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Council avoids pursuing defeat of mayoral veto

BY SARAH FOX
 Staff writer

City Council

Instead of trying to defeat Mayor Don Wesely's veto a second time, the City Council voted unanimously on Monday to withdraw an ordinance Wesely vetoed Aug. 18.

The veto was his first as mayor. The ordinance would have extended appointments of 12 Community Health Endowment board members by one year. Terms expire Wednesday for four of the board members.

The Community Health Endowment was formed in 1998 from the sale of Lincoln General Hospital and will fund community health projects in Lincoln and Lancaster County.

The endowment has \$41 million in assets and can spend \$1.2 million each year.

In a telephone interview, Wesely said he recommended that the council reappoint two of the four outgoing board members and choose two new members. He said he opposed the ordinance because he didn't want the 12 members to receive an extra year on the board.

"I don't think any boards should be automatically reappointed," Wesely said. "I think it should be done person by person."

Board members at the meeting said they didn't want too many people from the board to leave at once.

They also said they had worked hard creating bylaws and committees for the endowment.

The council members said they realized starting an endowment was difficult.

"I'm greatly appreciative of the tremendous effort you've done," Jeff Fortenberry, council vice chairman, told members.

However, one Lincoln resident said he opposed the board's control of the money.

The \$41 million should not be used for community health care programs, Robert Valentine said.

"I have a depth of experience as a taxpayer," he said. "Let us apply (the money) to our own families and our own health care costs."

The City Council will meet again at 6:30 p.m. Sept. 7.

Two students to be charged as adults

BY JAKE BLEED
 Senior staff writer

Two teen-agers accused of firing a gun at students outside Lincoln Northeast High School last week were arraigned in Lancaster County court Friday.

Both suspects will be charged as adults, Lancaster County Attorney Gary Lacey said, because of "the seriousness and the dangerousness of the crime."

The 14-year-old suspect was charged with making terrorist threats and use of a firearm to commit a felony, and he was held on a \$50,000 bond. A 15-year-old was charged with being an accessory to a felony. He was released from custody Friday.

The charges against the 14-year-old were changed from attempted first-degree assault to making terrorist threats. The charges against the 15-year-old were changed from aiding and abetting a felony to accessory to a felony.

Police Capt. Doug Srb said the 14-year-old fired a gun first at a student in a nearby car and then at students standing nearby. Srb said a total of four to six shots were fired.

The shooting took place just before the year's second day of classes ended at Northeast High School on 63rd Street between Delhay and Adams streets.

No injuries were reported in the incident.

Northeast High School principal Terry Wilks said only one of the students was enrolled at Northeast as a freshman but had yet to attend class at the high school.

Srb said the incident stemmed from an argument Monday between several Northeast High School students. Police did not know the cause of the argument.

Capt. David Beggs said no guns were recovered by police from the incident, but several baseball bats were taken from the victims of the shooting.

Minnesotans view state's Unicameral

BY KIMBERLY SWEET
 Senior staff writer

Four Minnesota representatives got a taste of Nebraska's one-house Legislature form of government on Monday.

With Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura on a crusade to pile drive Minnesota's bicameral form of government into a version of Nebraska's one-house system, representatives came to Nebraska to hear from lawmakers and legislative experts about the benefits of the system.

After a day's worth of information gathering, Nebraska Sen. DiAnna Schimek said the visitors' impressions varied.

"I think there was a mixed bag of feelings amongst them," she said. "I think there still is."

The legislators received a welcome from Nebraska Gov. Mike Johanns and heard a history of the Unicameral from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Professor Robert Sittig.

Discussions throughout the day included topics such as committee organization, non-partisanship and budgeting and appropriations.

While some of the legislators were still vehemently opposed to the idea at the end of the day, Schimek said there were some aspects of the Unicameral the Minnesotans liked.

The budget-making process, the fact that both parties can run for committee chairmanships and the efficiency of the system were some of the reforms the lawmakers saw as being positive for Minnesota, Schimek said.

Minnesota Rep. Tony Kilkucki said he was in favor of the idea before he made the Nebraska visit.

But after hearing from Nebraska officials, Kilkucki said he thinks there are ways the Legislature can be reformed without the drastic overhaul.

"I was leaning toward it," Kilkucki said. "Now I'm kind of looking at

more reform issues than unicameral issues."

Minnesota Rep. Jim Rhodes said he held a neutral position on the unicameral issue before coming to Nebraska, and he said he would leave the same way.

But whatever the pros and the cons of the system are, people are going to have a hard time with any kind of change the Minnesota Legislature implements, Rhodes said.

"Change is always hard for people when it is in effect," he said.

One of the options Ventura is considering is endorsing a unicameral form of government that would be partisan, unlike Nebraska's non-partisan system.

"It could work," Schimek said. "It would be different from our unicameral."

Ventura intends to push the unicameral issue in the next legislative session, said Chris Peterson, a representative of Johanns' office.

A hearing on the issue is scheduled for this fall. Schimek said Nebraska legislators are talking about participating in a teleconference with Minnesota legislators later this year.

Minnesota isn't the only state that has taken interest in Nebraska's unique form of government.

South Dakota has shown interest, and representatives from Kansas and California have visited the Unicameral to observe as well. Montana had it on the ballot a few years ago, Schimek said.

Oregon also is expressing interest, Peterson said.

While Ventura is enthusiastic about the idea of a unicameral, Schimek said changing the entire governmental process will be difficult, just as it was in Nebraska in 1934.

"It all depends on how serious the governor is willing to keep at it," Schimek said. "It took a long time in our state."

Senior staff writer Jake Bleed contributed to this story.

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