Hillel dedicates new siddurim

KU Hillel students Jeff Garfinkle (from left), Bridey Maidhof, Sarah Zurovsky and Elliot Kort display a copy of Mishkan T’filah, the new siddur for the North American Reform Movement published by CCAR Press. KU Hillel began using its new siddurim this semester for the weekly Reform minyan. The new siddurim were a gift to the students of KU Hillel from Rabbi Arthur Nemitoff and The Temple, Congregation B’nai Jehudah.
Building is at foundation of tax drive
Hall Family will donate to Cancer Center

BY JIM DAVIS | STAFF WRITER

The Hall Family Foundation is negotiating to buy a pair of Fairway office buildings, one of which it could give to the University of Kansas Cancer Center.

The building's donation to house clinical trials is an opening inducement in the coming campaign for a sales tax to finance the Johnson County Education & Research Triangle and part of a continuing effort to win National Cancer Institute designation for KU Cancer Center.

Hall Family Foundation President Bill Hall said he's confident that the foundation will buy the buildings on Shawnee Mission Parkway from Highwoods Properties Inc.

The Kansas City-based foundation's property transfer to KU would hinge on Johnson County voters endorsing a probable one-eighth-cent sales tax that would raise an estimated $15 million a year. Proceeds would be split evenly among KU Cancer Center, the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park and the Kansas State University Food & Security Research Institute in Olathe.

Backers of the tax said that on May 8 they plan to ask Johnson County commissioners to put it on the November ballot.

Hall said the foundation intends to retain the second building and

SEE BUILDING | 29

The Fairway West office building at 4350 Shawnee Mission Parkway would be remodeled to house clinical trials.
BUILDING: Designation ‘puts you in the major leagues

its current use.

“We felt if there were a building devoted to clinical trials, it would give voters more confidence,” Hall said.

It also could provide a good deal.

Dr. Roy Jensen, the cancer center’s director, said that remodeling the Fairway West office building at 4350 Shawnee Mission Parkway for clinical trials would cost about $15 million — $10 million less than new construction.

Remodeling also would take less time, Jensen said. He hopes the clinical trials unit could be ready for occupancy within two years.

Jensen said the unit would consolidate and extend activities already taking place throughout the area.

“The real opportunity that we have is to build upon our drug discovery and development effort, not only at the KU School of Pharmacy but also through our tremendous concentration of pharmaceutical contract research organizations,” Jensen said.

Companies such as Quintiles Transnational Corp. give metropolitan Kansas City the second-largest concentration of contract research organizations in the United States, behind Research Triangle Park, N.C., Jensen said.

His aspirations are even higher.

“We want to be the leading academic medical center in the country,” Jensen said.

Bob Regnier, a Johnson County banker and civic leader who’s helping frame the research triangle campaign, said the cancer center holds the most economic impact in the triangle.

Regnier, also chairman of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, said he became convinced of the cancer center’s potential during a chamber trip to Seattle in September, during which he saw the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

Whereas the Hutchinson center began with a $60,000 bequest, Regnier said, he hopes KU Cancer Center will be able to tie into discoveries being made in Kansas City by the Stowers Institute for Medical Research.

David Adkins, vice chancellor for external affairs for the University of Kansas Medical Center, said that focusing on clinical trials and translational research can differentiate the Kansas City area as a life sciences leader.

“If, in fact, a cancer center is going to be positioned as providing, close to home, the latest therapies and treatments, the widest array of options available to patients confronted with very difficult circumstances, you had to have a robust menu of clinical trials available,” Adkins said. “So the addition of this part of the triangle, if it’s successful, would mean a great deal to our efforts to build a world-class cancer center.”

Adkins said he hopes to seek National Cancer Institute designation in 2009 as a comprehensive cancer center, which "puts you in the major leagues."

There are 39 NCI-accredited centers — none in Kansas or the Kansas City area.

