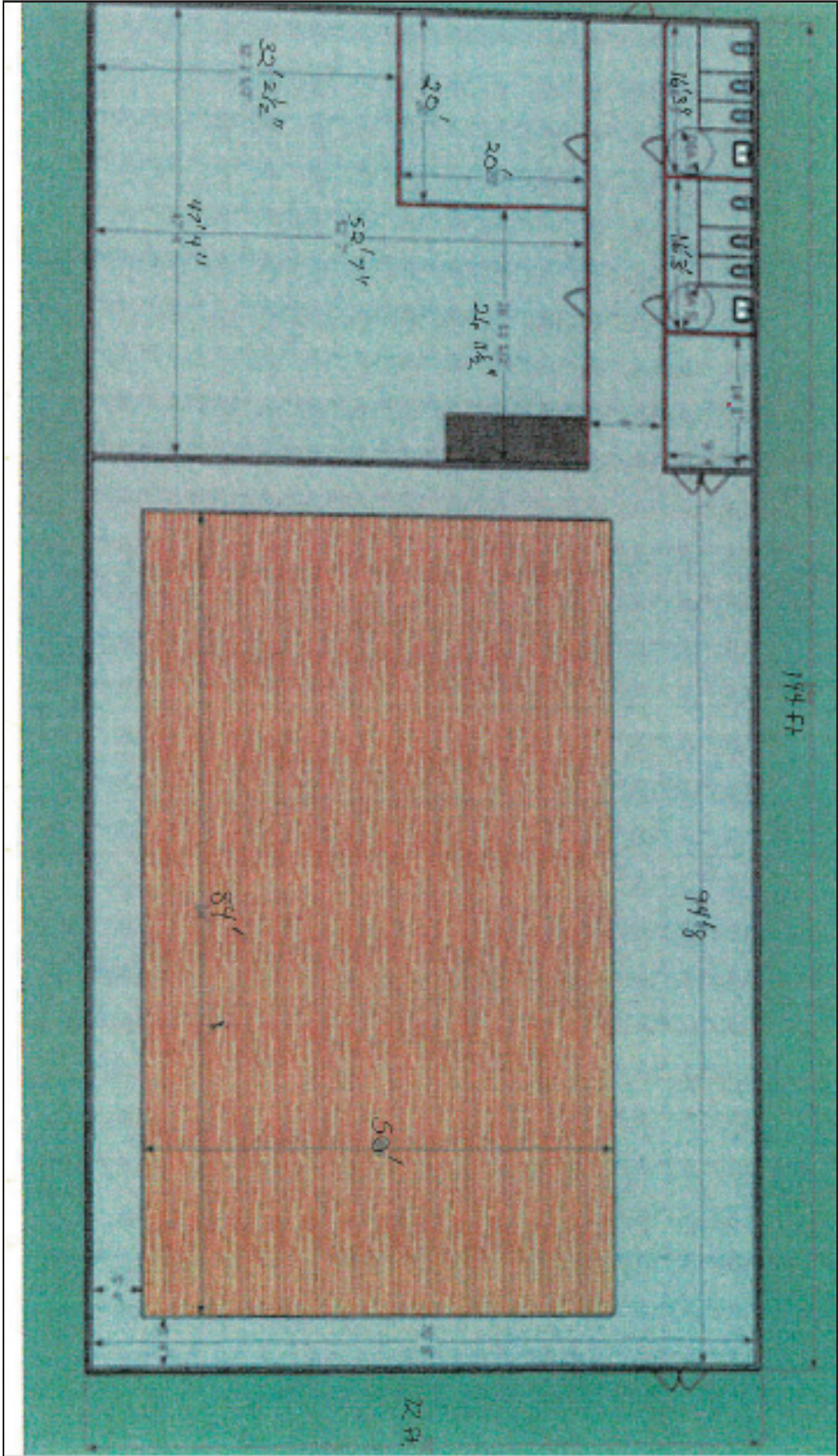


Sandhills Public Schools Planning New Building



COURTESY

Story By:
Marcia Hora

Sandhills Public Schools is planning construction of a new multi-purpose building north of the football field. Superintendent J.D. Furrow said the 72' x 144' building with 20' walls will house wrestling, a weight room, restrooms, concessions, and an extra practice basketball court where the

school could host some events. The facility would also be home to a new crew's next for radio stations and filming crews. The present crew's nest would be moved to the visitor's side for their coaches to use. Patrons of the district saw the plans at a community meeting held December 20. Superintendent Furrow said the board has been putting plans and looking at options for

the past 18 months before the meeting where a question and answer session was held. A significant portion of the cost of the building would come from the special building fund and the balance would come from a seven year lease-purchase. The school board will be meeting on Wednesday, January 26, to look at accept bids on the proposed facility.

