

Legislators discuss taxes, data centers, education and more during breakfast in Paola

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PAOLA – State legislators representing portions of Miami County tackled a variety of topics ranging from taxes and data centers to education and gender identity during a legislative breakfast Saturday, Feb. 28, at Paola High School.

The combined event was hosted by the Paola, Louisburg and Osawatimie chambers of commerce and sponsored by Citizens State Bank, First National Bank, Landmark National Bank and Miami County Farm Bureau.

Breakfast was provided in the PHS cafeteria by Chris Cakes, and Miami County Commission Chairman George Pretz was the moderator.

Audience members were encouraged to write down questions, which were then given to Pretz to read to the legislators.

Present were Republican state senator Caryn Tyson representing District 12, Republican state senator Doug Shane representing District 37, Republican state representative Samantha Poetter Parshall representing District 6, Republican state representative Fred Gardner representing District 9, and Republican state representative Courtney Sappington representing District 5.

Property taxes

Property taxes were a big topic of discussion throughout the 90-minute question-and-answer session.

Sen. Tyson expressed her support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 1616 (SCR 1616), which is a proposed



Moderator George Pretz (right) speaks to state legislators (from left) Rep. Samantha Poetter Parshall, Sen. Doug Shane, Rep. Fred Gardner, Sen. Caryn Tyson, and Rep. Courtney Sappington during the Miami County Legislative Breakfast on Saturday, Feb. 28, at Paola High School.



Miami County Commission Chairman George Pretz was the moderator of the legislative breakfast.



Sen. Caryn Tyson

amendment to the Kansas Constitution that would limit annual property tax assessed valuation increases to 3 percent.

The Kansas Senate passed the resolution with a 30-10 vote on Feb. 25, sending it to the House of

Representatives.

Tyson and Shane both voted for the legislation, and both said it is just one component of a complicated issue.

“There’s no silver bullet for property taxes,” Tyson said.

Shane agreed, saying government spending and taxation must also be addressed.

“This is one piece of the puzzle,” Shane said.

Tyson said that since it is a proposed constitutional amendment, it must pass the Legislature with a two-thirds majority, and then it would go to the ballot for members of the public to vote on.

Poetter Parshall said she also supports SCR 1616 because it would increase transparency and highlight the fact that holding the mill levy steady is

not relevant when home valuations are drastically increasing.

Poetter Parshall expressed strong opposition to HB 2745, which would allow successful protest petitions to limit cities, counties and other local taxing entities from collecting more than a three percent increase in property tax revenue. It would also repeal the revenue neutral rate notice and hearing requirements for taxing jurisdictions.

The bill passed the house 76-45 on Feb. 26 and moved to the Senate. Poetter Parshall and Gardner voted against the legislation.

“It’s a terrible bill that is a flat out lie to taxpayers,” Poetter Parshall said. “Hopefully, it gets fixed or killed in the Senate.”

In a post on her Facebook page, Poetter Parshall said the bill would be a guaranteed property tax increase.

“Repealing revenue-neutral hearings destroys transparency and accountability,” Poetter Parshall wrote. “Paired with exemptions for expiring abatements, TIFs, and revitalization zones, only taxing jurisdictions win. I refuse to vote for legislation that guarantees property tax increases, pads local governments’ pockets with corporate welfare disguised as ‘economic

development,’ and permanently straps everyday Kansans with the bill.”

Rep. Sappington voted for HB 2745, stating that she ran the numbers in Douglas County, and it made sense. She also said she supports SCR 1616.

“I don’t see why we can’t do both,” Sappington said.

Data centers

One submitted question asked the legislators to comment on SB 98, which passed the Legislature last year and provides a sales tax exemption for firms developing a data center. The legislators were also asked to comment on SB 146, which would extend Osawatimie’s ownership of Northland property for another 20 years to use for economic development.

Osawatimie currently is reviewing plans for a data center on the property near the Osawatimie State Hospital.

Sen. Shane was one of eight senators who voted against SB 98 last year.

“We have a giveaway problem in Kansas,” Shane said, adding that sales tax exemptions in Kansas add up to about \$8 billion each year.

Shane also said incentives are often stacked, with companies receiving both sales tax and property tax incentives.

As for SB 146, Shane said

the legislation is just for the continuance of the city’s ownership of the land, and it does not reference data centers or other developments. He said those type of bills are typically more procedural and not controversial.

Shane did acknowledge that when it comes to data center developments, it is important to ask questions such as can the electric grid handle it, and will there be enough water available?

Tyson also was one of the eight senators who voted against SB 98 last year, saying that she usually does vote against giving incentives to developers.

She said a facility in Bourbon County has made it very difficult on the neighbors because of the noise.

Poetter Parshall said she voted for SB 98 last year, but she’s not sure she would again today. She said her brother works on constructing data centers, so she has been learning about the process.

She said some say they will help reduce the local property tax burden, but she referenced an example in which property taxes increased after the construction of a data center.

As for the land in Osawatimie’s Northland, Poetter Parshall said she thinks the county should



Sen. Doug Shane

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