

City can afford rate hike

Employee policy jumped 40 percent

The Oberlin City Council found out at the meeting Thursday night that the city had budgeted enough to pay for a 40 percent increase in medical insurance premiums for employees.

City Administrator Gary Shike said the insurance would increase 40 percent and he has received the plan. The insurance is paid for out of two funds. Ten employees' insurance is paid for out of employee benefits and the other six are paid for out of enterprise funds, he said. The insurance is supplied by Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

He said there is \$70,000 in the employee benefits fund. Mr. Shike asked City Treasurer Deanna Castle to crunch the numbers, and she said the city would have to pay \$63,131 out of the benefits fund and \$48,638 out of the enterprise fund.

Mayor Gary Walter asked if the council wanted to set up a committee to study the insurance and have them come back with a recommendation.

The city is also considering the state medical insurance plan, which also is Blue Cross/Blue Shield. The date to sign up for the state plan to start coverage in April is already past, he said, which is when the current coverage for the city is up. The city has to sign up for the state plan 60 days before the coverage would start.

The city has to stay with the current plan for at least a month because the deadline was missed to get on the state plan in April.

Mr. Shike said he has some reservations with the state plan. Just about all services offered in Kearney, Neb., are not part of the network for the state plan, he said, the same is true for McCook. Although the doctors in Oberlin are part of the network, the hospital here isn't listed.

The state plan initially seems so good because it has an agreement with Via Christi hospitals in Wichita, and if a person lives in central Kansas, it is different than if they are getting medical care out here.

The state plan, said Mr. Shike, promises stable prices two years out, but in the volatile industry, he said he doesn't know how that is possible.

City Attorney Steve Hirsch said he has the same concerns.

"The state has broken every promise they have made so far," he said.

Councilman Jay Anderson said he didn't think a study group with council and employees is a bad idea.

The city might have to look at different cost sharing, said Councilman Jerry Fidele. He said he isn't thrilled with the state plan, but at the same time he isn't thrilled with the other options.

The council talked briefly about self insurance, but thought the city staff was too small a group.

The council decided to talk about the insurance at their next meeting on Thursday, Feb. 20.

Offices close on Monday

Presidents' Day will be observed on Monday by federal and county offices and banks and financial institutions. The Decatur County landfill will be closed, and there will be no mail service.

State and city offices, as well as the Oberlin schools, will be open. Since there will be no mail, advertising and news may be left at *The Oberlin Herald* office, which will be open.

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MOVING ACROSS THE STREET, Gale Cook has taken the job of senior vice president at the First National Bank in Oberlin. —Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

Banker moves to First National

There is a new face at First National Bank, although he has been around the banking business in Decatur County for the last 25 years.

Gale Cook started at First National Bank as the senior vice president on Wednesday, Jan. 22.

Mr. Cook said his job deals with loans, any kind of loans, from agriculture to consumer to commercial, but mainly it is agriculture.

Originally from St. Francis, he said he is familiar with northwest Kansas. After high school he went to Fort Hays State University, where he received degrees in political science and economics.

After college, he said, he had an opportunity to get into banking.

Mr. Cook said he is able to work one-on-one with people in a job which he likes.

He has been in the business for 25 years, so he knows the people and they know him.

He said he started his career at Citizens State Bank in Norcat. He then went to Oberlin and worked at Farmers National Bank, Gold Bank (where he had been president) and The Bank. Most of the changes have been mergers and buyouts, he said.

Mr. Cook has lived in Oberlin since 1977. He and his wife Kendra, who works in the speech department at Oberlin Elementary School, have two children Tarah, 21, a junior at the University of Kansas, and Tyler, 18, a senior at Decatur Community High School.

First National is an outstanding organization, said Mr. Cook. He had an opportunity to get into the agriculture department, and said he decided to do it.

Council sells two police cars

The Oberlin City Council declared two old patrol cars surplus property and sold both at its meeting Thursday night.

The council sold both the 1995 and 1996 Ford Crown Victorias, which both were originally bought as police cars although most recently the 1995 car was used as the city administrator's car.

The city received six bids on the 1995 car ranging from \$3,151 to \$200 and three bids on the 1996 ranging from \$777 to \$300.

Police Chief Wade Lockhart said someone stopped to look at the 1996 vehicle and when the buyers started it, the car threw a rod. He said it would cost \$3,200 to replace the engine and that doesn't include labor.

The highest bid for the 1996 came in from a man in Colorado before the car was damaged and he had not been told what happened.

Mayor Gary Walter said before

either car could be sold, it had to be declared surplus property in a motion and then the bid had to be accepted through a motion and a vote.

Councilman Jerry Fidele suggested the council take action on the 1995 car and hold off on the other until the highest bidder had been contacted.

The question, said Councilman Stan McEvoy, is if the city can get a higher bidder for the car without the engine.

The council declared the 1995 car surplus property and sold it to the high bidder, Gordon Hawkins from Atwood, for \$3,151.

