

County may have to name all rural roads

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
A bill which passed the Kansas House last month will force counties to name all roads so that when someone dials 911 on a cell phone, their location can be pinpointed.
Naming the roads is only one part of the 911 tax bill, which would allow commissioners to levy a tax up to 75 cents every month on every wireless phone in the county.
Rep. John Faber, who represents Decatur County, said he voted no on the bill because of the increase in phone bills for taxpayers. He said

there are a lot of families who have three or four wireless phones and the tax would have to be paid on each one.
The bill passed the house on Feb. 8 with a vote of 74-48, though, and is now in the Senate, said Rep. Faber. He added that he thinks the addressing requirement is already required by federal law.
The money would go to purchasing equipment for the county so it could have an enhanced 911 system which would allow the phone to be pinpointed. Rep. Faber said out in northwest Kansas it could be used, for instance, if a farmer was out in the field and got injured but couldn't talk. The computer would locate the phone and the roads nearest to him as well.
Now, said Decatur County Sheriff Ken Badsky, when someone calls 911, their number shows up on the screen and the dispatcher can tell if it is a cell phone because it has a different number than a land-line phone. There aren't any computerized maps with the system the county has now.
Rep. Faber said with the program, county and

township roads will have to be named. The county will have to have road signs put up at intersections and where someone enters the road. He said in most counties, there will have to be a sign every mile where there is a road.
If the bill is passed by the Senate and approved by Gov. Bill Graves, Decatur County will have two years to implement the program. Many counties already have their roads named or numbered and marked. Rep. Faber said he didn't know what will happen if it isn't implemented, nor did he know who would oversee the program.
One fear is that if the county doesn't do it then the state will do it and the names on the roads won't mean anything, said Sheriff Badsky. The county does have a grid system, with roads numbered by the mile east and west, north and south from the U.S. 36-U.S. 83 intersection. Intersections are marked with small signs mostly on main roads, and not nearly all of them are marked.
Naming the roads has been brought up in
(Please see TAX on Page 5A)



READING FOR DR. SEUSS' BIRTHDAY, Marcus McKenna shared the "Cat in the Hat" with Cody Jacobs (above) while wearing a tall striped hat at Jennings School on Friday. Superinten-

dent Dave DuBois started Read Across America Day with "Green Eggs and Ham" (below), dressed in his bright blue hat and graduation gown.
— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

Dr. Seuss shows 'the places you'll go' with readings

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
Dressed in Dr. Seuss hats made out of colored felt, kids from kindergarten through the sixth grade at Jennings School celebrated the writer's birthday and National Read Across America Day by reading and listening to stories last Friday.
The students, dressed in comfortable clothes and brightly colored sweat suits, started the day with Superintendent Dave DuBois, who wore his graduation gown and felt hat. He read "Green Eggs and Ham" to the students, but with a twist.
Instead of just holding the book up and reading the words, Mr. DuBois got the students involved in the story by telling the kids every time he pointed at them to say "Sam."
By the second time through, the kids were yelling "Sam" with the point of a finger and some had the book memorized.
"Reading is the foundation to everything we do," said Mr. DuBois. "If we don't have them reading, it just gets

tougher down the line."
The idea of the day was to let the students know that reading is fun and is something which adults do, too. To help them see adults reading, professions from the county were invited in to read to them.
Mr. DuBois was the first, then the kids had the chance to meet Magistrate Judge John Bremer, who gave them the "oath of reading" and then read "Oh, The Places You'll Go," to them.
Students heard from one of their teachers, Craig Reaves, who read "The Foot Book," state Trooper Jerry Stritt, who read "Hunches and Bunches," KSNK television news anchor Julie Kennedy, who read "McElligot's Pool," and others.
Each had a message, whether it was never to give up or to follow a hunch to do the right thing, but the overall message was to have fun reading.
Cheryl Soderlund, who teaches first grade, said the idea was to show reading is good at any age and introduce the students to careers where reading is important.
In between the guest readers, each of the

students read silently, out loud to younger kids or had beginning readers share books with them. Each book which the student read or heard was put on a hat and hung next to a giant picture of the "Cat in the Hat" in the hallway.
By 3 p.m., birthday cake was served in honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday. That was a surprise for the kids.
The day was centered around reading and learning, said Mrs. Soderlund, and the kids pretty much read all day.

