

Mediation offers court alternative

BY BRITTANY KEELING
For the Index

There's an alternative to legal court for those involved in conflict in Kirksville. The Boston Chase Mediation Group, an independently owned business, seeks to teach the community the benefits of mediation.

Mediation is a way for parties in a conflict to decide for themselves what they will compromise on to create a resolution they each can live with, said Chandrika Collins, owner, mediator and conflict resolutions specialist.

"Mediation is an opportunity for individuals to come together and resolve the problem that they are having in a non-adversarial manner, with the assistance of a third party neutral, which is the mediator; to let them look at a variety of options and ideas, thinking outside of the box about their situation and just determine a solution, and essentially what will work for them, what they can live with, without having potentially a judge or a jury or someone else decide it for them," Collins said.

Mediation is both cost effective and time efficient because all parties involved share the cost of mediation involved, and the mediation process typically takes half as much time as a court case, she said. Boston Chase Mediation Group provides services throughout the state, she said. Cases primarily deal with child custody conflicts, but also some involve organizational conflicts among co-workers of an organization or within an organization

that is not functioning well as a whole, Collins said.

Collins, a Truman alumna who has a masters in conflict analysis and resolution from Nova Southeastern University in Florida, opened the business in 2006 after completing her practicum work with the Adair County Circuit Court. She said that through the practicum, she conducted a needs assessment of the community and recognized an opportunity for an alternative conflict resolution method in the region.

"I was able to identify essentially where there were gaps in the system in comparison to other communities that offer alternative dispute resolution," she said.

Collins said after assessing the community she decided there was a need for mediation services and that she wanted to stay in Kirksville.

The mediation process is confidential and anything that occurs in mediation cannot be discussed outside of it unless agreed upon by all parties involved, Collins said.

Before the process begins, all parties agree to four ground rules, she said. One, all parties will try to mediate through the entire process. Two, each party will be allowed to speak without interruption until they are finished. Three, each party will refrain from calling each other names, specifically profanity. And four, each party will respect each other's right to leave if they decide not to participate.

When mediation is complete and the parties reach a final resolution, Collins drafts a Sum-



Laura Tyler/Index
Chandrika Collins, mediator from the Boston Chase Mediation Group, goes through paperwork for her clients' cases.

mary of Mediated Agreement, which all parties review and sign off on before it is sent to their respective attorneys, she said. The attorneys then turn the resolution into a legally binding agreement and present it to the judge, Collins said.

Bill Alberty, Knox County Associate Circuit Judge, said he refers cases to the Boston Chase Mediation Group through the Mediation Achieving Results for Children program. This program pays for up to four hours of free mediation services for parties in cases involving child welfare, according to the M.A.R.C.H. Mediation website.

Alberty said he tries to order parties who are eligible for M.A.R.C.H. Mediation to attend the sessions because they're free, and it often helps them focus on the real issues at hand.

"If you can get them to focus on

the best interest of the children, they can usually come to some sort of an agreement," he said. "Too often the parties get mad at each other and their focus is on that, and when you can get them to sit down and start thinking about the children, you can usually — well not usually — but you can quite often get them to come to some sort of an agreement."

Kirksville residents Derek Slaughter and Shana Stremel opted to go through the Boston Chase Mediation Group instead of court for their divorce in April 2009. Both said it was a positive experience. It was a good way for them to handle their disputes in an unbiased way, Slaughter said.

The couple chose mediation because it was a "hopeful, healthy" option for navigating the complicated legal process, Stremel said.

Stores might see higher sales tax

BY ELIZABETH KOCH
Staff Reporter

The proposed establishment of a City Improvement District would implement a half percent sales tax increase for at least 20 years in the downtown Kirksville area.

The resulting revenue, estimated between \$110,000-\$115,000 over the 20 year period, would be used to improve downtown Kirksville's appearance and attract people to the area through planned events and activities, said Nate Walker, executive director of the Kirksville Downtown Improvement Committee. If passed by City Council, the CID could be established by the end of the year, he said.

The proposal would raise the tax rate to 8.35 percent. For example, it would be an additional 5 cents on a \$10 purchase, 25 cents on a \$50 purchase or 50 cents on a \$100 purchase, Walker said.

"That's not a tremendous boom," he said. "A lot of merchants always have sales and so forth, and so this is a very, very small percentage, and I don't think it will really have a major impact."

The rest of Kirksville has a sales tax rate of 7.85 percent, with an exception of the area from Orschlen Farm & Home to Stage Stores on Baltimore, which has a rate of 8.85 percent. This area has a higher rate because it already is a CID.

"It's an economic development tool that gives local communities the opportunity to make decisions for themselves and not be reliant on state grants or federal grants," Walker said. "We want to make downtown Kirksville a better place than what is already."

A written petition explaining what a CID entails and a five-year plan specific to downtown Kirksville will be presented to property owners in the area, Walker said. If there were enough signatures, the CID then would go to City Council. Walker said the committee plans to start collecting signatures within the next month.

The idea of establishing a CID came after the implementation of the Downtown Revitalization and Economic Assistance for Missouri Initiative in August 2007.

"It's going to take more than a half percent sales tax to change peoples' behavior [according to researchers with the DREAM initiative]," said Carolyn Chrisman, KDIC Board Member. "People [that] normally are used to shopping downtown will continue unless there is a drastic change in sales tax, not a nickel on \$10."

Chrisman said the two other options were to increase property taxes or business license fees. She said raising the sales tax seemed more evenly distributed among community members.

