

School board delays vote on bond issue

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The Oberlin School Board voted unanimously last Monday night to table a proposed bond issue which would provide improvements to both the schools after they discovered that district valuation figures had been quoted incorrectly in figuring the plan.

Board members and school officials said they hoped to look over the figures, possibly reduce the renovation plans and come up with an affordable bond issue for a June election.

The board had asked County Clerk Marilyn Horn in to explain what had happened. She said that she was faxed a sheet from the Steve Shogren, a financial adviser from Wichita who has been hired by the board to sell the bonds, the day before the general election. She faxed it back with a number of \$32,707,962 on it. This did not include the district's valuation for Norton

County, which is about \$1.5 million and then they also received around \$10,000 from Sheridan County. This is included in the district's valuation because they have kids that go to school here. With the combination of these two that is where Mr. Shogren came up with a number of \$34 million for valuation.

This number was taken by Mr. Shogren and used by him when he talked about the bond issue, when he looked at what type of increase in property taxes would be needed here to support a \$7 million bond issue. His figures were used by the school board. The problem is that this number wasn't correct. The actual valuation for the district is \$27,783,648 in Decatur County, which doesn't include Norton County, but does include motor vehicle taxes. This correct figure has been sent to Mr. Shogren, Mrs. Horn said.

She presented these figures to the

board as well as a sheet of paper which is sent to the board when members work on their budget. This sheet lists the valuation at \$24,022,235 for the district without motor vehicle taxes. This sheet, Mrs. Horn said, was sent to the board and approved by them.

It wasn't until Alan Marietta, who sat on the district's Blue Ribbon Committee, brought up the discrepancy in a meeting that it was looked at. Mr. Marietta went to Mrs. Horn to get the correct valuation.

These different numbers and the possibility of a \$7.38 million bond issue brought out about 21 people from the area, forcing some people to sit in the hall outside the board room. A few of them had questions for the board. Board President Barbara Olson told them that their chance to speak was at the beginning of the meeting during the forum, even though the board was going to

discuss the issue later on the agenda.

Barbara Solko said that she had read an article in *The Oberlin Herald* which said that this bond issue was eight times bigger than the one in 1965. (The proposed issue actually is seven times larger, not eight.) She asked how many people in the room had their salaries increased by that much. Mrs. Solko also asked why Herndon starts school after Labor Day, avoiding the hottest days of the school year, and gets out at the same time as schools here and still spends the same time in the classes.

Superintendent Duane Steele answered that the amount of time that students spend in school is in direct relation to their achievement, which he said is high here.

Mrs. Solko said that in Herndon, there are more kids graduated and going to college. Mr. Steele said that there (Please see BOARD on Page 10A)

Board closes doors to over 20 people

The Oberlin School Board may have violated the Kansas Open Meetings Act when it held a 45-minute closed session last Monday night, citing "financial reasons," to discuss new information about district valuations.

After the board heard County Clerk Marilyn Horn explain a mistake in the district valuation given to the district's bond expert, Board Member Dwayne Jackson asked for a closed session for 15 minutes to

discuss "financial."

He said that because of the changes in the property tax levies and misinformation, he would like a closed session.

Kimberly Brandt, reporter for *The Oberlin Herald*, asked Board President Barb Olson to repeat what the session was for and again was told it was for financial.

There were around 21 people at the meeting. When the doors were shut, (Please see LAW on Page 10A)

Storm delivers work, fun and some moisture

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Forecasters were correct when they said that Decatur County and northwest Kansas had a 100 percent chance for precipitation Saturday. But when they predicted the area would get 1 to 3 inches of snow, they missed the mark a little.

By nightfall, much of the area was shivering under up to 8 inches of heavy, wet snow.

Saturday morning, the sun was hidden by a mass of gray which lightly dropped rain in Oberlin. By the early afternoon, the clouds started to pour out huge flakes. Within an hour, the roads were covered and the huge flakes didn't look like they would stop.

While business died off downtown, it picked up at video stores. A clerk at Fine Spirits Snack Shop on the top of Penn Avenue said that once it started to snow, people started coming in. Not very many new releases were left on the shelves.

Oberlin was busier Saturday, with nine teams at the Oberlin Invitational Wrestling Tournament at the high school. The matches began at 10 a.m. and ended two hours earlier than scheduled, at 5 p.m.

