

By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

Local government entities have each sent a letter to the State of Kansas regarding a proposed merger between Dodge City Community College and Fort Hays State University.

Now, the Seward County Commission is looking to do the same. In the packet for tonight's meeting is a proposed letter the commission is looking to send Governor Sam Brownback in support of Seward County Community College/Area Technical School.



The letter begins with an understanding the merger would provide for bachelor's degree programs in Dodge City as well as a new technical institute.

"We are supportive of the initiative to expand bachelor's degree opportunities for our residents," the letter read. "However, we are concerned that the proposed technical institute will have a detrimental impact on SCCC/ATS, our local industry and our economic vitality."

The commission went on to state that it supports a resolution presented by college president Dr.

Duane Dunn to the SCCC/ATS Board of Trustees in May specifically these points:

- The board of trustees implemented a merger of Southwest Kansas Area Technical School and SCCC in 2008. Since then, that board has realized an increase in adult and secondary enrollment. That merger likewise allowed for three additional programs focused on energy industry careers which are directly related to and supported by the local, regional and national industry partners; and
- The technical programs identified in the merger of FHSU and DCCC will have a detrimental negative impact on the enrollment, employer engagement and workforce development initiatives already in place at SCCC/ATS, as well as the local and regional economies of area communities.

The letter then discussed a vetting process to include the Kansas Board of Regents and the Kansas Postsecondary Technical Education Authority and a tour of the Liberal community and the SCCC/ATS campus.

“We believe it is important that members of the Board of Regents and other public policy leaders visit our community and the college to realize the investments already in place for technical education, obtain data related to employer engagement and industry training initiatives and the involvement of industry in the development of curriculum and partnerships which strengthen our communities,” it said.

The packet also contains the resolution adopted by the SCCC/ATS Board of Trustees in relation to the proposed merger.

The commission is likewise scheduled to hear from emergency management director Greg Standard regarding construction of the new Kismet Fire Station.

On May 19, Standard presented an update and final plans on the fire station and requested permission to solicit bids for the construction. The commission approved the solicitation of bids following the specifications presented.

Standard has heard back from several of the contractors suggesting to raise the roof to 16-foot sidewalls or shorten the door on the fire station to 12 feet.

“The present design would be 14-foot sidewalls with a 14-foot door, which can be done,” information in the agenda packet said. “However, contractors have pointed out the parts are not standard, and if the tracks were damaged, it would cause delays in making repairs, not to mention the parts will be more expensive since they are not standard.”

The emergency management director took the item to the Seward County Fire Board for an opinion. Three of the members of that board were in favor of the 12-foot door, while two were in favor of raising the walls to 16 feet and using a 14-foot door.

Standard’s recommendation is for the commission to determine if a 12-foot door or 16-foot sidewalls and a 14-foot door is its wish. The estimated cost to raise the sidewalls would be about \$4,000.

The county commission meeting is scheduled to begin at 5:30 p.m. today in the commission chambers in the Seward County Administration Building.