The Hall Family Foundation’s contribution would continue a long collaboration with KU Med, Adkins said.

“It reflects their belief that the future of Kansas City remaining a competitive region and the prosperity of this region will only be secure when those in the region with the capacity to do so are investing in the kinds of facilities and infrastructure — the backbone upon which a life sciences and innovation economy can be built,” he said. “It’s a tremendous vote of confidence in the cancer center and in our efforts to expand clinical trials, but I think it’s also a huge vote of confidence in Johnson County.”

jdavis@bizjournals.com | 816-421-5900
Tax vote asks how, not if, JoCo will pay

Commissioners say alternative to sales tax is raising mill levy

BY STEVE VOCKRODT | STAFF WRITER

Johnson County taxpayers will have two choices in August: renew a quarter-cent sales tax on election day, or watch property tax bills go up.

Some Johnson County commissioners said that absent a favorable vote for the countywide sales tax in August, it will be necessary to look to property taxes to pay for long-neglected public safety projects.

"The only way we can do that is raise the mill levy," said Annabeth Surbaugh, chairwoman of the Johnson County Board of Commissioners.

Without the sales tax revenue, commissioners face the prospect of raising the mill levy by nearly 2.5 mills to generate the $20 million a year needed for the projects, representing the first such increase in years.

For a $250,000 house in Johnson County, an increase of 2.45 mills would increase property taxes by about $70 a year.

Supporters of the sales tax measure said it would pass off some of the cost of improvements to outsiders because nearly 30 percent of sales tax revenue comes from people who live outside the county.

Johnson County already is spending down the $125 million in budgeted reserves from 2007 to begin construction on an adult detention center expansion that will give the county 416 more prison beds. Surbaugh said reserves won't cover other projects down the road, such as an expansion to a jail in Gardner that's expected to cost $148 million to build and
VOTE: Cities will share tax proceeds

FROM PAGE 3

$30 million a year to operate.

Also coming down the pike for Johnson County taxpayers is the likelihood of another tax question, a proposal to increase the sales tax for the Johnson County Education & Research Triangle, which would help finance the University of Kansas Cancer Center, the Kansas State University Food & Security Research Institute and the KU Edwards Campus.

Bob Regnier, CEO of Bank of Blue Valley and member of the Triangle Advocacy Council, said he and others plan to ask commissioners to place the tax proposal on the November ballot at a scheduled May 8 county meeting.

Organizers for the research triangle tax haven't finalized the tax rate, but it's thought to be at or around one-eighth of a cent.

"Frankly, I think we've got good support and I think that most of the commissioners we've talked to ... I think they feel like it's got good viability," Regnier said.

'THE EFFORT may raise some challenges, to put it mildly.'

Ed Peterson
5th District commissioner

Campaigning for both taxes could be a tricky issue.

"Trying to put all those things together and deal with them all at once this summer may raise some challenges, to put it mildly," said Ed Peterson, 5th District commissioner.

The public safety sales tax proposal is a renewal of a tax that previously had gone to public schools.

The decision to redirect the tax to public safety projects caused some hand-wringing among district superintendents. The Olathe School District complained publicly about the prospect of losing more than $5 million a year from the sales tax revenue.

But redirecting the sales tax to public safety won't cover construction and operating costs on the county's projects, which include a new crime lab, three years from now.

"The quarter-cent renewal is not going to be enough in four years," Johnson County Administrator Mike Press said.

The sales tax also requires that one-third of the revenue go to the county's 20 cities, though it's not clear from the ballot language how the cities will spend the money.

"I do hope that the cities will be in a position to specify to the voters here what they plan to do with their share of the proceeds," Peterson said.

That will be one part of a public campaign Surbaugh and other commissioners plan to launch in support of the sales tax proposal, which they said will begin in earnest after the April municipal elections.
Spring enrollment at Kansas' six public universities is up by 913 from last year, the Board of Regents said Thursday.