Athletic Director Randy Olson said that the weather caused them to adjust the schedule. He said that they cut two hours of the tournament by having the wrestlers take minimal breaks during the day and having the finals on two separate mats instead of one.

"It was snowing like crazy," said Mr. Olson. "We wanted to get the

wrestlers and the fans on the road as soon as we could."

As the evening progressed, the weather started to get worse. At least one team didn't make it home until Sunday; the Goodland Cowboys were stranded in Colby and had to spend the night there.

The snow blocked streets off of U.S.

83 into town part of Saturday before the city crew was able to clean them. The weather caused at least three accidents: one near Clayton, one east of town on U.S. 36 and one south of town on U.S. 83.

Some areas of town lost power as the heavy snow caused lines to sag or short. (Please see SNOW on Page 10A)



FROSTY, THE SNOWMAN stood in front of a house at 207 N. East Ave Sunday afternoon, complete with a carrot nose and scarf (right). A young boy (above) on the same street played in the snow taking a fall into the soft white stuff.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt



Wife gets county job for 2 years

Decatur County commissioners were to have a new member, Republican Patricia Glenn, sitting at the table Tuesday morning.

The seat for the 1st District was vacated when her husband, Commissioner Bob Glenn, died last month of cancer. Republican precinct committee members from the district had 21 days to hold a meeting and appoint a person to the position. Over the last few weeks, at least seven people have come into the county clerk's office or talked to Jack Metcalf, Republican county chairperson, to say that they were interested in the job. They included City Councilmen Jerry Fidele and Stan McEvoy, Doyle Fredrickson, Larry Smith, Don Roe, Shayla Williby and Mrs. Glenn.

Last Tuesday night, the precinct committee members from the district, Todd Tompkins, Dolores Koerperich and Ken Morgan, met with Mr. Metcalf to decide.

At the meeting, closed to the public, members heard comments they had received from the public on the candidates. Thirty-five minutes after the meeting started, Mr. Metcalf said, the first vote was taken and Mrs. Glenn was selected.

"The committee concurred that Pat Glenn would come the closest to representing the wishes of those people



Commissioner Patricia Glenn

who had elected Bob Glenn and those who have followed the work he had done the past two years," he said in a statement released last Wednesday morning.

The appointment has already been confirmed by Gov. Bill Graves and Mrs. Glenn was scheduled to take the oath of office on Tuesday.

She will hold the position for the next two years, which is when Mr. Glenn's term would be up for re-election.

Mrs. Glenn said that she decided to put her name in for the appointment because her husband had asked her to. Although she told him that she didn't (Please see GLENN on Page 10A)

Public wants to attract young people

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

About 55 people at a public meeting on the county's new strategic plan decided Thursday night that attracting and retaining young families should be Decatur County's most important goal for the next few years.

Two men from Tekquity Ventures, the Colorado firm which is doing research for the plan, led the session. They said they wanted to find out what people think the county's goals should be and some ways to reach them. They drew up a top three list, with young families in the No. 1 spot, attracting new businesses and expanding current businesses in the second spot, and medical services, third.

Russel Disberger and Dale Graff, who have both been working on the feasibility plan for Tekquity, explained to the audience a little about why they were there and what their objective was for the evening. Basically, said Mr. Disberger, they wanted people to perceive what the problems or issues were in the county.

He said that two years ago when the area worked on a strategic plan, people said that they were concerned with the idea that the county was heavily dependent on only a few industries, that dollars earned here were leaving the county, that day-care was needed, and with money for the hospital, schools, water and zoning.

What they wanted to do last week, he said, was find ways to "improve the quality of life here." He asked the audience how they thought this could be accomplished.

Goal from two years ago no longer on list for plan

A lot of people were surprised that more day cares didn't make the Top 10 list of things needed to improve the quality of life in Decatur County at the public meeting on the strategic plan Thursday night.

Russell Disberger, with Tekquity Ventures, a Colorado firm working on the plan, asked after the list was put together if there are enough day care centers now. He pointed out that two years ago, this is one of the items that the county saw needed to be improved in the coming years.

County Health Administrator Marilyn Gamblin, who was at the meeting, said that there are eight day care centers in the county, yet there are 100 kids that aren't able to attend them and need the service. She said it is hard to get the money to start one and then find a building that can meet all the qualifications in state regulations.

