to claim the credit if they purchase a new principal residence. To qualify, eligible taxpayers must show that they lived in their old homes for a five-consecutive-year period during the eight-year period ending on the purchase

date of the new home. Homebuyers claiming this credit can avoid refund delays by attaching documentation covering the five-consecutive-year period:

- Form 1098, Mortgage Interest Statement, or substitute mortgage interest statements,
- Property tax records or
- Homeowner's insurance records.

More details on claiming the credit can be found in the instructions to Form 5405, as well as on the First-Time Homebuyer Credit page on IRS.gov.

SIGNAL

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the intersection and states that it should be synchronized with the signal at Fourth Street and Broadway Avenue.

Before Broadway was reconstructed earlier in the decade, Yankton-area engineer for the SDDOT Ron Peterson said, there was a signal at that intersection.

"A study was done at that time, and it was found a signal wasn't warranted," he said. "There weren't enough turning movements, and plus there was the close proximity of the Fourth Street signal, so you couldn't maintain any progression."

The decision to remove the signal was initially met with strong opposition, Peterson

recalled. However, he has heard no complaints since that time.

He said any petitions to change the situation would be examined by SDDOT officials in Pierre.

"We'll take a look at the petition and their reasoning," Peterson said. "I'm sure we'll have our traffic folks take a look at what's happening in the intersection as far as pedestrian movements, turning movements and traffic volumes. If changes are warranted, we'll certainly revisit it."

Late last week, Ven Osdel said he had collected nearly 100 signatures of support from area residents. He said he had yet to speak with state officials about the petition.

"I've been getting a consensus from people, and they like it," he said. "We're going to make (the SDDOT) do something. It's going to be the voice of the residents of Yankton."

JAIL

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year, \$106,000 has come from holding federal inmates.

Other revenue sources include the 24/7 Program, commissary, holds for other agencies, fingerprints and the work release program.

The jail is still nowhere near being profitable — total expenses through June exceeded \$466,000 — but the extra revenue does make a difference.

"If you can offset the costs, that helps everybody," Hunhoff said. "That's what we're doing, and I think we're doing a good job of it."

Of course, that kind of increase in inmates doesn't come without its costs. No staffing increases have been necessary at this point, other than some part-time help to administer the 24/7 Program. But it is a need that could arise.

"We do everything for these inmates," Hunhoff said. "We take them to doctor appointments every day. We pick up medicine for them. It takes more time to feed them. All that adds up. The jailers are working twice as hard."

When the jail population is consistently over 60, Hunhoff said it would be prudent to look at either more full-time or part-time staffing.

"The income would be there," he said. "At the same time, we've proven we can hold 67 with the same staff."

Putting aside the sudden increase in federal inmates being held, Hunhoff said the number of local inmates has not risen dramatically. The number of county inmates has ranged between 54 and 85 a month since January, while the number of City of Yankton inmates has been between 45 and 99.

"Some people thought (the number of local prisoners would increase quickly)," Hunhoff stated. "They said, 'If you build this jail, it will be full.' I disagreed. I didn't see any reason why that would be the

case. I think we were right on that. I expect it to continue to increase gradually, unless something major happens to cause a change."

The jail was built to be able to hold dozens more prisoners, and he said the county will continue to look at ways to utilize it. For example, if a rural county in the region decides to discontinue the operation of its jail, Hunhoff said he would attempt to contract for those prisoners.

"We can handle them, and I think we should want to handle them," he said. "But you also have to look at adding staff. It's not all gravy."

In the meantime, Hunhoff looks forward to nurturing the county's relationship with the Marshals Service and perhaps holding more prisoners for it in the future.

"We charge less than some other places to hold inmates," he said. "We're a little smaller and can run a little more efficient operation. That's got to show up in their budgets. I think it's a good deal for the taxpayers, and it's a good deal for the feds, too."



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