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Hail to the new queen of KMS

Theresa Schwenk showed a moment of pure joy at being crowned the 2020 Homecoming queen of KMS at Monday's evening's coronation program. Theresa was crowned by last year's queen, Haylee Johnson,

at left. Fellow candidates, from left Lauren Krieger, Morgan Pherson and Maret Gjerde, seemed equally happy for the new queen.

See the entire royal court on page 7.

Kerkhoven Council CARES for ambulance

by Jordan Almen

The biggest item on the Kerkhoven City Council's agenda at their meeting Monday night was using the remainder of the city's CARES Funds (COVID-19 relief). After Kildare, Pillsbury and Mamre Townships offered some of their funds to Kerkhoven, and after the \$5871.73 that has been spent as of September 30, there was \$12,383 remaining. The funds were supposed to be used for non-budgeted items related to the pandemic. The city has until November 15 to write the checks for anything that they buy with the money, and then it goes to the county to use. The county has until December 1 before the funds are given up to the state, which has until the end of the year to use them.

The council approved the allocation of the money which had been spent before the start of this month. They will approve spending that has happened since then, including items already purchased, at a future meeting. City clerk Kim Harkema has been in contact with the maintenance crew, the city Fire Department, and the Ambulance Squad to see where the funds could be useful. The Ambulance has already purchased some new equipment to get both of their rigs equally prepared. The maintenance crew and Fire Department have not had as many qualifying needs.

"I reached out to Chrissy (Thompson, the ambulance director)," said Harkema. "She's talked to the rest of the ambulance and they're looking for a couple of items." First, a powered stair chair for \$6920.09. This would make it possible for a single crew member to get a patient down the stairs, and would be safer for both the patient and the crew. Next, a headrest kit for \$179.10 and two trauma bags for \$734. "Then she emailed me today

with a request for a scoop backboard."

Council member Scott Laecker, a member of the ambulance, explained this particular item to the council. It is a split backboard which can be opened and the top put under the patient. Then the sides can be pulled together to scoop up the patient, rather than having to roll them. This has the potential to be much safer for patients. The cost comes to \$1023.30, plus an extender kit for about \$300.

"I say we get them," said council member Brian Thompson. The rest of the council enthusiastically agreed and approved the use of the CARES funds for the ambulance supplies. That will leave the city with \$3220. Council member Andy Thorson also offered a thank you to the townships which contributed funds.

"Does anybody have any thoughts on any city purchases, knowing that we have that \$3,000?" Harkema asked.

"Is there any software that the city could use to make your job easier, or where you could work from home easier?" asked Thorson.

Harkema wasn't sure, and asked for Thompson's opinion. "You could dial in to your computer here with some software I have, but right now someone has to be there to allow you in," he said, explaining his ability to work from home for the county. "I don't know the costs. You would have to have a good internet connection on both ends, and then it would be just like sitting at your desk. The problem with that is there is an annual fee." Harkema and Thorson agreed that the city would want to stay away from that, but Harkema said she could look into learning about options such as Thompson explained. Thorson suggested pre-purchasing extra latex gloves for the maintenance department.

In the mean time, maintenance (Continued on page 5)

Entrepreneurial course at KMS gets down to business

by Jordan Almen

At the KMS High School a few students, along with a few more from MACCRAY and RCW, are taking a unique course — West Central Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (WCCEO). Jacob Gareis, a member of the class and a senior at KMS, helped shed some light on how the unique program works.

"The goal of this class is just to prepare us for every aspect of business," Gareis explained,

"from starting a business and managing it, to proper business etiquette." The basic segments of the class are learning about money, a badge business, a class business, and then individual businesses.

The format of the WCCEO class is very unconventional. "We don't get homework, short of at the end of the week we have to journal our thoughts and the lessons that we've learned," Gareis said. "Other than that we have to keep an up-to-date network

database on the people we've met."

"You get treated like an adult, like you're a business person," Gareis reflected. "You make your own decisions, and what happens in this class is completely directed by the student body." There is no strict curriculum, and students aren't graded on the success of their business as much as they are on the effort they put in, the lessons they learn and how much they involve themselves.

The students get a lot of their lessons from local businesses, seeking out businesses that could help them learn different skills that they think they might need for the class. Pam Mansfield, a CPA in Kerkhoven, was visited for lessons on legality and the money-side of businesses. Some of the students were interested in doing something in agriculture, so another visit was to Riverview.

The badge business part (Continued on page 5)

KMS, Benson school boards differ on what's equitable for paired sports programs

by Ted Almen

KMS Board of Education members spent a considerable amount of time during their October 12 meeting discussing the existing athletic pairing agreement with the neighboring Benson school district. Specifically, members of the KMS Activities Committee reported on a recent meeting with like members of the Benson board about changes to the cooperative arrangement.

For reference, KMS pairs with Benson in boys and girls tennis, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls track and girls gymnastics. Benson, Morris and KMS also pair for girls hockey. Up until two years ago KMS also was paired with Benson in boys and girls golf, although that agreement was cancelled by Benson because it pushed the teams up one competitive class even though KMS had few students involved.

In all of these activities, and for the many years which the paired teams have been in existence, KMS has sent its athletes west to participate. Benson students have never come over to KMS to be in a shared activity. Benson has administrated the programs, and KMS has paid a participation fee based on its numbers of participants.

During their October 12 meeting, Activities Committee member Todd Rudningen informed the rest of the board that the Benson contingent is now proposing that KMS also pay



A running debate between the KMS and Benson school boards about the cooperative athletic programs has shown some reluctance on both sides to concede to the other's requests. Benson

wants KMS to start paying a facilities maintenance fee; KMS would like to see some of the paired sports programs held on its turf.

--photo courtesy of Kari Thompson

a facilities fee amounting to over \$34,000 per year. Benson has built a new room for the gymnastics team, and is planning on rebuilding its outdoor track.

Rudningen acknowledged up front to his colleagues that the Benson-KMS pairing agreement benefits both districts. With the increased number of students resulting from having two schools involved, it has

not only strengthened the sports programs which Benson was already offering its students, but it also gave KMS students more participation options that they didn't have previously.

But nothing comes cheap. It was estimated that KMS pays around \$60,000 a year in participation fees to Benson, on top of the \$24,000 in transportation expenses. Adding \$34,000 in facilities fees would put

the annual cost into six figures.

Even so, that wasn't the main issue debated by the KMS board. Programs cost money, no matter where they are hosted. What bothered superintendent Martin Heidelberger and some members of the board was the fact that KMS taxpayers would be helping to finance infrastructure outside of their own district. If the cooperative were to dissolve, there would

be no way to recoup the investment already made by KMS citizens, said Heidelberger.

Plus, he and other board members said, it would be nice to have some of these programs hosted right here, keeping those KMS students 'home' instead of busing them to Benson every day.

Rudningen had suggested boys and girls cross country, which would need no specific facility, and boys and girls track. The latter activity would require KMS build a track as it has none now. A guess by board members to do so ranged from \$700,000 to \$1.5 million.

Rudningen said he asked the Benson board members if they would send their athletes here if such a track was built. "I didn't really get an answer."

It was stated toward the end of the discussion that the two board committees were to meet with their respective full boards and then come together for another joint session to try come to some agreement.

Both school boards have met since the committees' session. While KMS board members seemed anxious to work out an agreement which they felt would be more equitable cooperation, some Benson board members have expressed their opinions which might not seem welcoming to the KMS ideas. The following information (Continued on page 6)

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