

Polk County
Itemizer-Observer
Volume 142, Issue 5 www.Polkio.com February 1, 2017 \$1.00

Court security to limit access

BOC reviews bid to close all courthouse doors except main entrance

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Limiting access to the Polk County Courthouse to one entrance for court security has been contemplated for years, but movement in that direction has picked up speed.

Last week, the board of commissioners reviewed a bid to close all doors except the main entrance on the Jefferson Street side of the courthouse. That would shutter doors on the historic side of the courthouse.

The bid included cameras and locks on the doors that would only open when the fire alarm is pulled.

The board rejected that method and said the county would have to put significant effort into communicating with the public about the changes before they happen.

"We would literally need to put signs at the bottom of the stairs out there," said Matt Hawkins, the county's human resources director. "This is a topic that we've had conversations around for a long time now."

County officials said education and signs will be important to make the move successful, especially given the confusing nature of the building, which includes the historic courthouse and an addition. Courtrooms are located in both buildings, and at the Polk County Jail across the street.

The floor height in the newer building doesn't match to the older building, adding to possible confusion. County employees often help



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Access to the Polk County Courthouse may be limited to one entrance for court enhanced security.

people find their way out of the building.

"We deal with people who are confused and disoriented on a regular basis," said Austin McGuigan, the

county's community development director. "It's kind of weird that just having the two buildings misaligned by a few feet can cause so much confusion for people, but it does."

He said people tend to exit on the old courthouse side, but under the security plan, those doors will be closed.

See **DOORS**, Page 5A

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS

Dallas Aquatic Center users may see a rate increase to use the pool.

»Page 2A

FALLS CITY

School board to ask for donations and volunteer support to build an elementary school gym.

»Page 2A

INDEPENDENCE

Richard Davis to receive the First Artist award at CHS.

»Page 2A

MONMOUTH

Police department to crack down on seat belt enforcement, distracted driving and speeding.

»Page 2A

PERRYDALE

Perrydale girls and boys basketball prep for stretch run.

»Page 15A

SPORTS

Sophomore Ali Nelke helps Western Oregon's women's basketball team make steady progress.

»Page 13A

Sheriff's office investigates two shootings

Itemizer-Observer staff report
POLK COUNTY — The Polk County Sheriff's Office and Salem police are investigating two shooting incidents that occurred on Friday night.

Polk County Sheriff Mark Garton said a woman's car was shot at while she was driving near Rickreall.

Windows were broken, but no one was hurt in the incident, he said.

He said the woman provided a vague description of the shooter's vehicle as a silver or white car. The driver was a man who appeared tall, according to the victim.

A similar shooting happened in Salem the same night, but Garton said investigators aren't certain if the two incidents are connected yet. The victim in that case gave police a partial license plate on the shooter's car.

"It seems like Salem might have a little bit more," he said.



Committee revises biz registration

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — The city of Dallas is reviewing a compromise to begin a business registration in town.

The city tabled its first attempt at establishing the registration, proposed after months of discussion and debate. It would have made it a requirement for currently operating and new businesses in town, and came with a fee of \$25 for the first year (for new businesses) and \$10 for annual renewal.

Business owners expressed concern, especially about the "mandatory" part, and the Dallas City Council decided to have the city's administration committee review it again because of those issues.

See **BUSINESS**, Page 10A

Districts see mixed results

Central grad rates rise, Dallas rates decrease from 2015

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Superintendent Buzz Brazeau was ecstatic when he heard about Central High School's graduation rates for 2015-16: 86.5 percent.

"Kids working hard; teachers working hard; parents working hard; administrators working hard as well, and that's a good deal," Brazeau said. "Great news."

Central's rate is up from 72.6 percent last year for its four-year cohort graduation rate. Its five-year rate is even higher at 91.71 percent.

Overall, schools across the state saw an increase in graduation rates in the class of 2016, up one percentage point to 74.8 percent.

"It shows the dedication of our teachers and school administrators that graduation rates are increasing across the board," Deputy Superintendent Salam Noor said in a press release. "We are making progress, while recognizing there is still more work to do. We are pleased our state's focus on improving graduation outcomes for all students is making a difference."

Not all students' success

Four-year cohort graduation rates 2016			
	Four-year	Completer	2015
State	74.83	78.11	73.82
Central	86.5	86.98	72.60
Dallas	74.63	79.78	82.17
Falls City	82.35	88.24	50
Perrydale	96.43	96.43	100

counts on graduation-rate data.

In Perrydale, graduation rates fell from 100 percent in 2014-15 to 96.43 percent in 2015-16. The reason?

"One special ed student got an alternative certificate," Superintendent Eric Milburn said. "Those don't count as completer or as a graduate. So if you have a high-needs special ed student that is well below ability, they're most likely going to get an alternative certificate. That's the highest level they can complete."

With everyone — including those in special education — completing high school in one way or another, Milburn said Perrydale is

glad to be on track — and it looks like the student success will continue.

"We just finished the semester," he said. "In the conversations I've had with the teachers, it seems like kids are on track" to graduate in 2017.

Falls City's graduation rate has shot up to 82.35 percent from 50 percent in 2014-15. With such a small student population, Falls City High School's graduation rates are largely affected by one or two students.

Superintendent Jack Thompson said the high school started a careers class, focusing on helping students plan for what they wanted to do after graduat-

ing. He said it's helped students stay focused.

"They've been spending a lot of time reviewing transcripts looking at, 'Where am I, and what do I have to do to be where I need to be,'" he said. "It's made a big difference, and we are seeing the fruits of our labor now."

Thompson said he's proud of the effort employees have put into assisting students with the first part of those plans: graduate from high school.

Dallas High saw a dip in its four-year cohort rate: from 82.17 percent in 2014-15 to 74.63 percent in 2015-16. Its five-year cohort increased nearly 4 percent from 81.63 in 2014-15 to 85.06 in 2015-16.

"It's important to note that it's always a different group of kids," said Steve Martinelli, director of instructional services. "In many cases, they have left our district and not enrolled in another district. That's the majority of our students who have not completed."

Martinelli said district employees are working hard to identify those students who have left Dallas earlier.

See **GRAD**, Page 5A

THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK

wed	thu	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue
Join Polk County Fire District No. 1 at a celebration and swearing-in ceremony at Central High School. 7 p.m. Free.	Need help with your taxes? AARP volunteers will help seniors get through the paperwork at Monmouth Senior Center. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Free.	For a toe-tapping good time, head to Guthrie Park's acoustic music jam session on Kings Valley Highway. 6:30 p.m. Donation.	Rickreall Grange Flea Market is back at the grange hall, 280 Main St., featuring vendors and baked goods. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Free.	Enjoy the musical stylings of "Keepers of the Faith" at a concert at Evangelical Bible Church in Dallas. 6 p.m. Donation.	Why not spread some joy and take part in National Pay-a-Compliment Day?	Looking to check out some basketball action? Dallas' boys basketball team hosts Corvallis. 7 p.m. \$5
Rain Hi: 39 Lo: 28	Wintery mix Hi: 37 Lo: 31	Wintery mix Hi: 40 Lo: 34	Rain Hi: 46 Lo: 36	Cloudy Hi: 44 Lo: 35	Rain Hi: 41 Lo: 34	Showers Hi: 44 Lo: 36