

Teen From Youth Rehab Academy Arrested

CUSTER (AP) — One of two teenagers who authorities say ran away from a youth rehabilitation facility in western South Dakota earlier this month has been arrested.

The state Department of Corrections on Monday said the 16-year-old boy was arrested during a traffic stop Friday in Rapid City.

The teenagers ran away shortly before 10:30 p.m. July 2 from the State Treatment and Rehabilitation Academy near Custer.

A third teenager who took off from the facility that night was apprehended near the academy hours after the escape.

The teenager who remains at large is described as a 17-year-old Native American male. He is 5 feet 7 inches tall, weighs 150 pounds and has black hair and brown eyes.

Driver Dragged Motorcyclist: Not Charged

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Prosecutors say hit-and-run charges won't be filed because there's no evidence a driver knew his car had hit a motorcyclist and dragged the body of a Lincoln man for more than two miles in January.

Lancaster County Sheriff Terry Wagner said Monday that the driver didn't know the bump he noticed was the body of 38-year-old Gabe Wilken, who'd already crashed. County Attorney Joe Kelly says a hit-and-run charge would require prosecutors to show the driver knew he'd hit someone.

Investigators don't know whether Wilken was alive when he was struck by the driver's sedan after Wilken crashed just after 7 p.m. on Jan. 16. The car driver told investigators he didn't come forward because he didn't know he'd hit Wilken and had heard deputies were looking for a pickup.

Man Gets Probation For Assaulting Father

ELWOOD, Neb. (AP) — A 27-year-old man has been given four years of probation for assaulting his father in south-central Nebraska.

Lexington radio station KRVN reports that Garrett Beck pleaded no contest and was convicted of assault. Prosecutors dropped a weapons charge in exchange for Beck's plea. Records say Beck, of Holdrege, was sentenced last week. He must serve seven days in jail each month for the first 19 months of his probation and serve 30 days at the end of his probation. But the judge also said the jail time could be waived by Beck's probation officer.

Prosecutors say deputies were sent to the Gosper County home of 55-year-old Gary Beck on Nov. 29, 2014. Deputies say the elder Beck complained that his son used a wooden rod to strike his head.

Body Pulled From Missouri River

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa (AP) — Authorities have been trying to identify the body of a man that was pulled from the Missouri River at Council Bluffs.

The body was spotted a little before 5:30 p.m. Sunday just south of the Veterans Memorial Bridge, which connects Council Bluffs with south Omaha, Nebraska. Council Bluffs firefighters recovered the body less than 30 minutes later.

An autopsy has been ordered.

NSU Arts Center Upgrade Progressing

ABERDEEN (AP) — Crews have gutted the Johnson Fine Arts Center at Northern State University as they prepare the facility for a long-anticipated \$14 million upgrade.

Construction began last spring on the project that will add more than 18,000 square feet to the 48,000-square-foot center and give existing spaces updated looks and equipment. Changes include new seating and acoustic improvements in the theater, lobby improvements, a box office, a new black box theatre and new office spaces in which faculty can also teach.

The biggest changes will be in the main theater, NSU Provost Alan LaFave told the American News.

"All new seating, new lighting capacities, they're putting in a new catwalk — an additional catwalk — up above," he said. "All new sound, all new lights, all new seats, a new shell system on stage."

The South Dakota Board of Regents approved the project in April 2013. It was delayed in the summer of 2014 when bids came in millions of dollars over budget, but a group of anonymous donors contributed \$2.5 million to get the project back on track. Ground was broken last May, 10 months later than planned.

The project is expected to conclude in July 2015. Productions in the meantime have been moved to other spots on campus and to the Capitol Theatre in downtown Aberdeen.

"The students have been wonderful and very flexible in dealing with scheduling issues," LaFave said.

Pavement Repairs Set To Begin On I-229

SIoux FALLS (AP) — The South Dakota Department of Transportation is starting road repairs in Sioux Falls on I-229 heading south between the Benson Road interchange and the Louise Avenue interchange.

The pavement repairs are scheduled to begin Monday. The work is set to start in the evening and continue overnight.

Repairs are also expected for the northbound lanes, and the work is set to be done in September.

The department says commuters should expect single lane closures.

Opposing Sides Face Off At Keystone XL Pipeline Hearing

BY JAMES NORD
Associated Press

PIERRE — Opposing sides in the debate over the Keystone XL oil pipeline faced off on Monday in front of the state regulatory panel that is considering for the second time in just over five years whether to approve the construction of the South Dakota portion of the long-delayed project.

TransCanada Corp. and other interested parties offered opening statements and witness testimony began before the Public Utilities Commission in the hearing process that is scheduled to stretch until Aug. 4. The state initially authorized TransCanada's project in 2010, but permits must be revisited if construction doesn't start within four years. The commission is now considering the firm's guarantee that it can complete the project while meeting the conditions of the 2010 approval.

