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SHAUNA MARLETTE/P&D

**Jay Williams presented a motion to move forward with a \$1.8 million, one-year opt-out at Monday's monthly school board meeting. The motion failed when there was no second presented from other members of the school board. The district's 2013-2014 budget will be discussed in more detail at the February meeting. Pictured are district business manager Jason Bietz, board president Chris Specht, superintendent Joe Gertsema, Kathy Greeneway and Williams.**

## YSD Board: Supt. Search Firm, Yes; Opt-Out, No

BY DEREK BARTOS

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The Yankton School Board decided Monday night to use a professional recruiting firm for assistance with its search for a new superintendent.

Also at the meeting, a school board member's motion for a proposed property tax opt-out failed to garner a second, as the board chose to continue its budget discussion at its next monthly meeting.

During their discussion on whether to utilize a recruiting firm, all school board members agreed that outside help was necessary for a thorough and productive superintendent search.

"We're all full-time employees," said board member Kathy Greeneway. "The amount of time it's going to take and dedicate to look at the candidates we come across ... I would just utilize the opportunities that we have."

School board president Chris Specht agreed. "I believe it's imperative that we use a firm," he said. "I don't think doing it on our own is an option ... (We need to) have that expertise in advertising, have that expertise in doing background checks and criminal background checks, and ensure that the candidates that are ultimately brought to the table to interview are candidates that we would expect to be able to do the job."

Following its acceptance last month of current Yankton School District Superintendent Joe Gertsema's resignation effective June 30, the school board put out a request for proposals for recruiting firms interested in aiding the district with its search to fill the position. Four firms responded, and the board discussed the proposals at Monday night's meeting.

Interested firms included the Associated School Boards of South Dakota (ASBSD), Dakota Educational Consulting of Vermillion, McPherson and Jacobson of Omaha, Neb., and Ray and Associates of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Costs of the proposals ranged from \$3,000 plus

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## Jail Escapee Captured In S.F.

Prisoner Walked Away From Jail  
In October, Nabbed At Motel

BY NATHAN JOHNSON

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A man who escaped from the Yankton County jail last fall was apprehended Monday afternoon in Sioux Falls.

Kai Conrad Hansen was arrested in a motel, according to Yankton County Sheriff Jim Vlahakis. A ve-

hicle Hansen is believed to have stolen from Yankton County after his escape was also recovered.

Vlahakis said the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation, the Sioux Falls Police Department and the Sioux Falls Area Joint Fugitive Task Force were involved in the investigation that led to the arrest. Hansen was immediately transported to the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

When Hansen escaped Oct. 28, he had been wash-

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Kai Conrad Hansen

# Tech Talk At RTEC



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

**Josh Svatos (left), general manager of Yankton's Regional Technical Education Center (RTEC), shows Sen. Tim Johnson one of the "RTEC Android" shirts worn by the LEGO robotics team members, during Johnson's tour of the local facility Monday morning. The South Dakota Democratic lawmaker heard from local officials on the importance of technical education to industry.**

## Johnson 'Skeptical' Of Some Gun Proposals

BY NATHAN JOHNSON

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When it comes to gun control measures, Sen. Tim Johnson (D-S.D.) said Monday he is skeptical whether many of them would be effective but is keeping an open mind for any proposals that come before him.

Johnson spoke about gun control, the debt ceiling battle and other subjects with reporters during a visit to Yankton's Technical Education Center.

President Barack Obama said Monday that he will discuss his plan to reduce gun violence later this week. It will be based on recommendations from a task force headed by Vice President Joe Biden.

"I'm open to any ideas that make kids safer," Johnson said. "That involves a wide range of initiatives, from mental health to whatever. I'm open to all of those ideas. I'm

skeptical about some gun control ideas, but I'm open to them all."

Asked if he would support a ban on assault weapons, he said he had his doubts about such a measure.

"I'll wait and see whatever options come about (regarding gun violence), with mental health playing a key role," Johnson stated.

On the looming fight between Democrats and Republicans in Congress over raising the debt ceiling, Johnson had strong words for the GOP.

"The Republican priorities are messed up," he said.

"The Republicans insist that wealthy people be protected from taxation, and yet they want Social Security and Medicare to be cut. That's the wrong priorities as far as I'm concerned."