Enrollment was up by just one student at the University of Kansas, for a total of 278%. The Lawrence and the Overland Park campuses together were down 158 students, but enrollment at KU Medical Center grew by 159 students.

Maré Rose Williams, mdwilliams@kcstar.com
Regents should watchdog tuition hikes

It was encouraging that the Kansas Board of Regents wanted to talk about tuition rates in February rather than wait until late spring, when the board usually rubber-stamps the universities' proposed hikes for the fall. And talk it did, spending about three hours discussing the issue last week.

In the end, the regents rejected a proposed 5 percent tuition cap and took a voluntary approach, voting 7-2 on a motion by Wichita regent Jill Docking to express concern over tuition increases and suggest universities' proposed rates for the fall be "well below" the sharp increases seen this decade.

University presidents seemed to get the message, forecasting hikes of less than 6 percent for fall. "We understand that the era of double-digit tuition increases is over," Jon Wefald, Kansas State University's president, told the regents.

That's some reassurance. But this and every year, the regents should scrutinize both the size and stated reasons for tuition hikes. They also should ensure the increases will be offset by ample scholarships and loans.

In-state tuition and fees have more than doubled since 2002 at Kansas State University and the University of Kansas and risen 58 percent at Wichita State University. Debt loads have increased dramatically across the state university system, too, with the average borrower in the 2006 graduating class owing more than $17,000 in student loans.

Docking told The Eagle editorial board this week that next fall's tuition and fees are pieces of an unfinished funding puzzle involving state dollars and issues such as campus security, which has gained new urgency with the Northern Illinois University and Virginia Tech shootings.

But, she said, "I think all the regents agree it's now time to moderate what we're doing with tuition."

As even some student body presidents argue, annual tuition increases can be justifiable to keep instructional quality high and catch up to peer institutions' rates. But at what point do rates go so high that students don't apply?

Overland Park regent Gary Sherrer, who was lieutenant governor under Bill Graves, suggested that point may have been reached. He noted a three-year decline in enrollment of in-state students, which looks worse when you exclude the KU Medical Center from the data.

"I'm convinced that there is a financial barrier growing, and it undermines the whole principle of public education," Sherrer told the editorial board.

Meanwhile, state lawmakers should not pretend they are innocent bystanders to the tuition issue. They share responsibility for the hikes, in that the state's share of university funding was 49 percent in 1985 and down to 32 percent by 2006. The increasing emphasis on research money and grants will and should continue. But tuition is "really a user tax on students and their parents," Docking said. The case can be made for that tax, but "as a society who is responsible for the next generation?"

Good question. Affordability is not more important than educational excellence. But the regents must guard against tuition rates that end up denying Kansans' access to their higher education system.

For the editorial board, Rhonda Holman
$43 MILLION GIFT BOOSTS CHILDREN’S MERCY EXPANSION

The funds will help pay for an expanded emergency room, two new heart catheterization labs and an eight-story building on Hospital Hill.

By JULIUS A. KARASH
The Kansas City Star

A massive expansion by Children’s Mercy Hospitals and Clinics is getting a $43 million jump-start from the Hall Family Foundation.

Children’s Mercy said the gift by the Hall foundation — a key funder of area health-care institutions — is the largest in the hospital’s 110-year history.

“This is a special day for the children and for the Kansas City community,” Randall O’Donnell, Children’s Mercy president and chief executive officer, said Thursday. “We are fortunate to have visionary leaders like those at the Hall Family Foundation who recognize the need for Children’s Mercy to reach for the stars through this expansion.”

Laura McKnight, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, said the pledge was one of the largest examples of philanthropy in the area in recent years.

“It’s a significant investment that demonstrates real confidence in the results that Children’s Mercy Hospital is achieving for our community,” McKnight said. “I think an investment like this is an inspiration to all of us, whether we’re giving $43 or $43 million, because every gift counts.”