William Taylor, an attorney for TransCanada, said that the project continues to meet the conditions on which the permit is based, and he said witness testimony will demonstrate that. He said the proceedings are not a

"retrial" of the pipeline's merits.

"The time to contest whether the pipeline is a good or a bad idea was in the initial hearing" in 2010, he said.

Robin Martinez, an attorney with opposition group Dakota Rural Action, said the organization's witnesses will show that TransCanada shouldn't be permitted to construct the pipeline because it poses a risk to South Dakota land and water. He said that testimony will reveal that the company "has a corporate culture of valuing profits over safety."

Commission Chairman Chris Nelson has said it's likely the panel will take some time to come to a final decision after the hearing process concludes.

The project has prompted opposition from Native American tribes, some landowners and environmental groups who are concerned the pipeline could contaminate water supplies and contribute to pollution.

John Harter, a Tripp County landowner whose property is crossed by the pipeline, said the project endangers the public for monetary gain.

"TransCanada has no answer to how they will clean up a spill into our

aquifer," Harter said. "The permitting for this route is ignorant, greed-filled and for this I hold you ... liable."

Supporters argue that the pipeline will be a boon for the country and will create construction jobs and boost tax collections in South Dakota. Corey Goulet, president of Keystone Projects for TransCanada, said in a Monday statement that "Keystone XL was a good project for South Dakotans in 2010 and it is an even better project today."

South Dakota is one of several fronts where TransCanada is stalled in getting approval for the pipeline, which would go from Canada through Montana and South Dakota to Nebraska, where it would connect with existing pipelines to carry more than 800,000 barrels of crude oil a day to refineries along the Gulf Coast. It could also transport some crude from the Bakken oil field.

The pipeline proposed in 2008 has not received the required approval from President Barack Obama and is also delayed by a Nebraska court case from landowners who oppose it.

Performance Issues On 9-1-1 System Lead State Board To Withhold Payment

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The state panel that oversees emergency communications systems in South Dakota decided Monday to possibly withhold from a contractor a scheduled \$259,000 monthly payment.

Members of the South Dakota 9-1-1 Coordination Board agreed to send a letter notifying NextGen Communications Inc. and its parent company, TeleCommunication Systems Inc. of Annapolis, Md.

Dissatisfaction with the progress of the new system, and some of its features, as it is tried first in Rapid City this summer led to the letter. The company reportedly plans to install a new version of software.

Meanwhile the work schedule is on hold for Brookings and Sioux Falls,

who are next in line for conversion to the NextGen system, as well as Pierre, Mitchell and other communities that serve as public service answering points.

The board wants a coordinated statewide system.

The state board authorized its administrative committee to decide when service is adequate for the \$259,000 monthly payment for July to be released to the company.

"We felt it was prudent to take this action at this time just to make sure we have corporate's attention," said Ted Ruffedt Jr. of Rapid City. He is the board's chairman.

The board's vice chairman, Perkins County Sheriff Kelly Serr of Bison, said the purpose of the letter isn't to be adversarial but to let the company know that mutual respect is expected.

Serr said TCS is moving in the right direction and the letter would encourage the company to keep the South Dakota project in front. "That's really what this is about," he said.

State Public Safety Secretary Trevor Jones and Richard Young, NextGen's executive vice president and chief operating officer, signed the contract in mid-December of 2014.

The contract called for South Dakota pay an initial fee of \$855,980 and to pay \$259,067 monthly for 60 months.

A renewal option calls for an additional one-time fee of \$1 million after 60 months and continuation of the monthly fee.

The board Monday agreed either Jones or state 9-1-1 coordinator Shawnee Rechtenbaugh, who works for the Department of Public Safety, could sign the letter.

State Board Of Education Adds A Math Endorsement Just For Algebra, Geometry

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

In an unusual step, the state Board of Education conducted a rules hearing by teleconference Monday and adopted an intermediate accreditation for teaching lower-level math courses in grades 7 through 12.

The change, which needs final clearance next from the Legislature's Rules Review Committee, could allow more instructors to qualify for teaching algebra I, geometry and algebra II courses.

The potential effects are reducing staffing difficulties that some small school districts face and also providing more teachers for those courses in junior high schools.

Two board members attended the actual meeting in Rapid City at Western Dakota Technical Institute. The other seven members participated by telephone.

The board also approved a variety of other rule changes. None of the rules proposals attracted any written comments from the public, and no one other than the state Department of Education's staff testified during the public hearing.

"This is a positive step forward," board member Julie Mathiesen of Sturgis said about the intermediate math endorsement.

She said it provides more equitable opportunities for students throughout South Dakota by making the algebra

and geometry courses potentially more available.

Don Kirkegaard, the Meade County schools superintendent and the state board president, spoke in favor of the change too.

"I have not talked to any of my colleagues who do not view this as a positive step," Kirkegaard said. "It makes sense."

The board also approved a substantial rewrite of the disciplinary process for teachers and administrators, repealed outdated rules for a variety of special scholarship and funding programs that have been eliminated and updated the funding formula for public technical institutes.

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