Ms. Gamblin told the men from

Tekquity that the Good Samaritan Center is working on putting a day care center in the facility for employees' kids.

Mr. Disberger asked her if she saw a good-sized center as a positive for the county. Ms. Gamblin said yes, as did others in the audience.

The county health department helps train people to run day care facilities, she said. She said the training is free, though the state charges a fee for the certification. She said that the state requires that the building has room for an outdoor playground area.

No one had a solution for the problem, and day cares were not added to the Top 10 or Top 3 list, although several in the audience were interested in the issue. With attracting and keeping young families in the area the top priority, one woman said, day care would be important so that both parents can work.

Greg Lohofener, who is an agricultural consultant, said that he would like to see a more diversified economy. Walter Pennell, who opened a computer business recently, said that there isn't a lot of money available in the way of loans or grants for new businesses.

Mr. Disberger said that there are programs that he knows of where a revolving loan is set up which have lower interest rates, although they are not grants.

The county was recently approved for a \$100,000 grant to use for loans for

small businesses here, although the paperwork is not completed yet and the money isn't available.

The audience was asked to write down their top 10 issues that they thought would improve the quality of life here. School Superintendent Duane Steele, who is the president of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., and Connie Grafel, marketing director for the agency, went with Mr. Disberger into a separate room to tally the answers while Mr. Graff told a little more about the feasibility plan.

He said that they had been in the area within the last few months and sent out surveys to businesses and students. The student survey had a response of 200 people with 90 percent of them saying they have Internet access in the home and 99 percent saying that they use computers. He said that from the survey, 80 percent of the students planned on leaving, most of them to go to school. They also heard comments that the town was too small and there weren't enough jobs.

He said that they interviewed potential investors and technology companies. City Councilman Marvin Matchett asked what the investors they talked to said. Mr. Graff said that the main concern was whether the town had the "infrastructure" for the technology. He said that people told them that they could be in a small town as long as they could communicate with a bigger market.

Mr. Pennell asked what the company (Please see YOUNG on Page 10A)

* Board decides it needs to wait to make decision

(Continued from Page 1A)
aren't a lot of kids dropping out here; they go on to college and get degrees. The more time they spend in school, the better their achievement level, he said. She asked him if he thought that parents should have a say in when kids go to school. Mrs. Olson said that the district has a calendar committee which has people from the community on it and they help set the schedule.
Dale Soderlund asked how the board had arrived at a \$7.38 million bond issue. Mr. Steele went over briefly how it worked.
He said that they started at the elementary school and wanted to bring the infrastructure up to par, which included electrical, boilers and plumbing. The board worked with the architects and arrived at the figure.
Mr. Soderlund said that he isn't against updating the schools, just worried that people can't pay for that size of a bond issue. Agreeing with him, Mr. Marietta said that the only reason he is opposed to the bond issue is because people can't afford it. He said that he would like to cut that number and get the job done.
Mr. Steele said that they need to get

the right numbers and see what happens. Mr. Shogren let the board down, said Mr. Marietta.
Another member of the audience, Loyd Moore, said that the city needs to do something with its water and then the schools need work and the tax heap is too heavy.
"We all have grandkids and kids in school and want the best for them," said Mr. Moore.
At the same time, he said that with the tax increase to pay off the bonds, the area may lose some of its tax base and there will be fewer people paying. He suggested asking Commissioner Ralph Unger about the taxes in the county and what happened this past year. Mr. Unger said that, believe it or not, the county levy went down this year although the overall bill that people see did go up.
After hearing from the audience and Mrs. Horn, board member Dewayne Jackson called for a 15-minute closed session for "financial" discussion and it was extended twice for an additional 15 minutes each time. After the sessions, the board voted to table the bond plans and the 12 or so people who were still there left.

* Law says session might be illegal

(Continued from Page 1A)
they had to leave the board room and wait in the foyer of the building. Many of them asked if the session was legal and wondered why they had been shut out of a meeting where the board seemed to be discussing their tax dollars.
Under the state Open Meetings Act, a closed session can be held for six reasons. They are for personnel matters of non-elected personnel, consultation with an attorney for the body, employer/employee negotiations, matters adversely affecting an individual such as a student, confidential data relating to financial affairs of private businesses, and preliminary discussions on acquisition of real property.
The session may not fall into one of these categories, since the board was talking about property taxes and district

money.
County Attorney Steve Hirsch said that the Opening Meetings Act allows governing bodies, like the board, to go into closed session for limited reasons and that on the surface, depending on what they discussed, it sounds like what the board did doesn't fit. He said that he was hesitant to say that there was a violation until he follows through and checks all the facts.
"I think that what we discussed was perfectly legal," said Superintendent Duane Steele.
He said that he couldn't elaborate on what type of financial matters were discussed in the session since it was closed.
If the session is found to be illegal in court, each member of the board could face penalties not to exceed \$500 per violation, said Mr. Hirsch.