DONATION: Expansion will add research space

Bill Hall, president of the Hall foundation, said the pledge is probably the largest health-care-related gift ever made by the 65-year-old foundation, which was started by the founding family of Hallmark Cards.

Hall said the foundation has given more than $100 million to support health-related institutions in the Kansas City area.

In 2001, the foundation pledged $42 million to the University of Kansas. The money went toward life sciences research at KU Medical Center; expansion of KU’s Edwards Campus in Overland Park; remodeling of the Hall Center for the Humanities in Lawrence; and the KU School of Business.

And earlier this week, the Hall foundation announced it is buying a Fairway office complex that will be provided to the University of Kansas Medical Center for clinical trials research — if voters approve a special sales-tax initiative later this year.

To support the Children’s Mercy expansion, the Hall foundation will pay the principal and interest on $30 million worth of bonds to be issued by the hospital, and it will give $13 million directly to Children’s Mercy over the next three years, Hall said.

“Children’s Mercy is a tremendous community resource,” said Hall, who is not related to the Hall family. “We are building one of the finest children’s medical centers in the country. We see it as one of the great institutions of this city.”

The $800 million expansion at Children’s Mercy, announced in December, will more than double the size of its complex on Hospital Hill and increase its presence in area suburbs.

The three-phase project, expected to take 12 to 15 years, will add 216 inpatient beds to the Hospital Hill campus, for a total of 476. It also will add hundreds of thousands of square feet of new outpatient clinics, offices and clinical lab space.

The $43 million Hall gift will help pay for the $280 million first phase of the expansion, which will include an expanded emergency room, two new heart catheterization labs and an eight-story building for outpatient clinics and physician offices on Hospital Hill.

The expansion is being driven by growing numbers of patients. For example, the emergency room on Hospital Hill was designed to handle about 50,000 visits a year, but the number of visits in 2007 exceeded 67,000.

The expanded emergency department is being designed to accommodate up to 80,000 patient visits a year, Laura Fitzmaurice, chief of Children’s Mercy’s emergency medical services, said in a recent interview. “We’re the only pediatric trauma center between Denver and St. Louis. Because we’re known as a children’s hospital, people tend to come here.”

Children’s Mercy spokesman Tom McCormally said the hospital expects to begin the expansion work on Hospital Hill in coming weeks.

Meanwhile, McCormally said, Children’s Mercy last week completed the $2.9 million acquisition of about nine acres of land in Independence for Children’s Mercy East, which will provide urgent care in the evenings and on weekends and specialty clinics on
The site is near the southeast corner of Interstate 70 and Little Blue Parkway, a hot growth pocket of eastern Jackson County. Construction is expected to begin in about a year.

The expansion also will add outpatient care capacity at Children's Mercy South in Overland Park.

Brad Leech, Children's Mercy vice president for resource development, said the Hall pledge is the lead gift of a comprehensive campaign to raise money for the expansion and the Children's Mercy Hospital Foundation endowment, which now has assets of more than $200 million.

The dollar goal of the campaign will be announced later this year or early in 2009, Leech said. “We typically like to have about 50 percent of our goal in hand before we go public,” he said.

Leech said he did not expect the fundraising campaign to be hampered by softness in segments of the area economy. “We're the 14th-most philanthropic city in the country, according to one of our consultants,” he said. “I think folks in our region will rise to the occasion and help us secure the funds necessary for our children.”

The expansion also will add space for research at Children's Mercy, which has seen its research funding nearly double since the start of this decade. The hospital’s researchers work in areas such as genetics, clinical pharmacology and pharmacogenomics.

Hall said Children's Mercy's growing research prowess will help Kansas City attain its goal of becoming a major national center for life sciences research.

“We have in this community a wonderful opportunity to vault ourselves into a major medical center, in research as well as clinical care,” Hall said. “Certainly, Children's Mercy will be a part of making that happen.”

