

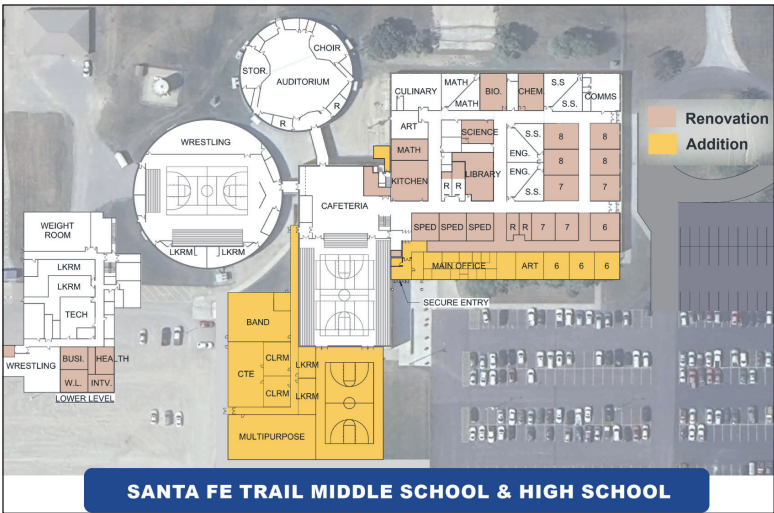
SFT \$26m bond proposal heads to August vote

Santa Fe Trail USD 434 voters will decide Aug. 4 whether to approve a \$26 million bond issue that would significantly restructure the district by reducing it from four attendance centers to just two campuses, while financing extensive renovations, additions and infrastructure upgrades.

If approved, the project would create a districtwide pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade elementary school at the Carbondale Attendance Center and a combined sixth- through 12th-grade campus at Santa Fe Trail High School along U.S. Highway 56.

The proposal comes as district officials attempt to address decades of declining enrollment, reduced state aid, and the cost of maintaining multiple aging buildings across the district. According to district information distributed to patrons this week, USD 434 has experienced enrollment declines over the past 30 years, reducing the amount of state funding the district receives because Kansas school funding is tied directly to student enrollment.

District materials state that despite serving fewer students, USD 434 continues to absorb the operating costs associated with four separate school facilities, including transportation, utilities, food service operations, technology infrastruc-



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This is a look at the proposed renovations and additions to the Santa Fe Trail Middle School and High School.

ture, property insurance, and building maintenance.

The district currently operates preschool classes in Scranton, kindergarten through third grade in Overbrook, fourth through eighth grades in Carbondale, and ninth through 12th grades at Santa Fe Trail High School.

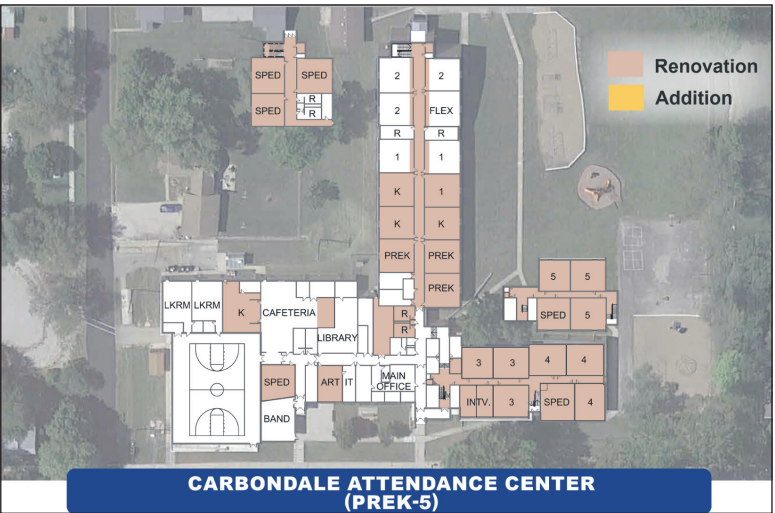
According to district officials, that configuration forces students to transition between four different buildings during their academic careers, creating inefficiencies and additional operational expenses.

The proposal would also continue a consolidation process that began years ago.

District documents note that USD 434 reorganized in both 2009 and 2016, moving away from a traditional K-8 “town-by-town” structure because of budget reductions and declining enrollment. Those reorganizations eliminated 23 certified positions and support staff through consolidation efforts.

The proposed bond project includes both renovation and new construction work at the remaining campuses.

At the middle/high school campus, plans include secure entry and main office safety upgrades, sixth-grade classroom additions and renovations, expansion of career and



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These are the proposed renovations to the Carbondale Attendance Center (Pre-K through fifth grade).

technical education classrooms, additional band room space, and construction of an auxiliary gymnasium, multipurpose room and locker room addition.

Other proposed work at the site includes modernization of existing building finishes, renovation of triangle-shaped classrooms into square classrooms, kitchen and serving line improvements, science lab renovations, and parking lot and site drainage improvements.