State stopped paying the whole fee at ranch

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
With less money coming from the state for Sappa Valley Youth Ranch, Kelley Youth Services has had to negotiate a lower rental price to pay the city.
The price went from \$10 to \$8.50 in recent negotiations. The city needs the money to pay off the bonds used to borrow money for the renovation at the ranch before Kelley reopened it.
At the last regular council meeting, Judy Cathcart, who is running for council and attends all the meetings, asked if Kelley was holding up its end of the contract. She questioned whether the city was making any money with the \$8.50 that the firm now pays for each day a child is at the ranch.
Councilman Stan McEvoy said, though, that the city is covering its expenses with the lower price.
The firm negotiated the lower rate because it isn't receiving as much money from the state Juvenile Justice Authority, which was paying them \$125 a day when the service agreed to pay \$10 to the city.
The ranch opened in November 1998, said Terry Campbell, the vice president of Kelley who supervises the ranch. A group from Kelley came out and looked at the facility and saw that the buildings were deteriorated, he said. They also saw the potential for the kids to live there and work through youth programs.
The city agreed to pay for renovations and the company agreed to pay the \$10 a day per boy, which would be used

by the city to pay off the bonds.
Mr. Campbell said the ranch created 30 to 40 jobs for area people, plus it registers cars here, pays sales tax and employees shop in Oberlin.
The contract said they contemplated that the Juvenile Justice Authority would pay the \$125 for each boy placed there every day they lived at the ranch.
"We wanted to create quality services for the kids," Mr. Campbell said, "bring in jobs and money to the community and generate revenue so it would pay for itself."
Then the day before Thanksgiving 1999, he and the president of Kelley were called to Topeka and were told that the authority could no longer pay the \$125.
Mr. Campbell said they were told

that on Jan. 1 they would close their doors, giving them five weeks to place the boys and put 40 people out of work. Mr. Campbell said they didn't like that. The alternative to closing they figured out was to do residential programs which could be certified by programs like Medicaid. This way, the federal program would help with some of the daily costs for the ranch.
The ranch is still receiving money from the Juvenile Justice Authority, the state funded program. The youth ranch isn't receiving all the money from them though, only about 60 percent, and the ranch will get the 40 percent from Medicaid.
The ranch workers are preparing the
(Please see RANCH on Page 5A)

Mayor resigns; president sworn in for two years

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
Mayor Charles Frickey turned in his resignation before Thursday's Oberlin City Council meeting, handing his job to council President Gary Walter.
Mayor Frickey was not present at the meeting, but had talked with Mr. Walter, City Administrator Gary Shike and City Attorney Steve Hirsch earlier in the day about the resignation.
In his letter, he said there were several reasons for deciding to resign, mostly business and family. For the past few months Mr. Frickey has been absent from meetings and Mr. Walter has been acting mayor at those times. He said that after the April election, the council would no longer in-
clude anyone from the downtown business area. By resigning and having Mr. Walter, who works at The Bank, take over for the remaining two years of his term, he said the new mayor could represent the downtown.
Mr. Frickey has been mayor for the past six years, but during that time he has gotten out of most his duties as an officer of Gold Bank, and moved his law practice to a home office.
At the meeting, Mr. Walter read the letter. Council members had not known about it earlier in the day, yet there were no shocked faces.
nor any discussion from the council on swearing in Mr. Walter.
Mr. Hirsch asked that the swearing in
(Please see MAYOR on Page 5A)



GARY WALTER was sworn in as mayor on Thursday.