Junior Anglers Needed: Ice Fishing Clinic In Valentine

Ever wanted to try ice fishing? Join the Niobrara National Scenic River and Valentine National Wildlife Refuge for the first Ice Fishing Clinic. The event takes place on February 5, 2022, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Watts Lake at Valentine National Wildlife Refuge. Registration is required and registration will close on January 28, 2022. Please contact the Niobrara National Scenic River Visitor Center either by phone 402-376-1901 or email niobrara_nsr@nps.gov to ask questions and register.

The Ice Fishing Clinic is geared for beginners and youth of all ages! From learning how to use an auger to learning about fishing rods and bait, you will walk away with a bet-

ter understanding of ice fishing. Anglers under 12 years of age will be receiving their own ice fishing pole to take home. Plan on wearing warm clothes and bringing ice cleats. Watts Lake is located off 16B State Spur highway. Signs will be at the turn on Highway 85 and parking area for Watts Lake. In the case of inclement weather, we are planning a back-up date of February 19, 2022. People have cared for the Niobrara River for generations. They have cared for the waters, tributaries and lakes that led to the Niobrara River. Fishing is a small way to remember how to care for the waters. Ice fishing the lakes along the Niobrara River watershed is a time-honored tradition to many Nebraskans in the

Sandhills. "The Niobrara National Scenic River is proud to partner with the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge to provide this clinic to community," Acting Superintendent Susan Cook stated. "We are excited to engage local youth in our public lands in ways caregivers have for generations." In accordance with CDC guidance and recommendations on preventing the spread of COVID-19, face coverings and social distancing are mandatory for all events. Niobrara National Scenic River has an exciting events planned for 2022. Keep up with the latest information by following us on Twitter (NiobraraNPS) and Facebook (Niobrara National Scenic River).

Downing Appointed To Board Of Appraisers By Ricketts

Governor Pete Ricketts recently announced appointments he has made to fill Nebraska's boards and commissions. The following appointees are unpaid and are not subject to Legislative confirmation:

Board of Appraisers for Educational Lands and Funds
Bonnie M. Downing, Dunning
Nebraska Aquaculture Board
Richard Lackaff, Bassett
Commission for the Protection of Children
Corrie Kielty, Lincoln
Mary Jo Pankoke, Lincoln
Michelle L. Padilla, Fremont
B. Gail Steen, Lincoln
Ivy C. Svoboda, Papillion
Mark Unvert, Sterling
Katherine S. Washburn, Sioux City, IA
Nebr. Children's Commission
Jarren Lee Breeling, Papillion
A'Jamal-Rashad Byndon, Omaha
Rachel Folds, Walton
Misty Frazier, Bloom-

field
Ronald Giesselmann, Fremont
Sara J. Hoyle, Lincoln
Terri J. Knutson, Omaha
Melissa K. Nance, Omaha
Susan J. Thomas, Fairbury
Collection Agency Licensing Board
Micheal J. Morledge, Grand Island
Jason A. Thompson, Bennington
Advisory Committee on Developmental Disabilities
Dorothy Ackland, York
Stacy Bliss, Fremont
Jennifer Miller, Bellevue
Lorie D. Regier, Madrid
Kizzie S. Vaughn, Omaha
Christina R. Zeleski, Hastings
Early Childhood Education Endowment Board of Trustees
Tanya Rochelle Santos, Omaha
Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council
Allison Freeny, Ed.S, MBA, Omaha
Nora Robinson, Kimball

Nebr. EPSCoR/IDEA Committee
Dr. Charles Bicak, Kearney
Dr. Janet E. Seger, Omaha
Nebr. Hemp Commission
Tara Smydra, Norfolk
Josh Watchorn, Sidney
Annette M. Wiles, Plattsmouth
Homeland Security Policy Group
Ervin L. Portis, Lincoln
Nebr. Commission on Housing and Homelessness
Lee Ann Heflebower, Lincoln
Kathryn Mesner, Central City
Roger D. Nadrchal, Norfolk
Mindy Paces, Omaha
Amy Thelander, Grant
Brent Williams, Lincoln
Nebr. Invasive Species Council
Dennis Schroeder, Lincoln
Judicial Nominating Commission - Dist. Court - 4th Judicial Dist.