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## Johnson Hears About Local Impact Of Technical Ed.

BY NATHAN JOHNSON

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Yankton officials stressed the importance of career and technical education Monday during a visit from Sen. Tim Johnson (D-S.D.).

Johnson toured Yankton's Technical Education Center that houses the Regional Technical Education Center (RTEC), which provides courses in areas such as welding, maintenance technology and manufacturing. Speaking with education, economic development and manufacturing officials, as well as Yankton High School students, Johnson sought to better understand the role of the facility.

"I'm very impressed with what is going on at RTEC," Johnson said. "You should be proud of the cooperation between the community and RTEC. It's true that not everybody needs to go to college, but most people need a secondary education."

Joe Vig, president of Kolberg-Pioneer, Inc., related how dozens of his employees have received training at RTEC.

Tom Bohnet, president of Applied Engineering, said 20-25 percent of his workforce has been through classes at the facility. He added that without RTEC, his business wouldn't be as broad and successful as it has become.

"RTEC is strengthening Yankton's workforce and giving area students the skills they need to compete for good-paying jobs,"

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## Abourezk: U.S. Should Leave The Middle East

BY TRAVIS GULBRANDSON

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VERMILLION — Former Sen. James Abourezk has some advice regarding the United States' foreign policy.

"I think it's in the interest of the United States to get the hell out of the Middle East," he said.

Abourezk spoke about the issue, as well as the rebellion in Syria and the influence of Israel on U.S. policies, Monday during a forum in Farber Hall on the University of South Dakota campus.

The U.S. government currently is aiding the ongoing rebellion in Syria by sending the rebels weapons through Saudi Arabia, Abourezk said.

"My theory is ... the reason we're helping try to overthrow the Syrian regime is that we want to break the alliance between Iran and Syria," he said. "The reason we want to break the alliance — even though Iran is no threat to us — is because Israel wants the regime to be overthrown."

"And that's exactly what's happening."

Abourezk said the U.S. would be better off not to help the rebels overthrow Syria's current leader, Bashar al-Assad, because "that is the most progressive government you'll ever get in Syria."

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DAVID LIAS/VERMILLION PLAIN TALK

**Former U.S. Sen. Jim Abourezk of South Dakota discussed Middle East issues Monday at an international forum held at the University of South Dakota.**

"It's a dictatorship, but they're not making anything better," Abourezk said. "In fact, if the rebels take over, it's going to be worse. Much worse."

Approximately 75-80 percent to Syria's current population consists of Sunni Muslims, which is a more orthodox form of the religion, while the country itself is ruled by an Alawite group.

"The Alawites are considered by Sunnis to be non-believers because they are the progressive religious sect over there," Abourezk said. "For example, they don't require the women to wear veils, where Sunnis mostly do, and the dictator of Syria provides freedom of religion to everybody."

## City Commission OKs Grant Money For Flood Problems

BY NATHAN JOHNSON

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The Yankton City Commission approved the receipt of more than \$2 million in federal assistance Monday as part of an effort to avert problems related to future Missouri River flooding.

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced in December that the city had been awarded \$2,069,600 through its Disaster Relief Opportunity Program. The grants are aimed at creating resiliency against future flooding events.

"The majority of this is going to be used to repair damage that was done during the flooding a couple years ago," Mayor Nancy Wenande said, referring to summer 2011. "It's going to help with the outfall piping system from the wastewater treatment plant and replacement of the East Highway 50 lift stations."

Kyle Goodmanson, the city's environmental services director, said the flooding caused river water to back up into the wastewater plant.

"Rather than just replacing the outfall pipe with a standard one, we're putting in a box structure that will give us the abil-



Wenande

ity to shut valves," he stated. "It will also have temporary pumps to pump water out. We didn't have that ability."

The high water levels in 2011 also led to sink holes near the city's two lift stations along East Highway 50. In addition, the structures were getting old and had capacity issues, according to Goodmanson.

One lift station is near the Chesterman Company, and the other is near Vishay Dale Electronics.

"This will combine them into one larger lift station, which will be farther south of the Vishay-Dale Electronics lift station," Goodmanson said.

He added that it will probably be August before the project is put out to bidders.

The City Commission unanimously approved the EDA financial assistance. Commissioners Pauline Aklund, Paul Lowrie and Brad Woerner were absent

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