

# Schools focus on safety

Kirksville school district begins construction to update building security by next summer

BY DANA BRUXVOORT  
Staff Reporter

The Kirksville School District is implementing new security features in an effort to prioritize safety in its schools.

Construction has begun on security upgrades, and Superintendent Patrick Williams said the updates are the result of a nationwide desire to enhance school safety.

"The highest priority is to serve our educational needs, but we incorporated with that a high sensitivity in designing buildings that will be secure and safe," Williams said.

He said the community passed a bond issue last April that provided funds to upgrade security measures in the schools. He said the Early Childhood Center is the first priority and will be the most secure building because of the age group it serves.

Williams said the safety measures include surveillance cameras, alarms, phones and intercoms in every classroom, emergency communication in the outer areas of campus and card-scan entry for some buildings.

"[There will be] a lot of attention to the ability to lock down and control access in and out of buildings, [and] monitoring by use of cameras and communication through intercoms, radios and telephones," Williams said.

He said all buildings will have these features to some degree, but the Early Childhood Center will be fully equipped. The construction already has begun and is scheduled to be finished during summer 2010.

"I believe that those of us in the education business who are overseeing campuses and deal with students have a heightened sensitivity to security for obvious reasons, given the examples in the last decade," Williams said. "I believe it's just expected by the community to take these measures."

He said that as school officials plan the safety updates, they must balance security with the culture of education.

"You don't want to create a culture that appears too restrictive, because then it begins to infringe on just our day-to-day need to edu-



Mayank Dhungana/Index  
The Kirksville School District is upgrading building security and will install surveillance cameras, alarms, phones and intercoms. The district will also establish card-scan entry for some buildings.

cate and create a culture that's safe and secure and conducive to education," Williams said.

He said no specific incident prompted the decision to upgrade safety and the schools have never had any major security breaches. Rather, a national sensitivity to safety because of past events influenced the decision.

Williams said the schools rehearse for such circumstances and are implementing the new safety measures as a precaution.

"Statistics show that nationally, schools are very safe places for kids to be, and we want to keep it that way," Williams said. "I'm confident that our district is taking appropriate measures and is putting the appropriate priority on this issue."

Jay Self, assistant professor of communication, has first- and fifth-grade sons who attend Kirksville public schools. He hasn't received information about the upgrades, but said he has no concerns about his sons' safety at school.

"Compared to where I grew up on the East Coast and in Kansas City, ... the safety here seems higher," Self said.

He said his sons haven't encountered any safety issues while at school.

Self also said he hasn't come across any security incidents at Truman and feels perfectly secure on campus.

"I don't think it's any more dangerous than any other campus I've ever been on and probably even a little less so," he said. "I think students here, in general, are more responsible than at other campuses."

Tom Johnson, director of the Department of Public Safety, said Truman has numerous security measures in place, but campus safety at a university is very different than at lower education facilities.

"You're comparing apples and oranges a little bit when you're talking about K-12 education as opposed to higher [education], because

they can lock down their buildings," Johnson said. "We can try, but realistically, with all the buildings we have and all the different access points, we can't control that like K-12 can."

He said safety features at Truman include automatic door locks in residence halls, emergency text messaging, emergency telephones around campus and DPS officers.

Johnson said there also is a committee deliberating card-access entry to residence halls.

He said the most basic preventive measures to help avoid emergency situations are being aware of your surroundings and using common sense.

"I just tell people, use your instincts," Johnson said. "If something doesn't feel right to you or the situation you're in, then it probably isn't. There's a reason you have those feelings."

He said if anything out of the ordinary is noticed, students or faculty should immediately call in the situation to DPS.

# Tax controversy submitted to lawyers

BY JANE KRIENKE  
Staff Reporter

The Adair County Ambulance District and the Kirksville Tax Increment Financing commission have found themselves in a tiff over the amount of tax money due to aid in public improvements.

The TIF commission in Kirksville was set up in 1999. It originally was established to help bring the Downtown Cinema 8 movie theater to Kirksville. The TIF is not an additional tax and all businesses in Kirksville pay the same tax rate, City Manager Mari Macomber said. If a business lies within the TIF district, a portion of the taxes it pays goes into a separate fund used to make public improvements at the discretion of the six-member TIF commission. Funds from the TIF have gone toward fixing sidewalks and establishing new parking lots, among other projects.

