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Medicaid Processing System Deadlocked In Contract Fight

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — Frustration filled the room at a legislative meeting Wednesday over what's become a three-year deadlock between the state Department of Social Services and a major technology company hired to create a new Medicaid management information system for processing claims.

CNSI received the contract in 2008 but halted work in 2010 as the two sides went to state court against each other on the far-from-finished project. Federal authorities, who are responsible for 90 percent of the project's costs, made the company and South Dakota use a mediator instead.

Approximately \$50 million has been paid so far on what was supposed to be a contract for \$62 million. CNSI has won a variety of major contracts from the federal government and other states but is facing a lawsuit and investigation in Louisiana over a state contract there.

The sessions with the mediator haven't been fruitful yet, according to state Social Services Secretary Kim Malsom-Rysdon.

She told members of the Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee that CNSI has asked for contract changes that are unacceptable to the Daugaard administration and CNSI wants more time than the 36-month completion schedule that South Dakota and federal officials proposed.

Malsom-Rysdon acknowledged she was off the mark when she stated in June that work could resume in August. Asked how much the project will cost to finish, she replied, "That is the key question."

She wouldn't even give a range. One reason for her refusal, she said, was the federal government ordered additional changes in Medicaid expense reporting during the three years the project sat stalled.

Several legislators spoke frankly about their disgruntlement with the situation.

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A Sign Of Success

City Officials Praise Community For Quickly Implementing Sign Ordinance

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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Yankton is advertising itself a little differently these days, and city officials are amazed by the speed of the transition.

A new sign ordinance went into effect July 21, and Community Development Director Dave Mingo said that almost all businesses are already in compliance. Normally, he expects that process to take anywhere from 6-12 months.

"There are hundreds of locations in the community that the new ordinance had an impact

on," he stated. "After the initial mailing we did to every single business in the community (explaining the ordinance), there were 36 businesses that maybe didn't have a clear understanding, so we touched base with them a second time. After that, there were approximately nine businesses that we touched base with a third time. Now, everything is pretty much in compliance. I say that with the understanding that this is an ongoing administrative process. Right now, it's a matter of standard ordinance maintenance where we address issues as they come up. But the initial implementation went unbelievably well."

After 18 months of development, the new sign ordinance received approval from the Yankton City Commission earlier this summer.

The ordinance was first implemented in 1958 and underwent revisions in 1976 and 1979.

When setting out to rewrite the ordinance, Mingo said there were three goals:

- streamlining the permitting process through a series of regulated exemptions, making the process more user friendly;

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COURTESY PHOTO

Patrick Binder, 16, of Yankton, was named to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Youth Advisory Board this summer.

Local Teen Named To Advisory Board

BY ROB NIELSEN
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Patrick Binder admits at one time he didn't have the healthiest of lifestyles. But his hard work to change this trend has landed him on the Youth Advisory Board for the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

"In middle school, I was definitely not living a lifestyle and I just didn't feel like I fit in," Binder the Yankton teen says. "In eighth grade, I joined track and I really turned my life around. I started eating healthier and exercising more often. When I started exercising I lost a lot of weight and started to become more healthy and this continued all through my freshman year."

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation was founded by the American Heart Association and the Clinton Foundation with the goal of reducing childhood obesity.

"Once you really put your mind to it, becoming healthier is probably one of the most life-changing things that a person can ever do. ... It's a really great thing that everybody should strive for."

PATRICK BINDER

Including Binder, there are 21 people on the Youth Advisory Board from across the country ranging in age from 10-18.

The 16-year-old Binder says he heard about the opportunity at school and wanted to get involved in order to help other youths going through the same situation he had.

"I found out about the board from the announcements at school, and I thought it would be a great opportunity to get my story out there and really help kids who are going through the same thing I did,"

Binder says. "I really think the Youth Advisory Board is a great beacon of hope for kids because it seems like it's impossible, but it really is (possible) and kids can look at my story and all the other kids on the advisory board to see that."

Binder, who was accepted onto the board this summer, met with fellow board members in Charlotte, N.C. this summer where he learned more about the board and was given a task for when he returned to Yankton.

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Mo. River Rescue Has Happy Resolution

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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One man was retrieved from an island just downstream from Yankton's Riverside Park Tuesday night by emergency responders.

A report was received at 8:36 p.m. that a male wearing a life jacket was unable to get to the boat ramp in Riverside Park because of the Missouri River current. He was one of five individuals who had been tubing down the river, according to Yankton County Emergency Management Director Paul Scherschligt.

Yankton County Search and Rescue, Yankton County EMS and the Yankton Police Department responded to the incident.

"The rescue teams got on the water and started looking for the person," Scherschligt said. "We had some ground teams working the shore on both sides of the river."

"I think within 40 minutes, someone was heard yelling from the island east of the boat ramp," he continued. "He was stranded on the island. The ground team was able to radio the boat to pick him up."

All five of the subjects were evaluated by emergency personnel and were fine, Scherschligt said.

"Everyone worked together and there was good communication," he said of the responders. "It was a successful rescue."

For those doing activities on the water, Scherschligt said it is important to be aware of the surroundings, such as the current and snags, and to wear a life jacket at all times.

"This gentleman that we rescued had his on, and it worked," he stated.

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage

Bus Safety A Priority In Yankton Schools

BY DEREK BARTOS
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"The bus driver is going to stop the bus. Show me what the bus should look like and sound like," instructed third-grade teacher MaryBeth Herrboldt.

The bus fell silent and each student faced forward, keeping the aisle clear. They were making sure any individual getting on or off the bus would have a clear path and that the driver would be free of any distractions.

The rule was one of many covered Wednesday during Bus Safety Day at Beadle Elementary School. Each year, the elementary schools in the Yankton School District hold the event to instruct their

students on bus rules and regulations.

"The driver's number-one job is to keep all of you safe," Herrboldt told her class. "He or she can do that job as long as you follow the rules of being on the bus."

Teachers at the school took turns using the stationary bus parked outside to inform and illustrate the rules to students in their classes. Each presentation took approximately 15 minutes.

All students underwent the instruction, regardless if they regularly use the buses or other transportation to get to school, said Beadle Principal Carey Mitzel.

"They're probably going to

SAFETY | PAGE 13



DEREK BARTOS/P&D

Third-grade students at Beadle Elementary School in Yankton board a bus Wednesday to listen to a presentation during Bus Safety Day. The district-wide event is held each year to teach elementary students bus rules and regulations.

Expert: School Funding Should Be Predictable

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — A national school-finance expert echoed a concern on Wednesday that many Nebraska schools have raised in recent years: that state aid needs to be predictable.

Policy analyst Michael Griffith advised Nebraska lawmakers to look for ways to make it easier for schools to anticipate how much money they will receive from state government.

Griffith, who works for the Denver-based Education Commission of the States, said schools want the ability to predict how much state money they might gain or lose with each student.

But state aid for individual districts has fluctuated in recent years, in part because of surging farmland values and rising student enrollment in urban schools. The shift has led to

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