To reach Julius A. Karash, call 816-234-4918 or send e-mail to jkarash@kcstar.com.
Every day is a different day

Lee serves public through versatility

BY JUDY GARCIA
Herald Staff Writer

It's a job that requires knowledge from a wide range of fields: math, science, psychology, communication and law.

As director of planning and codes for the City of Ottawa, Wynndee Lee said her days can be unpredictable and harried, but she embraces the issues and challenges that develop.

"Every day is a different day," she said.

Lee said parts of her days are spent like any other manager, dealing with issues like staffing and scheduling. She said she also works with other city departments.

Lee also is a point of contact for developers and those with upcoming projects, and she and her staff provide information about issues — rezoning requests or site plans, for example — that come before the Ottawa Planning Commission and/or the Ottawa City Commission for approval.

Lee said she didn't set out to be a planner but found that path after taking a job as a city program manager in Ottawa in 1992.

In that position, Lee managed grants and dealt with nuisance enforcement. She said the city manager at the time encouraged her to consider a master's degree.

Lee attended the University of Kansas and graduated with a master's degree in public administration. She said she took classes related to planning but initially was more interested in local government from the perspective of community development.

"The public participation appealed to me," she said.

In 1999, Lee became city manager for Concordia and was there until 2002, when she returned to Ottawa as director of planning and codes.

Lee said her path was unusual for a planner because most directors obtain undergraduate and master's degrees in planning.

Lee received her undergraduate degree in business from Ottawa University and noted that planning resonated a lot with her liberal arts background.

For example, planners must know certain laws, the math and science that go along with construction, as well as communication and concepts such as the psychology of how people feel about space, Lee said.

"So many of the disciplines come together," she said.

Lee said one of the best parts of her job is seeing a project come in and, with the assistance of staff and the planning commission, help it along the way to become the best fit for Ottawa.

She said she and her staff want to help builders be successful, and they, in turn, help the community to be successful.

"We all need each other," she said.

Lee, who passed a strenuous test to become a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners in 1999, said leaving Ottawa for a few years and then returning made her value the community and its assets.

"We understand what it takes to be attractive to a market, but we appreciate what we have," she said.
University officials link tuition hikes to Legislature

By Harris News Service

TOPEKA — To hold the line on future tuition hikes, state university leaders say they're going to need some more help from the Kansas Legislature.

Higher education officials generally agreed during Wednesday's state Board of Regents meeting to limit next year's round of hikes to less than 6 percent.

However, the effort to slow steep increases in tuition charges will hinge heavily on how much lawmakers choose to increase higher education funding in the future, school leaders say.

Several regents, state university officials and even student leaders emphasized this week that schools are trying to keep tuition hikes down, but can't do it alone.

"We need additional funding from the state Legislature or else we're going to keep seeing tuition going up," Matt Wagner, Kansas State University's student body president, told board members.

In fact, several board members said this past week they were against setting a formal cap on tuition because it might reduce accountability for lawmakers.

Since 2002, the basic charges for attending the University of Kansas and Kansas State University have more than doubled. Tuition and fees at other schools have jumped by an average of more than 10 percent a year, except for Fort Hays State University, which has averaged an 8.5 percent annual hike.
Add accountability to tuition increases

Everyone is aware of the rising cost of higher education. Every year the state universities approach the Board of Regents with a proposed tuition increase. Apparently, the board is getting tired of seeing large double-digit tuition increases because this past week it considered a tuition cap. Fortunately, the board rejected the cap.

On a 7-2 vote, the board rejected a tuition cap that would have run in the neighborhood of 5 percent. However, the Regents did suggest that colleges keep their increases to around 6 percent. This is in stark contrast to what has happened in the past few years. Since 2002, Fort Hays State University has seen an increase of 42 percent while the University of Kansas experienced an increase of 136 percent.

