

I'd like to update readers on two matters dealing with district personnel, and also one financial issue. Normally, of course, personnel issues aren't handled publicly. But both of these are unusual situations.

First, I'm pleased that the school district has been upheld in court on a long-running legal case. In 2005 the Board of Education terminated the employment of Dr. Lynn Kitchen, who was the assistant superintendent, for misconduct and violation of board policy in regard to an alcohol-related incident. Dr. Kitchen appealed that decision, and it was upheld in both Butler County Common Pleas Court and the 12th District Court of Appeals.

Separately, however, she also filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court, alleging that she had been discriminated against because of her age and/or gender. She claimed that in past years other employees in similar cases had not been terminated. The district, however, maintained that her case was significantly different in a number of ways, and last month a U.S. District Court judge issued a summary judgment in favor of the school district.

The deadline for any appeal has passed, and hopefully the matter is now concluded. The entire situation was regrettable, but the Board of Education took the action it felt was appropriate, and the courts have upheld that action.

Moving to another matter, I'd like to address the speculation going around about whether our varsity football coach, Doc Gamble, will be back next year. Doc has our full support, and we have every intention of renewing his contract. He has also told us he plans to be back.

We knew there wasn't going to be any instant turnaround for the football program. But our athletic director, Jim Sherard, tells me he sees many indications of progress. Those include the players' effort, their attitudes and behavior – both on and off the field – and their work ethic. We're also very pleased with the way Doc and his coaches have handled a difficult season, continuing to guide and instruct the players in a calm, professional way no matter how great their frustration might be at the moment, or what the scoreboard might say. All those are signs of victories to come. Doc also brought with him a wide network of contacts at colleges, and he is working very hard to help get our kids into those colleges, with as much financial support as possible.

It's generally our practice not to comment about rumors, because it would be a never-ending process. But in this case I felt we should make an exception, because our players, their parents, and our fans were all hearing different things and deserved to know the facts.

And last, I'd like to respond to one claim in a flier that was distributed to many homes in the school district. A group opposed to the Permanent Improvement levy that will be on the November ballot sent it out. The flier says "the true cost of the new PI levy, for the average home owner, based on a \$155,000 home, is \$109 a year." Depending on how readers of that flier interpret the words "true cost," residents might understand it to mean

taxes will go up \$109 per year if the levy is approved. Just to be clear, for a \$155,000 home, the tax increase would be \$8.01 per year. (We usually phrase it in terms of \$100,000 of real estate value. For that amount, the tax increase is \$5.17 per year.) For more information about the levy, please see the home page of the district web site (www.fairfieldcityschools.com) or call us at 829-6300. We'll be glad to answer any questions.

Published in the Fairfield Echo, Oct. 23, 2008.