



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Tom Kunke Art Studio & Gallery, at 357 Main St. in Dallas, will close June 25. The work of Kunke and artist Therese Misner is on display until then. Owners Tom and Conni Kunke said running the studio didn't mix with retired life.

LAST EXHIBIT

Tom Kunke Art Studio & Gallery showing paintings for the last time June 25

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Tom Kunke wants to refocus on his creative side.

After retiring from his first career as a college professor, Kunke did just that when he started painting.

At first he wouldn't show anyone his work, but with the help of his wife, Conni, he brought his talent to light.

He eventually began showing his work at local exhibits.

In late 2013, Tom and Conni took the next step, opening an art studio and gallery on Main Street in Dallas.

Tom Kunke Art Studio & Gallery has done well by many measures.

Kunke's distinctive style — he doesn't use a

brush, but a palette knife to apply paint to the canvas — has proven popular.

"We do feel like it was really successful," Conni said. "Tom has sold over 70 paintings since we've been here."

The studio also offered a place for local artists to show their work and connect with others, Tom said.

The couple briefly offered a selection of gift items, trying to make up for the void left when Plain & Fancy closed.

That idea didn't catch on as much as they would have liked, but offering a place for art in Dallas resonated.

"We met a lot of interesting people who came through," Tom said.

That is why he's feeling conflicted about the next step in his artistic journey: closing the studio.

June 25 will be the last

day the studio will be showing art.

The couple is semi-retired and keeping regular hours at the studio three days a week doesn't match with the traveling they would like to do.

When they opened the gallery, Tom envisioned it being a "working studio," where people could stop by and see him paint, see his finished work and other artist's pieces.

That system worked, but Kunke wasn't still wasn't able to keep typical "gallery hours" on weeknights and weekends.

"I think running a gallery and painting are very different things," Tom said. "We really appreciate what it takes to make a gallery go."

They recently decided that part of owning the studio was something they had to let go.

Tom will be able to paint at home and show his work at other venues.

This summer, his paintings will be display at Samuel Robert Winery in Amity in July and August.

Bush Barn Art Center in Salem is showing his work on an ongoing basis starting in July.

"Bush Barn is where he started, and they are so excited to have his work back at the gallery," Conni said. "With our retired or semi-retired lifestyle, he can paint and give his work to them."

Tom said he's closing the studio with mixed emotions and appreciates the support the community has given his artistic venture.

"It was a great experience and we learned a lot," he said.

For more information: <http://www.tomkunkeart.com/>.

FC library funds miscalculated

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — The Wagner Community Library has more money at its disposal than originally thought.

In the past two years, the city inadvertently transferred too much money to the city's general fund from the Wagner Trust than was needed by about \$22,400.

Mayor Terry Ungricht discovered the issue while putting together the city's 2016-17 budget and suggested converting the trust into its own fund in the budget to avoid any further confusion.

Ungricht said former city administrator Amber Mathiesen set up the budget for the first year of operations based on an estimate of what it would cost to run the library. The next year interim city manager Jon Hanken used that figure as a guideline, unaware that the estimate was more than was needed for operations.

"They over budgeted and part of that was transferred,"

he said. "Amber had budgeted, like, \$60,000 operations and we ended up spending a little over \$30,000. That (\$60,000) was transferred."

The city will cover the first \$22,442 of expenses in the upcoming fiscal year to compensate for the unneeded amounts transferred. Remaining trust funds will be funneled into its own budget with a starting balance of \$111,670, so long as expenses don't exceed \$22,442.

Ungricht assured the council the city could afford to pay back the money.

"We have the funds there to do this," he said. "It's no problem."

The city and Falls City School Board still are planning on meeting to discuss the future of the library, Ungricht said. He said he will offer options for meeting dates at the school board's meeting on Tuesday.

Librarian Cynthia Hovind has resigned as of June 1 and the district is in the process of filling the position with interviews on June 27.

MONEY: Fire vehicle to save city money

Continued from Page 1A

Engineering on a "water reclaiming" project, which will redistribute treated wastewater for irrigation at city parks, is to begin during the 2016-17 fiscal year. The city budgeted \$200,000, to be paid for with systems development charges.

In addition to bringing on temporary staff, the fire department will add a new squad vehicle to its fleet at a cost of \$150,000.

Hertel said it requires fewer firefighters to operate and is less expensive to take to calls, helping to solve two problems: long response

times due to lack of volunteers and tight budgets.

"It is a quick-response type unit for our limited staffing," Hertel said. "We are running into more and more situations where we have limited staffing, and this vehicle is a multi-use vehicle that allows us to easily maneuver and handle a lot of those small-type calls."

He said it costs between \$15 and \$18 per mile to respond to call on a fire engine, while the squad vehicle is estimated to cost \$5 per mile.

For a more on this story, go www.polkio.com.

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