Enrollment here may start leveling

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
Early enrollment for the kindergarten class next year at Oberlin Elementary School is up five students from this year, giving school officials a ray of hope in what had been a gloomy enrollment picture.
The first week in February, parents enrolled 37 kids for kindergarten for next year, although Principal Duane Dorshorst said that isn't a firm number. He said some of them may not actually enroll, and they may lose some over the summer or gain some kids with families moving in or out of the area.
He said he thought the enrollment would be about the same as it is this year, with 32 in the morning and afternoon kindergartens.
Before kindergartners are enrolled, they go through screening, said Mr. Dorshorst, where tests try to determine whether the kids are ready to start school.
Diana Pollnow-Steinmetz, who runs the Rainbow Program at the school, said there are several areas which the screening process looks at. The first is a physical given by School Nurse Ruth Wolfram.
(Please see SCHOOL on Page 5A)

School cancellations forced by ice, snow

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
The buzzer on the alarm is sounding off and the bright red lights say it is 4:30 a.m. It's too early to be out of bed, but when Decatur County gets a snow, that is exactly what school officials have to do.
Dave DuBois, superintendent of the Prairie Heights District, and Superintendent Duane Steele and transportation supervisor Brian Simonsson in Oberlin all head out to drive the roads. That way, they can tell whether it is safe for busses or student drivers to come in to school.
Although officials have had to cancel classes several times this year because of stormy weather, neither Jennings nor Oberlin will have to make up anytime in the spring — at least not so far. Both districts allow for some cushion in school schedules, going well over the minimum amount of hours required by the state just in case days need to be taken off for ice, snow or heat.
In Jennings, Superintendent DuBois said he gets up on snowy days and drives throughout the countryside on roads which busses or students use. He said lately he has also been talking to rural mail carriers, too, because they know the road conditions.
Last Tuesday, he said, school was called off after his drive. The area had been expected to get anywhere from four to 14 inches depending on which news program you were listening to.
Mr. DuBois said he jokes about his ability to make a blizzard happen. On days when he cancels school, he said, the sun comes out and parents wonder why their kids aren't in class. On the days when he says school is on, the snow falls all day and the roads just get worse.
In past years, he said, it has been tough to decide whether Jennings should have school or not. This year, Mr. DuBois said he hasn't had that problem. Each time it has snowed, the area has been hit hard.
(Please see SNOW on Page 5A)

*Snow canceled classes often but make ups won't be needed

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While out at 4:30 a.m. last Tuesday, he said there was about two inches of snow and the forecasters were predicting 10 inches, although it ended at eight inches. The school day was cancelled. Superintendent DuBois said he tries to call classes off early enough so parents are able to make arrangements, since their kids will be home all day. On Wednesday, students in Jennings had an hour extra in bed, but school was on, since the area wasn't supposed to get a whole lot more snow and the roads were open.

Unlike recent winters, the school has had to call school off this year because of ice, which Mr. DuBois said he doesn't fool around with. It's just too dangerous to drive on, he says.

The Jennings school calendar is set to allow some cushion in case school has to be cancelled.

Mr. DuBois said students have to attend classes a minimum of 1,116 hours under state regulations. He said the district still has room for about three more days off.

The Jennings district has a schedule similar to Oberlin, where the calendar allows about 75 hours more than the minimum, said elementary Principal Duane Dorshorst.

He said the board has had the philosophy for years, the more contact teachers have with the students, the better.

That's why Oberlin students attend so many hours beyond the state requirement.

The board, like the one in Jennings, doesn't actually build in snow days, he said; it just hopes to have extra class time.

In Oberlin, students have had four days cancelled, including last Tuesday, and have had at least one two-hour delay, last Wednesday.

Classes were cancelled here after Mr. Simonsson drove the rural roads. He said he starts at his house, which is eight miles northeast of town, and drives in that area and then on either U.S. 36 or U.S. 83.

Superintendent Steele then drives in the city checking out the streets. He said before 5 a.m., he and Mr. Simonsson check in with each other to see what they have found and what the storm looks like.