"The whole idea of TIF is to take growth in property and sales tax and move it toward public improvements because there aren't funds available to do those public improvements," Macomber said. "If you take an area that has not seen any growth in the value of the

property or in the sales tax and you make improvements and then more sales are generated or people are paying more in property tax, then in the long run, each of these governmental entities, which would include the ambulance district, will benefit from the increase in the sales and the increase in the property tax payments."

The conflict between ACAD and the TIF commission arose when ACAD switched from a property tax to a sales tax. When ACAD made the switch in 2006, the base for that sales tax was set at zero because a sales tax had never been collected before.

"When the TIF was established, we figured out what the amount of sales tax being collected in that district was when the TIF was approved and that became the base rate and only included the sales tax at that time," Macomber said. "Any increase in sales tax collections in that district over the base, 50 percent of it went to the TIF."

Macomber claims that Don Crosby, ACAD's former administrator and current representative of the Adair county commission on the TIF, told ACAD that despite the switch from property to sales tax

collections, they still would have to pay to the TIF.

"When ACAD went to the voters to ask for approval of a sales tax to support the ambulance district, they had a TIF in place," Crosby said. "I had worked with the TIF commission on several projects, so I understood that just like they did for other new taxes in the community, the TIF regulations would require that any taxes collected in the TIF district would all be collected for the TIF district purposes, and the ambulance district would get no portion of the taxes collected in the district."

Bill Crnic, current chairman of the board of directors for ACAD, said he thinks the TIF calculations are not clear enough. Crnic and ACAD have placed the matter into the hands of their attorney, Franklin Foster from Jefferson City, Mo. Foster did not respond to messages left by the Index.

"I have been to a meeting where

he made that statement," Crnic said. "But if we do owe it, what are the calculations of the fee that is owed and by whose calculations do you go by? There are some ambiguities there."

Crnic claims ACAD made an effort to resolve the conflict by providing a proposal to the TIF commission.

But the proposal was not accepted, he said.

"When I became board chairman, we made an attempt to resolve the issue," Crnic said. "We made a proposal to the TIF district, and they refused it."

Macomber said the city also has taken steps to solve the problem. After proposing an offer to ACAD, Macomber said the commission has

been waiting since October for a response. In 2006, ACAD paid \$5,073 to the TIF based on the property tax collected. The TIF commission estimated that based on the sales tax, ACAD owes \$45,000 to the TIF. But the commission has offered to allow

ACAD to pay half of the \$45,000.

TIF commission chairperson Allen Goans said he thinks part of the dispute between ACAD and TIF could be caused by ACAD's switch from collecting on a property tax to collecting on a sales tax. Goans said collecting on a property tax is a much simpler process.

"The county collector collects those funds, and before they disperse the funds, they go ahead and make the TIF payment to the city," Goans said. "So when they had the property taxes, they went ahead and paid TIF the money, but it was an automatic thing because of the way the funds are dispersed."

Although both sides agree this issue should be resolved as quickly as possible, ACAD and the TIF commission have lawyers corresponding back and forth. Crosby said he thinks that although the situation is an unpleasant one, it will not be detrimental to Kirksville or the future plans for public improvements.

"The amount in dispute is not enough to negatively impair the ability of the ambulance service to provide emergency care, nor do I think the amount is significant enough to be required for the TIF funding needs," Crosby said.

"When I became board chairman, we made an attempt to resolve the issue. We made a proposal to the TIF district, and they refused it."

Don Crosby  
Former ACAD administrator

## Computer savvy? Then we want you!

The Truman Media Board is seeking applicants for a 2009-10 Webmaster position. Applications are due April 1 and interviews will take place April 3 to 4. The Webmaster will be responsible for design and maintenance of the five media Web sites, including audio, video, text and photo uploads, and must be familiar with HTML and CSS code. Flash and College Publisher experience is a plus. Hours are flexible with some required and on-call times. The Webmaster will oversee at least one assistant, and previous managerial experience is recommended. This is a year-long commitment, and the position is for institutional pay, but applicants may opt to apply the first 60 hours toward a scholarship requirement.

Please submit a resume and work sample by e-mail to [blakettoppmeyer@gmail.com](mailto:blakettoppmeyer@gmail.com) with the subject line: Webmaster Application 2009-10.

### Required qualifications and job duties:

- Knowledge of HTML and CSS code
- Good communication skills
- Design/modify/maintain multiple (5) Web sites
- Some required hours, on-call, with flexibility (availability to PDF newspaper pages from 7 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. on Wednesdays)
- Posting audio/video files and general upload
- Oversee at least one assistant
- Flash media experience

### Preferred qualifications:

- Familiarity with College Publisher
- Previous management experience