See Appointments
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Putting An End To Human Trafficking In Nebraska

By:
Gov. Pete Ricketts

The most heinous crimes often target vulnerable members of our society. To protect our innocent, Nebraska is hard at work to expose human trafficking and root it out of the Good Life.

Human trafficking is a despicable crime. It inflicts severe trauma on its victims and shows a sickening disregard for human dignity. It's important that we recognize that human trafficking exists in Nebraska. It may not be visible in your neighborhood, but it happens across the state and is a scourge in our society.

During my administration, we've followed a four-part strategy to combat human trafficking:

I. Raising Public Awareness

We all have a role to play in looking out for signs of human trafficking, especially at casinos, gas stations, hotels, and rest stops along our traffic corridors. The Nebraska Department of Transportation has placed posters at all rest areas in Nebraska with the number for the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-373-7888). The posters have a QR code that directs to the Attorney General's website, where short videos provide information to help viewers identify telltale signs of trafficking.

In addition, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has trained more than 1,800 professionals and State team-mates to recognize human trafficking and prevent it from happening to the children and families we serve. The Nebraska Human Trafficking Task Force within the Attorney General's Office trained over 6,800 people in 2021 alone, focusing on strategic groups like police recruits, staff at Nebraska's schools, and county attorneys.

II. Passing Legislation

Passing Nebraska-specific laws has been extremely important because federal trafficking laws only apply to cases that cross state borders. Prior to the Nebraska Legislature enacting legislation, criminal activity within the state couldn't be prosecuted as effectively. Senators across party lines have stepped up to help fix that.

In 2015, Speaker Jim Scheer championed legislation that allows trafficking victims to seek civil remedy against perpetrators.

In 2017, Senator Patty Pansing Brooks sponsored legislation to increase penalties for human trafficking-related crimes.

In 2019, Senator Julie Slama brought forward LB 519, which among other provisions, eliminated the statute of limitations for sex trafficking of a minor.

III. Investigating and Prosecuting Crimes

Legislation has empowered law enforcement to investigate trafficking and apprehend criminals. For example, in August law enforcement in Nebraska participated in Operation United Front, a human trafficking investigation spanning 12 states. As part of the operation, Nebraska law enforcement conducted sex trafficking operations in Scottsbluff, Kearney, and South Sioux City. It was an all-hands-on-deck effort that included the Attorney General's (AG) Office, the Nebraska State Patrol, five local police departments, Homeland Security Investigations, and the FBI. The investigation resulted in more than 100 arrests nationwide, including seven in Nebraska.

As these arrests are made, the State prosecutes them to the fullest extent of the law. In 2021, that included 22 prosecutions in state court. In many cases, legal victories are years in the making. After two years of close collaboration with other

law enforcement agencies, the AG's Office helped bring down a major sex trafficking ring in Furnas County in 2021. Just last month, the lead perpetrator was sentenced to a minimum of 176 years behind bars.

IV. Supporting Survivors

Gaining a conviction doesn't mean "case closed" when it comes to trafficking. Survivors need care, resources, and support after experiencing such profound trauma. That's why Nebraska supports providers who help survivors move forward.

The State of Nebraska is administering a three-year, \$1.5 million federal grant to help children and youth who've experienced trafficking. This money helps support child advocacy centers and health providers across Nebraska who offer crucial care to help those survivors heal. I'm grateful for the partnership of these agencies to bless and benefit survivors.

The fight to end human trafficking requires close cooperation — between state and local governments, agencies like the AG's Office and State Patrol, local law enforcement, community partners, survivor leaders, and the non-profit community.

If you would like to learn more about the State's work to prevent and prosecute human trafficking, please visit the Attorney General's website at ago.nebraska.gov/combating-human-trafficking. For additional information on how you can help to combat human trafficking, check out the resources available through the Department of Homeland Security at www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/identify-victim. If you have questions on any other topic, please email me at pete.ricketts@nebraska.gov or call 402-471-2244. Thank you for stepping up to help with this critical work.