The two men try to answer questions, like whether the state and county will be out to plow the road before school starts and what the storm will drop throughout the day.

In some cases, Superintendent Steele said, he can call other school officials and see what the storm looks like there. For instance he said if the weather is moving in from the west, he said he will call someone from a school in that direction to see what that area is getting.

Mr. Simonsson said last Tuesday, it was a borderline whether to cancel

classes or try to wait it out, and the original plan was to start two hours late. By the time the sun came up, though, it was snowing and blowing even harder and school was cancelled.

When he drives, Mr. Simonsson said, he asks himself whether it is safe for a bus full of kids to be out there and looks even harder at whether teen-agers should be driving their cars in the storm.

The main reason school is cancelled is because of ice, he said, and he also looks at what the visibility is and whether there are any drifts.

Even when school is out, that doesn't mean there aren't people in the districts working.

Superintendent Steele said some teachers come in to work, the transportation workers come in, the district office is open, the custodial staff works and the outdoor maintenance works.

He said Jerry Fidele, the outdoor maintenance man, often works more on the days there is snow or ice because he has to start clearing the sidewalks in case school is held.

Mr. Dorshorst said in the last 18 years he has been in the district, there was one time the schools had to make up for snow days. In that case, he said, they added 10 minutes to each day for the last nine weeks.

*Tax for emergency number will pay for new equipment

(Continued from Page 1A)

Decatur County, but commissioners have put it off. Commissioner Ralph Unger said if it is going to be required, then he would rather the county name the roads instead of having someone come in and do it.

He said there is probably a logical way to name the roads, for example do the east-west ones as numbers and the north-south ones as names or something along those lines. He said he would like to have everything coordinated around the U.S. 83 and U.S. 36 intersection since that is the main one in the county and comes into the county seat.

Commissioner Unger questioned how much good it will really do to find

locations when there is an emergency, since even if someone has the road names it doesn't mean there is a direct route. He said dispatch would still have to know the directions and where to turn as they do now.

Part of the expense for the individual counties is not only going to be the enhanced equipment for dispatch, but the road signs. Rep. Faber said he heard one county bought equipment to make their own signs to cut down on the costs. The money from the tax can be used for this but he said he wasn't sure when the increased 911 tax money would be seen in the county's budgets.

Commissioner Unger said the commission will have to look at what is required if the law passes and work from

there, although he is sure it will cause a lot of concern. The county will have to coordinate with the cities to make sure none of the roads carry the same names, he said.

"I don't think the counties have any choice," said Rep. Faber. "According to federal rules and regulations it is an unfunded mandate coming from the federal government."

Although Rep. Faber voted against the bill because of the tax increase, he thinks it is an idea whose time may have come.

"I haven't heard anyone who has said they don't want to do it," said Rep. Faber, "but I know a lot of counties who haven't done it, so I suppose that is a sign."

*Ranch stays open despite cutbacks

(Continued from Page 1A)

programs for certification, Mr. Campbell said. For the last year, though, they have been using Kelley Youth Service money to run the facility. The ranch is still receiving about 60 percent of the money from the Juvenile Justice Authority.

Mr. Campbell said that the firm is

keeping up its end of the contract but with the state change, it only seemed fair to ask the city for a lower rent. He said he didn't recall hearing anything about the city needing to make money off of the ranch, but knew that the money was needed to pay off the bonds, which it is doing.

He said he appreciates the council

working with him and the ranch.

"I have had nothing but a great response from Oberlin people," he said. "I have had nothing but good support from the city employees, and we are going to do our best to make this a regionally known facility and make this a working ranch."

*Farm changes need to be reported

(Continued from Page 1A)

Farm operators need to report to the U.S. Farm Service Agency office any change to their farming operation that would affect the status of that farm for federal program so the change can be effective for the current fiscal year.

A farm, as defined by the agency, is generally made up of tracts that have the same owner and operator. A sale of land in the farm or a tract of land within the farm requires notifying the office so a farm reconstitution can be initiated. All requests must be made by June 1.

