

'BOMBER BUDDIES' CON'T FROM PAGE 1

Bomber Buddy Jasper Halvorson handed leadership responsibilities to incoming fifth grader Easton Brattle by presenting him with a Bomber Buddy vest, the recess shed key, and a walkie talkie, tools representing trust, responsibility, and service. The moment marked the continuation of a leadership tradition that is already strengthening school culture.

As each new Bomber Buddy was

introduced, they walked the red recognition runway to enthusiastic applause from their peers. Each student shared a personal leadership goal, explaining how they hope to help others and make a positive impact this year.

Bomber Buddies are trained student leaders who: help classmates take turns and share equipment, include students who may feel

left out, assist with solving small conflicts calmly and fairly, and model kindness, fairness, and responsibility. While they do not replace adult supervision, they serve as positive role models and extra support during recess.

Through the ceremony, Mrs. Schumacher reinforced Drayton Public School's message of One School. One Team. Soaring to

New Heights, ensuring students understand what it truly means to lead and support one another. Students were reminded that leadership is not about being the loudest voice; it is about

helping others rise. With flight school complete and vests on, this year's Bomber Buddies are ready for takeoff, continuing a tradition of student leadership that is truly soaring.

'RIFT' CON'T FROM PAGE 3

have leased or purchased 3,400 acres from 23 landowners and have not encountered any issues. The land acquired for the project was very alkaline and Hoppe said he was told the farmers were glad to not have to farm it moving forward.

Rep. Anna Novak, R-Hazen and chair of the committee, invited three companies she considers to "have a great track record" in working with landowners to obtain consent for transmission lines and pipelines in the state: Grid Electric, Oneok, and Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

Those speakers all emphasized the importance of engaging landowners and local officials in the process early on and making a good faith effort to accommodate any concerns or opposition.

Brant Johnson, senior vice president of development for Grid United, the company developing the North Plains Connector transmission line to increase the connectivity between east and west electricity grids, said his team has made 400 route changes to the 425-mile line, a 50-mile increase from its original route, in order to accommodate landowners' wishes. If someone is adamantly opposed to their project, they don't play hardball, but go and talk to their neighbors instead, he said.

Grid United pays landowners for the right to survey, the time required to review contract documents, building on their land and the right-of-way itself. Most importantly, Grid United priorities "hands on, pragmatic dialogue" with affected landowners, Johnson said.

"It's kind of expensive to do it this way," Johnson said, but worth it to "demonstrate the kind of flexibility that you need in order to develop a route with support in the communities."

Oneok has constructed and operates around 6,000 miles of pipeline in North Dakota. Danette Welsh, director of government relations for Oneok, said the vast majority of those pipelines are for gathering oil and gas from wells and moving it to central locations. Gathering lines are not eligible for eminent domain, a legal proceeding that can force landowners to consent, she said. If they can't obtain the landowner's consent, Oneok reroutes the pipeline.

A representative from Basin Electric said negotiations with landowners involve many factors and opposition can take many forms. At times, it's a request for the project to cross on the edge of the property rather than across a cultivated field. Others can't reach an agreement on the terms and conditions, the insurance and liability and surface use provisions.

"There are things we can do to have a minimal or lesser impact on their property," said Mike Murray, director of property and right of way for Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

Perdue asked lawmakers to remember most, if not all, of this development will use land that is, and will continue to be used for farming and ranching. "We think it's very important that landowners are engaged in these conversations proactively," he said.

Multiple landowners spoke to lawmakers on Thursday pushing back on the idea that all companies operate transparently and have built trust with landowners in the area.

"Relationships are built on what you do, not what you say," said Josh Dukart, a rancher in Oliver County. "Let's not think that everything is rosy and peachy."

Local control

McLean County has been attempting to tackle many of these issues by using zoning as a tool to guide, not constrain, development. County Commission Vice-Chair Steve Cottingham said they know the county has to keep bringing in new oranges in order to avoid squeezing what they have for a tax base for more juice.

"It all boils down to working together," Cottingham said.

Sen. Kathy Hogan, D-Fargo, said one of the most important issues this committee could try to solve is the conflict between state control and local control of how development is regulated.

"Finding that balance between local authority and state authority and complex, big systems projects, that has been an issue for us as policy-makers for decades," Hogan said. "I think it's important to hear the local voice."

This was a prominent discussion during the 2025 legislative session. House Bill 1258, now law, gave the Public Service Commission more authority on transmission lines, taking away authority from townships and counties.

Welsh said too much variance in regulations between neighboring districts, whether townships or counties, can be dangerous and challenging.

"Having consistency is very important," Welsh said.

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