

MOHELA | More student borrowers to join lawsuit

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building projects.

"It's a pretty sad day here in Missouri when students end up paying double, so to speak," Lichtenegger said.

Lichtenegger also said that in addition to a greater number of plaintiffs, the case will include some of the allegations against MOHELA that a recent audit conducted by State Auditor Susan Montee revealed.

"The state auditor has revealed even more outrageous conduct by this board and by MOHELA staff," Lichtenegger said.

The audit showed that MOHELA had spent millions of dollars on perks and executive employee salaries, according to an October press release issued by Montee's office. The audit also uncovered information about a lack of competitive bidding for a new \$11 million headquarters and imprudent use of funds for retreats, parties and closed meetings, according to the release.

Samantha Brewer, public affairs coordinator for the State Auditor, said she thinks the MOHELA audit was an important step in taking care of Missouri students.

"When [Montee] was running for office, MOHELA was one of the things that she mentioned she wanted to audit," Brewer said. "It had never been audited before, and she thought that it would be a good thing to look at."

As a result of that audit, Brewer said the state auditor's office will send a follow-up letter to MOHELA in six months to a year in order to check on the progress the loan authority has made in implementing the recommendations that the auditor gave.

"We don't have enforcement authority," she said. "We can't make them do anything, but we can let them know that we haven't forgotten that they said they would do something."

At Truman, the filing of a second lawsuit means that the Pershing Building renovation, which will be funded by Blunt's Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative, once again would be in jeopardy. Sam Minner, dean of the school of health sciences and education and co-chairman of the Pershing Building ad-

visory committee, said that because the lawsuit has been dismissed, there are no immediate impediments to the renovation plans.

"At some point, it's really going to have to be over one way or another," he said. "It's over today, but if there is a refiling then we'd have to take another look at it."

Minner said he agrees with Blunt that there is a way to continue to serve student loan-holders while still meeting some of the pressing demands for capital improvements on college campuses.

"Just as there are some risks associated perhaps with Missouri students to have a sold MOHELA, Missouri students here at Truman also are definitely affected by the sub-standard spaces in Pershing," Minner said.

Truman already received \$6,250 as a first installment for the Pershing renovation in October, more than a month before the case against MOHELA was dismissed. Minner said that allowing some of the money to be distributed throughout the state was Blunt's decision.

Minner also said a schedule for following installments has been established and that, for the most part, the University knows when it will receive the rest of the money.

Because another lawsuit could be filed at any time, Minner said he doesn't think Truman would spend a significant amount of the money if it was likely that the project would not be able to be completed.

"We would need to be quite certain that the funds would be available and that we wouldn't have to dip into our own reserves in order to get this done," he said.

So far, about \$39.4 million has been distributed to Missouri colleges and universities to begin work on renovation projects outlined by Blunt's Initiative.

If students should be victorious in an upcoming lawsuit against MOHELA, Lichtenegger said the loan authority would have to use some of its excess cash to repay those students since they would not be able to get the nearly \$40 million back.

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Co-chairman of the Pershing Building Advisory Committee



Mark Hardy/Index
Tom Mayer, left, listens to a speaker at a Kirksville City Council meeting in October. He has resigned his spot on the council. Jeff Newton also resigned as Mayor, and Martha Rowe has said she will not run for re-election.

MAYER | Councilmember will step down in April because of work responsibilities

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various and sundry ways, including public events," Mayer said. "It is a good public service that I think someone in my circumstance, an hourly employee, would find very difficult to really meet the standards that I place on myself as a city council member. I do not want to do a job that I can't do well."

In the 2007 elections, Mayer strongly supported the smoking ban ordinance. He said he knew that if the ordinance was voted in, he would be as well. However, first quarter assessment of the economic implications of the smoking ban show mixed results, opening the ban for a possible appeal (see the November 15 issue of the Index). But Mayer said he is not concerned about the future of the smoking ban without his influence on the council.

"[The mixed result] keeps the tobacco ordinance in the limelight," Mayer said. "In a sense, the city will be looking for a second straight year at political ramifications of the tobacco ordinances, and [residents will] be able to vote again according to their desires."

Mayor Martha Rowe said her second term as a councilmember will expire in April, along with Jeff Newton's. Rowe said being a council member takes more time than citizens see and that she will not seek re-election.

"At this point, I think six years is enough," Rowe said. "I think we need new ideas and new people."

Rowe said community members seeking council positions should not only have ideas but also a sense of humor and willingness to listen.

City Manager Mari Macomber said she noticed a high turnover rate among council members in the past few years, including the resignations of former members Rich Scott, Debbie Masten and Dale Blesz.

"The resignations have been because of [personal] things," she said.

Macomber said the council has showed initiative by involving itself in several large issues in the past three or four years. Public debate over Hazel Creek, adult entertainment, rental housing and the smoking ban can consume much of a council member's time, she said.

"The council can decide whether or not they want to take a stand on something," Macomber said. "The time commitment is whatever each member chooses to put into it. ... Maybe that's a change where you would've [previously] had somebody who says, 'It's not on our agenda,' ... as opposed to listening to the citizens."

Macomber also said councilmembers are essentially volunteers. Before 2004, Missouri state law restricted councilmembers' stipends to \$100 annually, but Statute 78.590 now allows each community to set its officials' salaries. Macomber said the Kirksville City Council recently has begun to consider increasing members' pay.

"The council did discuss in their budget meetings changing the compensation from \$100 per year to \$1,200 per year to cover the costs to attend meetings and [events]," Macomber said.

