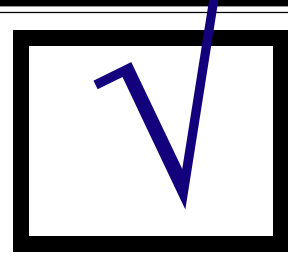


Vote on Tuesday!



THE OBERLIN HERALD

75¢ (tax included; 54¢ delivered at home)

32 Pages, 3 Sections

Wednesday, July 23, 2003

125th Year, Number 30

Decision on schools

Public listens to school story

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Around 40 people, including teachers, retail business owners, farmers and members of the school board, met Thursday night at the high school auditorium to hear why the Oberlin School Board has asked for a tax increase.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said he was glad that people showed up so that they can make an informed decision at the polls. The school budget, he said, is public information and should not be a secret.

Mr. Glodt gave a computer presentation that went over everything from why the board is asking for the 5 percent increase in the Local Option Budget to how much money the district has on hand.

He said the district has authority now to set the local option budget at 13.1 percent of total spending, and the board is asking that it go to 18.1 percent. The local option budget, which is raised from local property taxes, was created by the state in

1992 and is based on a percentage of the general fund.

The election would authorize the board to raise the levy to 18.1 percent for five years. That doesn't mean that they have to use that much every year, Mr. Glodt said; it is based on what is needed.

The superintendent said that the district can increase its budget authority two ways. One is by having more students, but preliminary numbers already show a decrease of 20 students next year. The other way is to increase the local option budget.

The district is asking for the money, he said, because its fixed costs are growing. Increases include jumps of \$100,796 in health insurance, \$19,126 in business insurance, \$5,100 in unemployment insurance, \$2,000 in utilities, \$24,925 in heating fuel, and \$15,095 in transportation fuel, which is a total of \$167,095. The increase in the local (See MEETING on Page 8A)



SPEAKING THURSDAY NIGHT, school Superintendent Kelly Glodt explained why the Oberlin School Board is asking for a 5 percent increase in the local option budget to about 40 people at the high school auditorium.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

District ends year with little money

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The Oberlin School Board found out last Monday night just how little money the district really has to start the new year.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said that in most years, both the food service and special education funds should start with \$80,000. This coming year, food service will start with \$15,006 and special education with \$5,611.

Mr. Glodt said the school year ended with no money in the contingency reserve fund, \$585,522 in capital outlay which can be used only for building improvements, and \$445,110 in the local option budget which can be spent on salaries and other operating costs. Basically, he said, the district has

\$997,801, which includes all of the funds.

The board agreed to skip the annual new employee dinner, with money being so tight. They decided to try to recognize new employees in a different way, even if it is just having each board member try to introduce themselves and welcome the new teachers at the beginning of the year.

The board has asked for an increase of 5 percent in the local option budget, which will go to election on Tuesday.

Mr. Glodt said even if the election passes, he and Board Clerk Vickie Lippelmann will be going to Topeka to talk with the money gurus at the state Department of Education (See MONEY on Page 8A)

Teachers agree to take salary freeze

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Faced with a tight budget and an election on increasing school taxes, teachers agreed to a new contract with the Oberlin School Board last Tuesday which includes a salary freeze.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said the freeze actually includes the entire district, including administrators.

Teacher Rhonda Barth, who is the Kansas Education Association local president and was in on negotiations, said the teachers went into negotiations asking for a 3 percent raise, but there isn't any money for that so they agreed on the freeze.

Teachers can get more money through "horizontal movement" on the salary scale for college credits but no other movement.

Those who move horizontally for credit will receive an extra \$500 on their checks.

The district has 54 certified teachers with four full-time and one part-time at the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch.

Mrs. Barth said the teachers won a reduction to 189 contracted days, one less than last year.

Added into the contracts is the creation of a team to look at the policy for teacher layoffs, known as a reduction in force. The language

was redone in negotiations. Re-employment was added in so if teachers are let go, they will know the terms under which they would be rehired.

Mrs. Barth said professional development council points were also added to the salary schedule.

That way the teachers can receive points for each training day. Twenty points equals one college credit, she said.

Teachers will receive points for the last three years of district-wide training and for the past year of out-of-district training. All of that can carry over to the new year.

Mrs. Barth said 13 items were

negotiated, among which were duty free lunches, holidays, vacations, military leave, early retirement, insurance, disciplinary procedures and a grievance procedure.

With the election on the 5 percent increase in the local option budget coming up Tuesday, Mrs. Barth said, the teachers are very much in support of it.

She said they can't envision Oberlin without schools.

"If the finances aren't increased, what will happen with our school and the community?" Mrs. Barth asked. "I am personally campaigning for a yes vote, as are all of the teachers."

Where to vote Tuesday

For the special school election Tuesday, there will be four polling places in the county so voters in the Oberlin School District can decide whether the schools will get a 5 percent increase in the local option budget.

