## **SDRS**

From Page 1

compensation was listed as an executive session item on the trustees' official agenda for the June 2 meeting. But the compensation issue wasn't on the legislators' official agenda

official agenda.
Only six of the 10 legislators on the committee attended the June 2 meeting. Although the compensation issues wasn't on the their agenda, they proceeded to a vote on it. That violated state requirements for conduct of

a public meeting. The tally was 5-1, short of

the six ayes necessary.

The nay came from Sen.
Bernie Hunhoff, D-Yankton.
Hunhoff said he couldn't
support extra pay for an
administrator because of
the low pay for many public
employees in South Dakota.

The committee took a break. Its chairman, Sen. Bruce Rampelberg, R-Rapid City, later told the trustees and legislators that the legislators could reconsider the matter at a later time. Rampelberg said that

Rampelberg said that might be in December when the Legislature assembles for the governor's budget speech.

Legislators eventually realized the matter shouldn't have been considered, as the situation came to the attention of Jason Handcock, director for the Legislative Research Council that serves as the lawmakers' non-parti-

san professional staff.
Eight days after the joint meeting, Wylie detailed both sets of problems in his e-mail

He said the compensation issue was first discussed by trustees at their April 2 meeting and was carried over to the June meeting. The action taken at the June meeting didn't meet the requirements set in state law, Wylie said.

"I should have recognized that any action taken after May 1 was not appropriate or legal and any fallout is my responsibility," he wrote the legislators.

"Obviously, no further action will be taken by this (SDRS) board in this matter."

## **Delmont**

From Page 1

become even more important for the community following the tornado, Grosz said.

"The townspeople said it was important to have the Memorial Day observance shortly after the tornado," she said. "We kept going with the Fourth of July celebration, alumni reunion and now the kuchen and harvest festivals. And we plan to have our annual New Year's Eve Day celebration."

Gunnare also spoke of the determination to keep the Memorial Day program going in the midst of the tornado

recovery. "We had the Donation Center at the Legion Hall,

grade on up.'

Center at the Legion Hall, and we just shoved aside the donated items and set up for the Memorial Day program. It was one of the best attended Memorial Days that we've had in a long time," she said. "Vern Kraft got the local band together. They got together about two hours beforehand (for rehearsal) and performed at the ceremony. We had all ages (n the band), from fifth

The same determination was seen this past weekend, she said. At the harvest festival, the tractor parades drew around 120 entries, the church service drew150 worshippers and Sunday's attendance doubled the previous day.

The community will continue to focus on its tornado recovery, Gunnare said. The town has begun disbursing part of the \$252,000 in donations gathered so far, and a Sept. 28 community meeting will provide an update.

In addition, Gunnare and Wessington Springs Mayor Melissa Mebius – whose town was devastated by a tornado last year – will speak Wednesday at an emergency management conference in Mitchell.

Also, Delmont residents will vote in October whether to change the size and structure of their city government, given the loss of residents.

But amidst such dramatic

events, Delmont residents are also continuing to celebrate, Gunnare said..

"When we lost our school (to consolidation), we lost a number of events that brought us together," she said. "It's important to continue having these community events."

That's what makes activities such as last weekend so important, she said.

"Life changed for us, but these things didn't go away. We're still holding our traditions and getting together," she said. "We are going forward and moving forward."

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# **Battery**

From Page 1

Battery.

For the Yankton unit, some things remained the same. The battery remained based in Yankton and kept its armory. The battery also remained an artillery unit working with the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS).

But the period also brought great changes in terms of personnel, Eichacker said.

"When they combined the two units (Yankton and Salem), we were full (in terms of manpower). We couldn't take more soldiers," he said. "Now, we have some openings and can fill some spots."

The individual soldiers also needed to learn more about their new brothers and develop a solid working relationship. The camaraderie was achieved through holding annual training together prior to the merger and then working together during the monthly drills and annual training during the past four years.