Macomber said four of the current councilmembers have full-time jobs. Rowe, the only retired member, was employed when she was first elected to the council.

Citizens can file for candidacy from Dec. 18 to Jan. 22.

BLUNT | Governor stops in Kirksville during state tour to talk about proposed Missouri driver license restrictions for illegal immigrants

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thinks the new Blunt proposal is not intended to make the Department of Revenue a watchdog.

"Most of our contract offices are very small, and in order to make a call and say you've got an illegal in the office, they would hear you and probably flee," Griffith said.

However, he said providing penalties for those who assist illegal immigrants in obtaining forged documentation is an important aim of the proposal.

"Usually [immigrants] know that they're here illegally and so whatever documentation they're

trying to present to us is going to be forged," he said. "I think what the governor is saying is that those people that are assisting those illegals, there's going to be some penalties for them, that those need to be in place."

Valencia Mensa is director of Centro Latino in Milan, Mo., about 30 miles from Kirksville. She said having a driver's license, even as an illegal immigrant, is a matter of safety.

"We have a lot of people here that have that problem [of being undocumented]," Mensa said. "... It's better for them to have a driver's license because if one of us

gets hit, it is a problem ... because maybe they don't have a driver's license and maybe not insurance. Then it is like the accident is all my fault."

She said most illegal immigrants who work already have some form of identification. If they were able to use that identification to obtain a license, they also could get insurance. Currently a driver must have a license to be eligible for insurance.

Alumna Kelsey Aurand, former president of Hablantes Unidos and now the AmericaCorps VISTA member for service learning at Truman's Teaching and Learning

Center, said that although she does not support Blunt's new proposal, she sees two sides to the issue.

"I would be supportive of ... having driver's licenses available to undocumented individuals simply because the DMV records are what law enforcement most often use for safety reasons," Aurand said. "... If you did provide the opportunity, then these undocumented individuals can obtain insurance if they so choose, ... and one of our major concerns in this country is the number of drivers without insurance."

This would help protect the children of illegal

legally born in the U.S., Aurand said.

"Is it really safe for them to sit in a car with their parents who are not insured?" she said.

Accurate record keeping still would be challenging, Aurand said.

"Those who use false names would probably just use that false name for the driver's licenses as well because all of their papers and documents are under that false name," she said.

Aurand said proposals regarding illegal immigration have been in the spotlight recently on both the state and federal levels.

"Obviously that's something the federal government can talk about, but when you have every state issuing licenses, there begin to be some regulation issues," she said.

Blunt has spoken publicly about his strong opposition to illegal immigration, including issuing a directive in August to the state Highway Patrol to check immigration status on every person they arrest.

"That was a surprise initially that he came down so harshly with that issue, but this just seems to follow up with that card he's playing for whatever reason," Aurand said.

FOOD | Library accepts food donations in exchange for fines on overdue books as part of its first Food for Fines program in more than a decade

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"I would love to see 1,000-plus cans," she said. "I hope its more than that."

If students do not pay their fines, they can lose their privileges to check out books, to view their transcripts and to register for classes. McHenry said the library collects more than \$22,000 a year in fines.

"I was always shocked," McHenry said. "Basically, fines are 15 cents a day, so if you do the math that's a lot of books, a lot overdue."

This program offers an opportunity for students to get something in return for helping out the community, and they can use the opportunity to get a bargain.

"We would hope that people would go to the store and buy the canned or box items that are four for a dollar," McHenry said. "So students can really

get a pretty good deal if they go and get those things that are four for a dollar and then we will count those as four items and, obviously, \$4 would be waived."

Senior James Hladky donated seven cans to the food drive Monday evening to pay off his fines. He said he found out about the program through TruView.

"I racked up a lot of fines first semester and thought this was a good way to pay them off," Hladky said.

All donated items will go to the Central Missouri Food Bank and will be used to benefit programs in the community. The food bank will donate the items to three agencies in the

area: the Christian Community Food Depot, The Salvation Army and the Buddy Packs program at local elementary schools.

Buddy Packs serves elementary school children who have been discreetly identified by teachers and administration as having need.

"When school is out for the weekend or for vacation, they're hurting," said Steve Youngblood, community resource developer for Northeast Missouri at the food bank. "So what

they do is they get these backpacks and they load them up with nutritious, kid-friendly food, and when they leave school at night, they carry a backpack

home. Everyone else thinks it's books, but it's full of food and it's designed not only for that particular child, but for the whole family."

Youngblood said it costs about \$30 per child per year to fund the Buddy Packs program. Sixty schools in the area currently use the Buddy Packs service.

"We'd like to be in a ton more," Youngblood said.

The Central Missouri Food Bank is one of six food banks in the state and covers 33 counties from the Lake of the Ozarks to the Iowa border. Central Missouri is one of only five food banks in the nation that give its food away for free to agencies like The Salvation Army.

Youngblood said the food bank gets its funding mostly from donations from producers in the area like Kraft Foods

and Adair Foods.

"If someone gives us a dollar, over 98 cents of that is going to go directly to food," he said.

The food bank distributed more than 20 million pounds of food and related products in 2006.

"This is the breadbasket," Youngblood said. "There are people just falling through the gaps. ... The need is phenomenal. We've got to do something about this."

Youngblood said a good turnout in the Food for Fines program could have an impact and that every little bit helps.

"We are really wanting to link with Truman because we know the student body there is a solid, voluntary work force that can make a difference," Youngblood said. "If a bunch of people contribute a little, it becomes a lot."

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