Inflation shows issue would be 30 percent more

How much bigger than the last school bond issue is the \$7.4 million proposed by the Oberlin School Board?
According to The Inflation Calculator on the Internet, the \$1.087 bond issue from 1965 would be worth about \$5.68 million today. The inflation factor over that time is something like 522

percent, wages included.
In real dollars, then, the current proposal is bigger, about 30 percent bigger. School board members hope to trim that total.
However, school officials point out, it's been 35 years since the district spent any substantial money on its buildings.

Taxes will increase if bond issue is passed

The Oberlin School Board has issued new numbers on how much it will cost taxpayers if a bond issue is passed here. The district refigured the numbers after officials realized that a mistake had been made in the valuation figure it originally used.
The last figure the school board had was for a \$7.38 million bond issue, but at a recent meeting Superintendent Duane Steele said that the board will work on lowering that number. Below are what the taxes may do for bond issues of \$6 million and \$7 million, based on an assessed valuation of a little over \$29 million for the district.
These numbers were figured with that valuation, and then the board's financial advisor, who it hired to sell the bonds, found out how many mills the property taxes would need to increase to support the renovation. The county

appraiser was then asked to crunch the numbers. The figures show the estimated increase in property taxes per year.
Quarter Section of Dry Land
\$6 Million Bonds=\$67.32 or .42 cents per acre
\$7 Million Bonds=\$78.54 or .49 cents per acre
Quarter Section of Rangeland
\$6 Million Bonds=\$28.32 or .18 cents per acre
\$7 Million Bonds=\$33.04 or .21 cents per acre
Quarter Section of Irrigated land
\$6 Million Bonds=\$177.12 or \$1.08 an acre
\$7 Million Bonds=\$206.64 or \$1.26 an acre
\$50,000 House market value
\$6 Million Bonds=\$84.90
\$7 Million Bonds=\$99.05



THE PRESIDENT OF GOLDBANK, Gale Cook, used his snow blower to clean the sidewalks outside the bank on Sunday after Oberlin received 8 inches on Saturday.
— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

* Snow blankets town with 8 inches

(Continued from Page 1A)
and there were several times when the power surged and blinked. Downtown, the power was out on the east side of Penn Avenue for around two hours.
Lineman Jim Soderlund told City Foreman Dan Castle that this was the biggest snow load, in diameter, he has seen gather on the lines.
Mr. Castle said that most of the power surges and outages were caused by tree limbs which were completely covered in snow and caused fuses to blow. He said that the crew replaced about a dozen fuses on Saturday. One transformer went out on the outskirts of town
City Administrator Gary Shike said that the crew did a great job, both with getting the power on and cleaning the streets in the city.
During the storm, he said, they had one grader out cleaning the snow routes. The rest of the city was cleared the following day, with workers starting at 5 a.m. and finishing the job Sunday evening.
Officials at the Goodland Weather Service Office said that the snow was lighter in the southern end of the county. Dresden reported only 3 1/2 inches.
Sunday morning, people who hibernated on Saturday, came out of their homes to the sun shining and a heavy job to do. Walks were shoveled and more than one yard is now decorated with a snowman.
That morning, the county and state

crews cranked up their graders and plows. The state cleaned U.S. 36 and U.S. 83 and at 10:30 a.m., state trucks were back at the maintenance shop filling with gravel.
The county had 12 men in town at 5:30 a.m., said Road Supervisor Tim Stallman. They put 12 graders out in the county and started moving snow at the airport and hospital first so that they could be accessed in the case of an emergency. He said then they moved onto the main gravel roads and finished up with the townships. The workers didn't come in until about 7 p.m. that night. Mr. Stallman said that on Monday, they sent four graders out to finish the job.
The rain and snow this weekend has been the only precipitation in the county this month, although it may not be the last.
Forecasters said that the area had a 20 percent chance of receiving snow on Monday evening and a 60 percent chance of one to three inches here on Tuesday.
Hearings set for meeting
The Oberlin City Council plans to do two property vacation hearings at 6:30 p.m. Thursday night at The Gateway.
The first hearing has been requested by Mike and Jacque Elwood and the second by the Good Samaritan Center.