After finding out it cost \$800 to advertise the cars in several newspapers, the council decided to declare the 1996 car surplus property and sold it to Officer Troy Haas for \$500. Mr. Haas was aware of the condition of the car.

With the two cars sold, the 1997 patrol car will have the police mark-

ings taken off so the city administrator can drive it.

Chief Lockhart said it would be better to leave it as a police car, but Mr. Fidele said that had already been decided when the city decided to sell the other two cars.

Chief Lockhart said he would pull the low band radio, take out the siren, the control box for the lights and the lights. The radio that was left in it would need to be reprogrammed, he said.

Mayor Walter asked if there is a regulation that says the equipment needs to come out.

Mr. Shike said he doesn't have the authority to drive a car with that equipment.

Mayor Walter said, though, that it could be good to leave it so the police would have a spare car if needed.

Chief Lockhart said they could just pull the markings if that is what the council wants to do.

Valentines giveaway to raise money

Someone will be the winner of a package of prizes donated by Oberlin businesses at the Decatur Good Samaritan Center and high school cheerleaders' giveaway at 4 p.m. today at the center.

Activities Director Jan Badsy said the prize package has a value of over \$200.

The winner will get a night at the LandMark Inn for two, dinner at the Meadowlark Grill for two, flowers from Flowers by Lee, a scented candle from Ward Drug Store, a gift from the Washboard and breakfast for two at the Frontier Restaurant.

The night for two at the LandMark Inn was donated by owner Gary Anderson, First National Bank and Hirsch and Pratt Law Firm.

Money raised through the event

will be used to help implement the "neighborhood" concept at the center and help the cheerleaders pay for camps and uniforms.

At 2:30 p.m., cake will be served and John Juenemann will be playing his guitar at the center. Everyone is

welcome to come, said Mrs. Badsy, and then stay for the giveaway.



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Commission looks at bids for truck to spray roadsides

The Decatur County commissioners looked at four bids Tuesday morning for a roadside spraying truck to be shared between the noxious weed and road and bridge departments.

Weed Director Gaylen Huntley said the first bid was for a 1995 single-axle International for \$24,750 out of Dodge City. The second was for a dual-axle 1997 International for \$25,000. Both of the used vehicles are diesels.

There were two bids for new vehicles, a Ford for \$35,000 or a Mack for \$39,000.

Mr. Huntley said for the miles and the money, he and Road Supervisor Tim Stallman agreed a used truck would work.

The commissioners signed the annual weed report, which is sent in to the state. Mr. Huntley said the department probably billed out \$1,000 more in work last year but did \$12,000 less because of the drought.

The commissioners talked with Sheriff Ken Badsy, who was in to give his monthly report. Sheriff Badsy said the office did 24 vehicle inspections, had five accidents reported, four incidents, three offenses, served 46 papers and wrote four tickets.

Sheriff Badsy said they had found an abandoned meth lab off of the Lyle Road in a ditch. He said there are probably more meth labs than are reported dumped along side the road, but people just don't know what they are.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Held a five-minute closed session for personnel with Sheriff Badsy. There was no action.

County Roundup

At their meeting Tuesday morning, Decatur County Commissioners:

- Talked with Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman about the snow being cleared off the roads and projects the department has been working on. Story to come.

- Heard that the ambulance department collected about \$740 last week after not getting any the week before. Story to come.

- Looked at four bids for a roadside spraying truck to be shared between the noxious weed and road and bridge departments. Story at left.

- Talked with Jack Metcalf about the Oberlin Speedway. He was seeking financial help from the county, but the commissioners didn't commit any money.

- Decided not to sign up for terrorism risk insurance for \$1,800 because it only covers terrorism damage if the person is not domestic. County Attorney Steve Hirsch said he didn't think it was worth the money because if someone decided to, say, blow up the court house the insurance would only cover it if the person was a foreign terrorist.

- Signed a resolution to establish a policy that does not allow anything to be paid to an employee who is receiving workers compensation.

- Held a closed session for attorney-client privilege for 15 minutes. There was no action taken.

Break-in has cops puzzled

The Oberlin Police Department had a report of burglary or unlawful entry. The only problem is, they can't figure out who's the victim because the trailer was unoccupied.

Police Chief Wade Lockhart said it was reported on Wednesday, Jan. 29, that someone had entered and vandalized a trailer in Terrace Village, near the hospital. Bee Hansen, who takes care of the trailers, called.

Chief Lockhart said eggs were smashed on the floor and it looked as if either coffee or tea grounds were spilled. There was a television missing from inside.

He said he isn't sure if the victim is the person who had been living in the trailer or the trailer park owner.

On the same day, the department received a report of a sodomy at the youth ranch. Chief Lockhart said a 14 year old had accused a 17 year old of the act.

On Friday, Jan. 24, the department received a call from Dr. Richard May, who said his daughter's flute and case were missing.

At 5:30 a.m. Jan. 23, Renee Harman, Norcat, was driving behind Farmers Bank and Trust when she tried to turn to the north and slid into a utility pole.

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