A special provision allows contract acres to be divided in a manner agreed to

by all sellers and buyers. The method of division, known as the "Designation by Landowner" provision, requires all sellers and buyers to agree to the method by signing a form, or providing a memorandum of understanding that includes signatures of all sellers and buyers.

The designation by landowner method of division may be used more specifically when:

Part of the farm is sold or ownership is transferred.

An entire farm is sold to two or more persons.

Farm ownership is transferred to two or more persons.

Part of a tract is sold or ownership is transferred.

A tract is sold to two or more persons. Tract ownership is transferred to two or more persons.

When notifying the county office of ownership changes, the designation by landowner method of division should be discussed to see if this would result in a more satisfactory division of contract acres compared to the default method most commonly used for farm and tract divisions. The designation by landowner method can only be used when requested and if all buyers and sellers agree in writing, according to Decatur County Executive Director Diane Barrett.

Ash Wednesday celebrated



IN OBSERVANCE OF ASH WEDNESDAY, Shelby Brown had a cross made of ashes placed on her forehead by Pastor Charlotte Strecker-Baseler at Faith Lutheran Church last Wednesday. — Herald staff photo by Dave Bergling

*Mayor cites family and business as reasons for his resignation

(Continued from Page 1A)

in be held up so he could check the ordinance which entitled Mr. Walter as council president to take over. Mr. Hirsch said he had been called at noon about the resignation and about 6 p.m.

*School numbers may level

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and Decatur County Health Nurse Marilyn Gamblin. Then the kids have their speech tested and get a readiness test given from Mrs. Pollnow-Steinmetz.

"The screening looks at several different developmental things to see if the kids are ready to go to school," she said. "It shows the parents whether the kids are ready for kindergarten or developmental kindergarten and areas which may need work over the summer."

The screening will be offered Thursday and Friday, April 5 and 6, at the United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall. Mrs. Pollnow-Steinmetz said parents will be receiving letters with appointment times. A copy of the child's birth certificate, immunization records and Social Security number need to be brought along.

After the scores are totaled, the parents will attend a "kindergarten round-up" on April 27 where they will learn how their child did.

If all 37 students enroll in the kindergarten classes, the district will bring in five more students than the high school will graduate this year.

Superintendent Duane Steele said that if the enrollment stays at 37 kindergartners it will help the leveling out of district enrollment to begin. He said with the declining enrollment, usually a small kindergarten class is brought in and a larger senior class graduates.

Next year, though, with graduating 32, the district could be up a few kids. The larger kindergarten class will help stabilize enrollment and budget, he said.

started to look for the ordinance. He said the ordinance is unclear in what actually happens. He said the ordinance says the president takes the position for the time being, but doesn't say permanently.

"In practice I know that is what happens," said Mr. Hirsch, "but I couldn't put my finger on it right away."

He said a recent Kansas League of Municipalities bulletin addressed the issue.

Mr. Walter's seat on the council will be up for election in April, and he had decided not to run for re-election. With a vacancy on the council, though, the new mayor has the right to appoint someone to serve for the next month, said Mr. Hirsch. The council only needs three members for a quorum, he added, and if Mr. Walter chooses to not fill the vacant seat, it would OK since the election is soon.

Without filling the seat, Mayor Walter may have to be the tie breaker in votes, though.

The new mayor said he found out

about Mr. Frickey's resignation about mid-morning last Thursday. As the council president, he said he always knew that was the order of succession if for some reason the mayor couldn't fulfill the term.

Mayor Walter said it did cross his mind not to take the position, but as the mayor, he will fill a different role on the council. He said he will help move the discussion along, being responsible for not just himself, but the whole council, and for getting accurate information to the public.

Since he hasn't served as mayor before, Mr. Walter said there will be a learning period for him as well as the council as members learn to work with a new mayor.

"I think the council and the city will miss the knowledge and experience that Chuck had," he said. "He had a lot to offer as the mayor and I don't have that same experience. I am not at the same knowledge level."



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