

Kent Street News

Madison Public Schools

**From the Desk of the Superintendent
Alan Ehlers**

Phase IV Building Project Update

Madison Public Schools is excited to announce that the Phase IV building project will wrap up by Mid October with the completion of the north parking lot project. We have survived major flooding and the COVID Pandemic during construction and have found a way to bring this project to an end.

The Board of Education would like to thank all who were involved in the project and everyone that might have had to find alternate parking places during this time. The Middle School Commons portion has already been utilized to allow for social distancing during the first three weeks of school. Although not designed to be used as a daily lunchroom; our eighth-grade students have been able to use the Middle School commons area to enjoy daily lunch.

We would like to invite the public to take in future events. You may enter the building on ground level by parking in the North parking Lot or by entering at the tower entrance. You can still enter at the front entrance and walk through the temperature-controlled building. The old gym will continue to be used for many events including Junior High and Junior Varsity contests during the year.

During the September 14th Budget Hearing the Board of Education will be reviewing the district levy for the 2020-2021 school year. The tax valuation for Madison Public Schools has decreased for the fourth straight year. With the recent passage of LB 1107 that provides tax breaks for large business, along with changes to property tax relief, the future of the Nebraska economy seems to be at a crossroads. Several organizations are projecting a large shortfall in the near future for Nebraska.

Trying to forecast future school funding is like looking into a crystal ball that would require school districts to prepare for rainy days ahead. It just does not appear that Nebraska will have additional funds to support local school districts during these times of change.

This year we have had good news as we have been able to fill some key positions such as Industrial Technology teacher/Athletic

Director and Instructional Coach along with adding a childhood classroom program to help better support our community and retain staff. However, adding these positions does have a negative impact on our budget. Along with this, the district has seen large increases in workman's compensation insurance costs compared to just a few years ago, plus the annual increase in salaries and benefits.

During the budget process, which began in July during a work session along with a finance committee meeting in August, discussions started to center around the need to increase the levy to make sure we cover the increases. They also reviewed area school districts' levy's and needs compared to Madison Public Schools. If you recall just a few years ago when land valuations rose double digits, the board reduced the local levy by 10 cents. At this time, the board will be looking to increase the levy to offset costs and prepare for the future. It is important to structure tax with a proactive approach to keep our school system strong and in your community.