Sherry Stacey, KDIC Chair and owner of Sweet Espressions Coffee House and Hidden Treasures said this increased sales tax is not new. The downtown area had an increased sales tax approximately three years ago, and citizens are most likely unaware of that, Stacey said. The funding from that increased tax helped run events, she said.

"It gave us money, but we still didn't have the manpower," Stacey said. "It was almost like having the cart before the horse. Now, we've got everything in the proper order and we need that source of revenue again."

Walker said he agreed. Without a permanent director like himself solely focused on KDIC, the planning would have been overwhelming for the rest of the board to do alone alongside their other careers, he said.

Stacey said that from a business owner's perspective, she fully supports the establishment of a CID because it would attract citizens and students to go downtown. She said she thinks the more exposure downtown has through events, the more business she potentially will receive.

"If people have a habit of coming uptown, they have a favorable experience — they're going to come back," Stacey said.

She said the increased sales tax would not have an effect on her business because it is not a significant amount of money.

Stacey said most of her customers probably would not have a problem with the 8.35 percent tax rate because they didn't when the sales tax was increased in the past, if they were even aware of the increase to begin with.

Walker said there were concerned business owners at a public meeting last Tuesday about the establishment of a downtown CID. He said they mostly were concerned with where the revenue would be spent.

"We had a very positive meeting," Walker said. "It was well attended and everybody had a chance to voice their opinion."

If the plan is passed, the committee will make detailed five-year plans throughout the project, and plans will be updated to ensure the most important changes are being made.

Shawn Wichmann, Shawn's Bridal and Formal Shoppe owner, located on The Square, said she was not aware of the proposed increase sales tax until Sunday after reading it in the newspaper.

"I'm not in favor of that," she said. "The activities and events don't bring business directly to the businesses, usually they're after-hours. The businesses have to come up with their own promotions to get people to come into their own stores."

She said her main concern is that the increased sales tax would push people away from The Square to businesses elsewhere in town.

"If somebody wants to go buy a refrigerator, they're probably going to go to a business with less sales tax than a business with more sales tax," Wichmann said. "So they're not even going to try to buy that refrigerator on The Square."

She said more sales tax could be generated through recruiting more quality businesses downtown, especially those with brand-new retail merchandise as opposed to resale stores.

"It just doesn't seem fair to have one business pay more than another business in town," Wichmann said. "That's just the bottom line for me."

"It just doesn't seem fair to have one business pay more than another business in town"

Shawn Wichmann
Shawn's Bridal and Formal Shoppe owner

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hikers rescued from Thousand Hills

The Adair County Sheriff's Department rescued two teenagers who were lost in Thousand Hills State Park Sunday night. Fifteen-year-olds Jeremiah McKim and Daniel Ferdig got lost while hiking the park's 13-mile trail. Deputies received a call from the park supervisor and contacted the boys by cell phone to determine their location using landmarks. Deputies crossed the lake by boat and successfully located the boys. Cpl. Eldon Grissom, an off-duty Missouri Highway Patrol trooper, assisted with the rescue in his personal boat. The boys were examined by the Adair County Ambulance District Paramedics. The Sheriff's department encourages hikers to carry a cell phone and basic emergency supplies when hiking and to let others know when to expect them to return.

Lyceum Series continues

There will be a performance of the play "Bus Stop" by the Montana Repertory Theatre at 7:30 p.m. tonight in the Baldwin Auditorium. Tickets are \$7 and are sold at Edna Campbells on The Square and the Truman State University Business Office at McClain Hall 105. The performance is a part of the Kohlberg Lyceum Series.

Scholarship applications due March 10

Foundation scholarship applications for the 2011-12 academic year are due by midnight March 10. Applications and a list of available scholarships are online at <https://secure.truman.edu/isupport-s/>. Some scholarships are only open to specific majors and qualifications, while others have more general criteria. Applicants are required to fill out personal information and submit a personal statement up to 2,500 characters, or approximately one page. Only full-time students are eligible to receive foundation scholarships. Graduating seniors applying for scholarships for their final semester do not have to be full time students to be eligible. Graduate students are considered full-time students for the purpose of foundation scholarship applications if they are enrolled in 8 or more credit hour or are involved in an internship program. Scholarship recipients will be notified by the Office of Advancement by the end of this semester. For more information contact Becky Pike at bpiketruman.edu.

STUDENT SENATE IN BRIEF

•Student Senate passed a money motion in the amount of \$225 for the cost of the Senate spring retreat.

•Student Senate passed a money motion in the amount of \$150 for the cost of printing copies of the report of the Organizational Activities Fee Review Committee.

•Student Senate passed a money motion in the amount of \$75 for posters to recruit students to run for Senate.

•Student Senate passed a money motion in the amount of \$75 for poster to encourage students to vote in Senate elections.

CRIME REPORTS DPS & KPD

2/27 Sophomore Addison Chavez was issued a Missouri Uniform Complaint and Summons for Possession of up to 35 grams of marijuana and unlawful use of drug paraphernalia.

2/27 Freshman Lauren Harrell received a Missouri Uniform Complaint and Summons for Minor in Possession of Alcohol.

2/27 Freshman Lynn Huffman received a Missouri Uniform Complaint and Summons for Minor in Possession of Alcohol.

2/27 Freshman Megan Johnson received a Missouri Uniform Complaint and Summons for Minor in Possession of Alcohol.

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