



SEWARD COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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SCCC/ATS Trustees begins name-change discussion

Input from employees, community members invited

The college name claimed the most attention during the first regular meeting of the Seward County Community College Board of Trustees Monday night. A discussion-only item on the agenda, the subject surfaced at the end of 2015 when board chair Ron Oliver received his annual tax bill.

“I noticed it said, ‘Seward County Junior College,’ and I thought, ‘it’s been a long time since we were a junior college,’” Oliver said in a previous meeting. Oliver asked various employees at the Seward County Courthouse why the outdated name continues to appear on tax statements, and learned that the wording is connected to legal definitions about property titles and deeds.

Extensive research through college records did not uncover solid documentation of when and how various name changes took effect over the years. The most recent name change happened with the addition of the Area Technical School to the college’s operations, in 2008 and 2009.

“In talking through the issue with legal counsel, Kerry McQueen, the question came up that it’s not a good use of resources to change the name on property deeds, only to have to come back and change it again later,” said SCCC/ATS President Dr. Ken Trzaska. “So that’s really where this item comes from.”

As the college examines its core values and strategic goals, Trzaska said, “that sense of a fresh start raises the question of ‘What will be the name of our college?’”

The board discussed a time frame to tackle the issue, starting with the February meeting when the administrative team could present a roster of three or four options to the trustees. Trzaska also suggested the board ask for feedback from college employees. “We should ask the team for their point of view,” he said.

“I can say now that I would prefer Seward County Community College,” said Oliver. “That’s what we started with, and it’s a good and proper name. That’s my personal opinion. I would like to hear what others think, though.” Trustee John Engel noted that he felt the inclusion of “County” in the name was important, since county taxes help support the institution.

Dustin Ormiston expressed concern that people affiliated with the former Southwest Kansas Area Technical School not feel slighted. “I remember there was pushback when the technical school joined the college,” he said. “I don’t want to revisit those hard feelings.” Board member Sharon Hobble expressed a preference for including the term “Technical” in the college’s name.

“Well, in this day and age, it’s pretty common for a community college to include technical education, which may not have been true 40 years ago,” Oliver said. “I think people know that we offer these programs.” Trzaska and Oliver said they are open to discussion from the public in the coming months.

Kansas concealed carry law may prompt insurance changes

Local insurance agency owner Al Shank presented prices for the College's panel of coverage. In his review of the various policies, Shank noted that insurance providers continue to adjust to changing legislation designed to prevent school and workplace violence. Concealed-carry law in particular has caused one large insurance carrier to threaten to deny any coverage at all to institutions that allow concealed carry on campus. Another large carrier provides coverage for everything except gun violence claims.

"As I see it, we have very little choice in this issue," said Oliver. "It's mandated by the state. We can't afford to search everyone who walks through the door, and it doesn't look like they're going to reverse the law or offer longer extensions."

As the remaining time period for the college's current exemption shrinks, Shank told the board he continues to work on crafting a policy that would fill gaps. For instance, it might be possible to find coverage for death or disability, as well as medical expenses, in case of some sort of workplace/school violence event.

"It's interesting," Shank noted, "that a study at Fort Hays State University showed about 80 percent of people in Kansas are not in favor of guns on campuses. But this wouldn't be the first time the state ignored what people said they wanted."

The board unanimously approved the existing coverage as presented by Al Shank Insurance, with trustee Marvin Chance absent, at a renewal price of \$87,359. The price, which increased from the current total of just above \$82,000, included adjustments to align all policies on the same renewal time frame. In the future, Shank noted, the board will have to examine insurance coverage only once per year.

Board buys tractor, welcomes employee, hears reports

In other business, the board approved the purchase of a small tractor for the Sustainable Agriculture Resources Program. With funds provided by the STEM grant, SCCC/ATS will purchase a 25 horsepower engine tractor that can work inside the recently-constructed high tunnel greenhouses. The low bid, from Keating Tractor for \$13,090, was approved by unanimous vote with Chance absent.

In the personnel report, the board accepted the resignation of SCCC/ATS Counselor Rhonda Kinser and welcomed new instructional and distance learning designer Markia Herron. Herron's position combines two existing positions that remained vacant through the fall semester of 2015, and will focus on creating online delivery systems for various courses.

— Dean of Academic Affairs Todd Carter presented an overview of the upcoming Employee Professional Development sessions scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday. Training for the new college computer-based learning management system, Canvas, continues to gain momentum, he said, with monthly workshops. Carter expressed appreciation to Dr. Suzanne Campbell for taking on the position of Interim Director of Allied Health, in addition to her usual work.

— Dean of Student Services Celeste Donovan reported on a student satisfaction survey conducted by the housing supervisors. With around 50 percent participation by students who live in the dorms, the surveys indicated a high level of satisfaction — nearly 100 percent in regard to consistency in rule enforcement, position living environment, opportunities for social interaction, and dorm upkeep. The scores for cafeteria satisfaction landed at about 80 percent, "not bad for eating at the same restaurant every night," Donovan noted. "I was really pleased with the results," Donovan said, "especially the participation. It's very hard to get students to fill out any survey that isn't required, so this was excellent." Enrollment numbers for spring semester appear lower than usual, "but we are fairly confident that we'll have a better sense of where things stand a month from now," said Donovan. She added that some area high schools have been slow to enroll concurrent students who are in fact expected to report to their ongoing college classes in spring.

— Dean of Finance and Operation Dennis Sander reported on progress for the Board Docs program that will computerize the monthly Board of Trustees agendas and report packets. By next month, Sander said, the board should be able to vote electronically and view all materials on the tablet computers.

— College President Dr. Ken Trzaska reported on the continuing effort to refine core values as identified by the college employees themselves. The five values, trust, integrity, student success, valuing others, and quality, will be explored at the Employee Professional Development sessions this week, he said. "These components underpin everything we do," he said. "And we've been working as an executive team to flesh out projects, or goals — we call them 'Movers' to remind ourselves and everyone that this is an effort that involves progress and motion — that are going to gain momentum in the spring semester." Trzaska noted he will attend the State of the State address, as well as KBOR meetings in January, speak at the Tyrone High School inservice sessions, and address a conference at the University of Oklahoma.