The polls will open at 7 a.m. and close at 7 p.m.

These are the polling places:
• Altory, Center, Grant, Harlan, Liberty, Logan, Olive, Roosevelt

and Sherman townships at the Golden Age Center.

• Oberlin City Precinct No. 2 at the Decatur County Courthouse.
• Oberlin City Precinct No. 1 at the American Legion.

• Garfield and Lincoln townships at the Norcat City Office. Election Officer Marilyn Horn, the Decatur County clerk, said as of Friday morning there have been 69 advance ballots voted.



Donors squeeze out gift of life in Oberlin

GIVING A LITTLE SQUEEZE to the ball, Jim Plotts (above) of Norcat County donated blood last Wednesday at the hospital in Oberlin. Just minutes before Mr. Plotts sat down, his daughter Jennifer Auxier, had occupied the second chair.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes



Beach party, volleyball set for downtown

Get out the sunscreen and head downtown Saturday, because it's time for the second annual beach party sponsored by the Oberlin Business Alliance.

Joe Stanley, owner of Stanley Hardware, said they have six to eight teams registered for the sand volleyball tournament on Main Street. He said they can take up to 16 teams.

Mr. Stanley said sign-up sheets for the tournament are available at

the hardware store. Each team needs to be made up of two men and two women. The tournament will be scored best two out of three, rally to 10 or done at the end of a 30-minute time limit.

The games will start at 10 a.m. on sand put down by Wayne Hackney of Oberlin Concrete in front of the old Duckwalls building. The last game is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. and after that the sand will be open to

everyone. Each team pays \$50 to enter, which includes a member T-shirt and meal ticket. Winners will receive trophies.

There will be bleachers set up in front of the sand for anyone who wants to watch the tournament.

KFNF Radio will broadcast live from the tournament starting at 9 a.m. and ending at noon.

At lunch time, the Decatur County emergency medical techni-

cians will be selling food and that evening the Oberlin Jaycees will be cooking.

At 8 p.m., the band Rendezvous, formerly The Decades, will perform on Main Street for two hours.

The alliance hopes to get some games going for the kids for the evening, too.

The sand will be cleaned up Sunday morning by anyone who wants to help.

Business alliance plans auction this Saturday

The Oberlin Business Alliance will hold an auction at 10 a.m. on Saturday in the drive thru of the old Bank building on South Penn Avenue.

The alliance is taking donations of items for the auction up until 9 a.m. They ask that all items be

clean, boxed and salable. They won't take appliances or clothes.

The money will go to boost the group's Christmas decoration fund.

For information, call the Chamber of Commerce office at 475-3441.



AT THE MEETING last Thursday night, Judge John and Dianne Bremer listened to the presentation about the upcoming school budget election. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

* Meeting lets voters hear need

(Continued from Page 1A) option budget will bring in just \$169,259, he said.

He said some people have asked why, if the district is having money problems, it can afford to keep fixing up its buildings and facilities and buy a new practice field. Mr. Glodt said things like building repairs, new vehicles and the land are paid for out of capital outlay fund. That money cannot be used on salaries or fixed costs under state law, he said.

The board was paying around \$3,000 a year to rent the practice field out of the general fund, but when they bought it, that money could come out of capital outlay fund, which in turn saves the general fund \$3,000 a year.

Mr. Glodt said that the state used to increase per pupil spending each year by \$50 but the Legislature cut it by \$7 last year and it will stay the same for next year.

He said that the district is not re-hiring a sixth-grade teacher this year to save money and has made other cuts already.

Ray Bryan asked how much it would cost to reverse the sixth-grade situation and hire another teacher. The base teacher salary for someone straight out of college is around \$32,000, Mr. Glodt said. He said he hopes that position can be

brought back, but it's hard to bring things back once they get cut.

Mr. Glodt said two-thirds of the staff is maxed out on the salary scale at around \$40,000, which he said is a good thing because it means the district has experienced teachers.

Mr. Glodt said the board tries to buy locally as much as they can, but there are bid laws that they have to follow. If a local business can match or beat a bid, he said, he would much rather buy in town.

Is a 5 percent increase enough, one patron asked. Mr. Glodt said probably not, but before he cuts teachers, he will be back next year asking for another increase.

Jeannie Unger, who teaches in Atwood but lives here, asked why the district didn't ask for 25 percent, which is the maximum the state allows.

Board Member Barb Olson said the board talked about that and half of the members felt they should only ask for what they needed. Since that decision was made, she added, some costs have gone up. If she had known then what she knows now, she said she would have asked for 25 percent.

Mr. Glodt agreed the district should have gone for 25 percent.

"Every single staff member we cut will have a negative effect on

what we produce," he said.

What is the board doing about home schooled kids and those that leave the district, asked Mike Helm, a rural mail carrier who lives in Norcat. Legally, Mr. Glodt said, children can go out of district. The system loses \$96,000 with students going elsewhere, but the board is looking at a home schooling policy now.