Architectural concept drawings included in the district’s information packet show a substantial addition connected

to the existing high school facility that would house band, career and technical education, multipurpose and classroom areas. The plans also depict remodeled academic wings and additional parking improvements. The drawings distinguish between renovated spaces and newly constructed additions.

At the Carbondale Attendance Center, the proposal calls for safety and security improvements, special education classroom upgrades, ADA-compliant restroom improvements, classroom modernization, and

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Summer reading programs begin in June

Summer reading programs and activities will begin soon. Each of the five libraries in Osage County will have a variety of activities planned for youth, including:

Burlingame Community Library – The program runs from June 17 through July 15, at 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Activities include coloring with cops, Dino Day, Milford Nature Center presenting Unearthing Kansas Fossils, and Mad Science of Kansas City presenting Davidious the Dino. Stop by the library to pick up an activity calendar. A summer reading challenge event for both children and adults began May 22 and will run through July 15, and registration forms are available at the library. Get registered by June 1 to be eligible for prizes. For more information, call the library at (785) 654-3400.

Carbondale City Library – All

programs, themed “Unearth a Story,” will take place at 10 a.m. on Wednesdays, at the library, unless otherwise stated. Activities begin June 3, where children under 18 can sign up to receive a free small Kona Ice and enjoy a foam party. June 10 will feature Mad Science and Jetpack Jason. June 17 will feature a petting zoo at the Carbondale Attendance Center (CAC) football field. A touch-a-truck event is planned for June 24 at the CAC football field. July 1 will feature the Milford Nature Center. July 8 will include music with Mr. Quilling, followed by a prize drawing. There will also be an end-of-summer-reading pool and pizza party from 6 to 8 p.m. Sunday, July 12, at the Carbondale City Pool. Reading logs and sign-up information is available online at Carbondale.NextKansas.org. For more information, call

the library at (785) 836-7638.

Lyndon Carnegie Library – The library will offer a summer reading program Monday through Thursday, from June 1 through July 15. Mondays will be for pre-kindergarteners, and will feature story time and crafts from 11 a.m. to noon. Tuesdays will feature a William Allen White Book Club program from 11 a.m. to noon for third- through eighth-graders. On Wednesdays, the library will host family programs, at different times, so be sure to check the calendar weekly. Thursdays, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., will be Osage County Historical Museum programs for first- through third-graders, and will be held at the museum in June, and at the library in July. Also on Thursdays, there will be evening crafting

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Members of the Overbrook Color Guard participate in a Memorial Day ceremony at Overbrook Cemetery, honoring military veterans and remembering those who gave their lives in service to the nation.

Osage County Commission

Clerk vacancies dominate meeting

LYNDON — The simultaneous vacancies for the Osage County clerk and deputy election clerk positions dominated discussion during the May 19 meeting of the Osage County Commission, as commissioners approved a temporary plan intended to keep county operations functioning ahead of the June 1 filing deadline for candidates seeking office.

Commissioners Heather Kuder and Brandon Smith were present for the meeting. County Counselor Joshua Ney was present, and reported that Commissioner Les Holman had other meetings and was not expected to call in.

Addy Esquibel and Haleigh Capoun were identified as assisting

with clerk’s office duties following the resignations announced the previous week.

Former Osage County Commissioner Willie Prescott addressed commissioners during public comment in his role as chairman of the Osage County Republican Central Committee. Prescott said the county was facing a unique situation, because both the county clerk and election secretary positions were vacant at the same time.

Prescott said Republican precinct committee members would be responsible for selecting a replacement county clerk, but he warned that the approaching June 1 filing deadline created additional urgency. He said meetings were being

planned to explain the process to interested applicants, and later interview candidates. Tentative meetings were discussed for May 21 and

May 28. Commissioners and Ney discussed whether the county could use

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KHP investigates fatal crash in Osage County

OSAGE COUNTY — The Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP) is investigating a fatal crash in Osage County. The crash, which involved two vehicles, was reported shortly after 6 p.m. Friday, May 22, on Topeka Avenue, near Carbondale.

According to the KHP crash log, one vehicle was southbound on Topeka Avenue and

another vehicle was turning north onto Topeka Avenue out of a private drive. The vehicle leaving the private drive pulled out in front of the southbound vehicle, causing a driver-side impact collision.

KHP reported the accident as a fatality, but additional details were not available at press time.

Reed returns to Scranton Police Department

SCRANTON — During Scranton’s city council meeting May 19, the council publicly interviewed and voted to appoint Jon Reed as Scranton’s interim chief of police, until the City of Scranton hires a full-time chief. Until then, he will join longtime Scranton officer Ken Silver in serving the community.

Reed, who operates Home Town Health Care, retired from law enforcement in 2020, with more than 30 years of law enforcement and investigative experience. Part of that experience came from serving as Scranton’s chief of police from 2008 to 2010.

He said he has always



Jon Reed

loved the small community, and he plans to hit the ground running.

“I want Scranton to be a place where families feel safe, local businesses feel supported, and people want to live because of the quieter small-town atmosphere, while still being close to larger cities,” Reed said.