If increases such as these were to keep going, many students would not be able to afford higher education. However, when students were asked for their input, they also didn't favor a cap. Putting a cap on tuition increases could be hampering our students' education. And we want to make sure the diploma that our children receive is worth something when they walk across that stage. By placing a cap on tuition we may end up placing a cap on the quality of our children's education.

The only way to safely enforce a tuition cap is to increase the amount of funding that colleges and universities get from the state. And with the shape of the state budget, it isn't very likely that we will see any major funding increases for post-secondary education. But to simply say that this is all the money you are going to get without the security of an increase in state funds could be devastating to the universities. They are already facing a huge backlog in maintenance because of a lack of funding from the state. We can't afford to have the same thing happen to education programs.

One way to help keep tuition increases under control could be to keep a closer eye on how the money is spent. Regents should have an idea of how our universities and colleges are spending the money they get from these increases and approve or reject tuition hikes based on that information. This would add another level of accountability to our university presidents.

Parents and students hate to see the price of higher education continually increase. However, we would also hate to see the quality of our education slip because of a lack of funds. Better scrutiny and guidelines provided by the Board of Regents could help keep tuition increases lower in the future.

--- Darren Werth
Editor and publisher
A permanent economic stimulus for Kansas

BY ARTHUR P. HALL
UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

President Bush signed the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 this week. Individuals and families will receive tax rebates. Businesses will receive greater tax deductions for capital investments made in 2008.

The business stimulus comes at an opportune time. The Kansas legislature is now debating a bill that will make the same type of tax deductions permanent for all Kansas businesses starting in 2009, a change that will leverage the federal stimulus and help make Kansas a permanently more desirable destination for capital investment, a key driver of high-wage jobs.

The Kansas legislation would allow all businesses an option to immediately deduct the full cost of an investment that federal rules disallow. It simulates at the state level a procedure that tax experts call "expensing," one of the key provisions in the federal stimulus package.

The Kansas expensing legislation emerged as a key feature of the state's strategic economic plan, as developed by Kansas, Inc., the agency statutorily responsible for crafting such plans. Community and business leaders from every part of the state helped craft the plan during dozens of meetings held last year.

An inspiring theme developed from the meetings: "Every business matters." Unwittingly or not, Kansas tax and economic development policies tend to play favorites. Yet, there is evidence that inclusive policies that create a level playing field for businesses of all types and sizes offer a superior long-term strategy.

Expensing is a tax policy that honors the level-playing-field strategy. Through a simple procedure, it allows businesses to perceive the same expected investment return that would exist if there were no income tax. This powerful outcome gives the same
pro-investment benefit to each business, and will make Kansas more competitive, even against states without income taxes, like Nevada, South Dakota, and Texas.

Kansans would win a trifecta if the expensing legislation passed this year. In the past two legislative sessions, Kansas lawmakers have modernized the tax system in a pro-investment direction by eliminating the property tax on new machinery and equipment and phasing out the archaic business franchise tax. Both of these reforms apply automatically and equally to every business, honoring the sentiment that every business matters. Expensing offers the perfect next step in the modernization process.

A Washington, D.C. policy group has alarmed state budgeters with news that the business components of the federal stimulus package will flow through to states. The group's Kansas estimate is a reported $87 million in lost revenue.

That number should be viewed with skepticism. It could be as low as $37 million. And that does not count the potential for offsetting sales tax revenue from the household part of the stimulus package: By mid-year, more than 1.2 million Kansas taxpayers will receive checks averaging about $1,100.

Nevertheless, optimists can view the federal flow-through as an opportunity. Kansas budgeters can use 2008 to make budget adjustments that will accommodate the expensing provision in 2009 and beyond.

Economists can demonstrate that expensing gives the same investment return to the state as it does to each business — a genuine partnership. Investments require a short-term sacrifice to produce a long-term gain. Without a short-term budget impact there can be no long-term economic impact.

Arthur P. Hall is executive director of the Center for Applied Economics at the University of Kansas School of Business.