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* Young families what the public wants for future

(Continued from Page 1A)
is getting out of the plan. Mr. Graff said that they are being paid to do a feasibility plan. Mr. Graff said that they were hired to gather the information for the county plan, and Tekquity wants to see if a business they have would work here.
"So basically, if it flops, you get your money and leave?" said Mr. Pennell.
After the sheets were tallied, Mr. Disberger brought back a list of the top 10 areas that people felt would improve the quality of life here: to keep and attract young families, Internet use/telecommunications/training, attract and expand businesses, higher wage scale, school infrastructure with after-school programs, start-up loans, attract new industry, year-round recreation, diversify agricultural markets and medical needs and services. Elmer Zodrow said that instead of higher wages, he would like to see benefits.
The next step was to pretend that each member of the audience had \$10,000 and could spend that any way they wanted to, he said. He told people to allocate that to the top three or four things on the list of 10. Using this, the top three goals were narrowed down to

attracting and keeping young families, attracting new businesses and expanding existing ones, and medical services. The next thing, he said, it to look for solutions.
One solution would be to work harder at having the jobs to bring back college graduates who went to high school here, said Commissioner Ralph Unger.
Marcia Lohofener said that a lot of people working here are underemployed. She said that they are more talented than what the job calls for.
Rusty Addleman, owner of Addleman Drug Store, questioned the medical needs on the list. Those who had allocated money there said that they basically wanted to keep a hospital here, have the jobs and keep up to speed on changes including possibly putting in mental health care.
The feasibility plan and information found last week will all be used for the strategic plan and to see if a Tekquity business would fit here. If a business will work here, Mr. Graff said, it would be the first success story in a community of this size for the Colorado company. So far, he said, they are zero for zero.

* Glenn's widow named to commissioner's seat

(Continued from Page 1A)
know a lot about county business, she said, he told her that she would learn. For the last two years, she said, as her husband held the position, they would discuss the issues at home. She said that one of the big issues she sees for the county is that the population is going down yet the expenses continue to grow.
Although she hadn't been sworn in yet, she has already made a visit to the courthouse to pick up a county code book and has started to study.
As her husband was, she said that she is interested in where the county's

money is spent.
"I want to look over all the expenses and see where it is going and why," said Mrs. Glenn.
She has two sons, Bryan and Eric. After moving here in 1976, she said, she worked at the former Decatur County National Bank and at The Bank. While the family lived in Lusk, Wyo., she worked at a lawyer's office. Being a member of the commission will be her first job in a political office.
"I want to carry out my husband's wishes," said Mrs. Glenn, "and follow in his steps of how he was as a county commissioner."

Pager taken out of car at school

Oberlin Police officers received a call Friday that a pager and maroon case had been taken from a car parked at 605 E. Commercial, in front of the high school.

The pager and bag, with an estimated value of \$175, belonged to Glinda Barber, 15. Chief Wade Lockhart said that the items had been left in a friend's car and were taken from it.

**CITY OF JENNINGS, KANSAS
ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT
FOR YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2000**

	Balance 1/1/00	Receipts	Disbursements	Balance 12/31/00
Funds				
General	22,091.99	47,415.62	39,399.66	30,107.95
Library	0.00	2,500.00	2,500.00	0.00
Employ. Benefit	2,459.16	1,694.37	2,118.19	2,035.34
Special Hwy.	35,397.68	4,890.48	38,283.24	2,004.92
Capital Improve.	12,000.00	2,000.00	13,805.30	194.70
Water	43,672.09	32,662.81	19,915.98	56,418.92
Sewer	3,455.73	2,453.76	1,158.89	4,750.60
Bond & Interest	0.00	46,524.05	44,200.00	2,324.05
Totals	119,076.65	140,141.09	161,381.26	97,836.481
Grant Account	0.00	292,117.00	291,049.45	1,067.55
Outstanding Debt	46,500.00			

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Lynn K. Tacha, City Clerk

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