"It's been smooth so far," Eichacker said.

Now, Nei has taken over the reins – or the guidon, to be more accurate.

The guidon, or unit flag, was passed from Eichacker to LTC James Linn to Nei during Saturday's transfer of command. 1SG Brooks Schild brought out and then returned the guidon.

1LT Travis Peterson served as master of ceremonies and explained the significance of Saturday's event.

"Since the earliest chronicles of military history, military leaders have used the flag to identify themselves and to serve as a rallying point," he said. "A military unit is symbolized by the colors under which it fights, for they record the glories of the past, stand guardian over the present and ensure inspiration for the future."

The colors have taken on a new meaning, Peterson said.

"In the past, the colors led the unit into battle.
Today, the colors join the unit in formation and ceremonies," he said. "The passing of the colors today represents the transfer of command, from the outgoing commander to the incoming commander, thereby ensuring a continuation of the spirit and traditions of the South Dakota National Guard."

### TAKING COMMAND

Nei wants to continue those traditions as he takes command.

"During the last three years, the two units have melded together," he said. "The last three years, they have progressed forward."

Bravo Battery has progressed so well that it has earned the Superior Unit Award. The battery will receive the award later this year.

Looking ahead, Nei is working with one immediate change as Bravo Battery takes on a new face – actually, new faces – with the addition of four women to the unit.

2LT Jessie Park transferred to the unit last weekend and was present at the change of command ceremony. She has taken on a double historic role, as she

has become the first female officer for a South Dakota National Guard field artillery unit and the first female soldier for the Yankton unit.

In addition, Bravo Battery will welcome female soldiers PVT Bailey Weavaill, PVT Samantha Williams and PVT Danielle McCauley. Of the trio, Weavaill was the first to join the unit and has completed basic training. Williams and McCauley joined later and will come to the unit when they have completed their training.

During Saturday's ceremony, Park and SGT Rob Buechler received the battalion commander's coin of excellence for scoring a perfect 300 on the Army physical fitness test.

In addition, five other soldiers received the battalion commander's coin of excellence for their efforts at annual training this August at camp Guernsey, Wyoming. They were SFC Les Kirchner, SSG Brian McGuire, SGT Seth Frederickson, SGT Josh Nilson and SGT Michael Peitz.

#### CONTINUING A TRADITION

In charting his new leadership position, Nei need look no further than his family.

"Our family has a long history in the military," he said.
"My dad, Clayton Nei, started with the South Dakota National Guard and eventually retired from the Wisconsin National Guard. He's here today for my change-of-command ceremony. It's pretty good to have him here. I looked up to him as a role model, and I'm following in his fortestore."

his footsteps."
Michael Nei has been
enlisted for 15 years and has
served the past five years
as an officer. The Watertown
native enlisted in March 2000
and served in the enlisted
ranks until July 2010. He
accepted his commission
as a 2LT in July 2010 and
has served in leadership
positions with then-Bravo
Battery in Salem and Alpha

Battery in Aberdeen.

Most recently, he has
served as assistant fire support officer for the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade
(MEB) of Sioux Falls. He has
also served as an instructor with the 196th Regional
Training Institute (RTi).

Nei deployed to Iraq with the HHS 2/147th Field Artillery from 2003-05.

He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Mount Marty College and is pursuing his master's degree in family financial planning from South

Dakota State University.

He is employed full time as the South Dakota Military OneSource Consultant. He and his wife, Samantha, have three children.

The commander walks a fine line in exercising leader-ship and authority while developing a bond with those under his or her watch, said Buechler, the Unit Public Affairs Representative (UPAR).

"It's, 'Hey, I'm head guy of the entire battery. I am responsible for 70-plus soldiers. I am responsible for their welfare and training. If Bravo Battery looks bad, it comes back and reflects on me." Buechler said.

me," Buechler said.
"We have the subordinates, and we have the training. But ultimately, the buck stops with the commander."

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