

L&T staff report

Liberal Mayor Dave Harrison has joined a growing list of individuals and organizations that have endorsed the school improvement bond proposal. Harrison joined The Joint Economic Development Council, Liberal Chamber of Commerce, Seward County Chairman Ada Linenbroker, National Beef's Pat Pridie, Northeast Liberal Leadership, Bright Futures, former Liberal City Commissioner Jack Cooley, Wheatridge Park Care Center Administrator Lindsay Durler, and Kids Inc, in endorsing the school bond proposal.



“When the City was approached by the school district to work together on a financial option for improving the schools, we had a choice to keep the traditional walls between the entities, or to do what is best for the taxpayers,” Harrison said in his letter of endorsement.

The city voted to allow a half-cent sales tax to be presented to the voters that would allow the proceeds to help fund the improvements. With the half-cent sales tax, property owners would not have to bear as much of a burden.

School districts do not have sales tax authority, only property tax. Cooperation from the City of Liberal in allowing the sales tax option will diversify the funding sources and allow those who shop, dine, spend the night or make any other purchases in Liberal help improve the schools and keep property taxes lower.

“When more than 700 local residents worked to develop the plan, that also says something about our community working together to bring pride to our educational system and our

community,” Harrison said.

The entire plan totals \$127 million, but with state aid and a half-cent sales tax, local property owners will pay \$36 million of the cost spread out over a 25-year period, or 29 percent of the total. Between the sales tax and state aid, \$91 million will come from sources other than property owners.

Harrison added that, “the plan is the right combination of funding, it’s a long-term approach to improving the infrastructure, and it is a step forward in making Liberal a more attractive community for additional business.”

Voters will determine if they want to accept the aid and sales tax initiatives in an election April 8. If the bond fails, the district will have to continue to add more portables and other stop-gap measures with no state or sales tax support, more than likely resulting in higher taxes but only supported by property owners with no state or sales tax support.

A public meeting to discuss the proposal is scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday at the Rock Island Depot.

**EDITOR’S NOTE** — To see full endorsement letter, see today’s Opinion page.