The board has sent a letter to all the families who choose to send kids out of district, said Mrs. Olson, asking them to come look at Oberlin schools. Some parents choose to go elsewhere for family reasons, including parents who work in another town, or tradition. She said she is not going to fight a family decision. Kids can get a great education here, and the district tries to do what is best for them.

If the local option budget increase passes, asked Librarian Shanna Richards, will a sixth-grade teacher be hired? No, said Mr. Glodt. He said even with the increase, the district can't hire a sixth-grade teacher for next year.

Dianne Bremer asked if anything will happen to the gifted program if the increase doesn't pass. Mr. Glodt said the last program the district can cut is special education, because there are federal rules about it.

He said cutting activities wouldn't save much, because they are a small piece of the pie.

Where does the athletic money raised at the door go? asked Brad Larson. Mr. Glodt said money raised by gate receipts stays with the kids; it can't go to pay salaries.

How much does the election cost? asked Dennis Richards. Mr. Glodt said the district had already received a bill for \$2,800.

Mrs. Unger brought up the idea of a door-to-door campaign to support the increase. Mrs. Olson said the board can't do that.

Mrs. Unger said that other people can. She said it would be an important part of education for kids to learn that the price of going out to dinner two Saturdays could finance the increase.

Mr. Helm said he is having a hard time with the election because he has five kids and received a 13 percent decrease in pay when teachers in the last two years have received a 5 percent increase. Teacher Rhonda Barth said even with that raise, she was taking home \$20 less. The teachers are not getting a raise this year, she added, nor is anyone in the district.

Mr. Helm said he thinks there are a lot more people in the district hurting.

Principal juggles staff to fill opening

With one less teacher at the Oberlin Elementary School, Principal Duane Dorshorst has come up with a creative way to help kids learn though there will be one section of sixth-graders.

Mr. Dorshorst shared the plan with the Oberlin School Board at their meeting last Monday night.

When Cassandra Holdeman resigned as a fifth-grade teacher, he said, they decided to move Jeri Buchholz into that position because the fifth-grade received a technology grant and needed to have two teachers. The school board decided to go with one sixth-grade teacher to save money.

Mr. Dorshorst said they had two options. The first was to bring Cynthia Matson out of the remedial programs and back to teaching sixth-grade full time. Mr. Dorshorst said he didn't like that idea because they would have to send federal money back.

The other option is to move one of the fourth-grade teachers into sixth grade and just have one section of fourth grade. There is a new program for technology learning in that grade through a grant, so he didn't really like that idea either.

Instead, said Mr. Dorshorst, he came up with a third option which,

although it isn't ideal, has the least amount of impact.

Carol Dixson will be the sixth-grade lead teacher and handle math, science, social studies and a section on computers.

Mrs. Matson will then teach two sections of sixth-grade English, while Steve Cullen will teach sixth-grade health.

The students will have band before lunch instead of after next year. Miss Dixson will have study hall by herself for all the sixth-graders.

The sixth-graders will have computers taught by Miss Dixson and Mrs. Buchholz. Reading will be taught by librarian Shanna Richards.

The students will still have an activity period including art, library or enrichment.

All the teachers have been contacted, said Mr. Dorshorst and said they will all do what needs to be done.

The downside to it, said Superintendent Kelly Glodt, is that the classroom time may take away from library, counseling and title services.

When one of the teachers is sick or there is a field trip in the fourth grade, it may be hard to find a substitute for just a few sections, said Mr. Dorshorst.

School roundup

At a meeting last Monday night, the Oberlin School Board:

- Had a first reading of the home schooling policy recommended by the superintendent and decided to have the policy review committee look it over before adopting it. Story on Page 5A.
- Approved several items, from

handbooks to banks, to get the school year started. Story on Page 3A.

- Heard the teaching assignments at Oberlin Elementary School with one less teacher. Story above.
- Found out how the district ended the year financially and how it will be starting with less money than normal. Story on Page 1A.

* Money runs short for school budget

(Continued from Page 1A) about what the district can do with the budget.

The most positive thing that happened this year, he said, is that the district didn't have to send back any federal money. In most years, the district has had to send back part of the money, but this year the district was better organized with those programs and either spent all of it or got balances low enough to carry it over.

Mr. Glodt said preliminary counts for the new school year are showing a decrease of 20 students. The counts show 238 in the high school and 215 in the grade school.

At Sappa Valley Youth Ranch, he said, the numbers have been up. There is a waiting list now to get in because of the summer school program. Hopefully, on the first count day in mid September there will be 35 to 36 kids so the district knows the budget.

Mr. Glodt said he thinks if Oberlin can hold onto its programs longer than the neighboring districts, there should be more kids coming here.

With the special election just around the corner, he said, he has been busy preparing for that. He said he has made fliers and started to get those circulated. He has also had to write a very difficult letter to the teachers to let them know what is

going on.

The board discussed running a full page ad in *The Oberlin Herald*. They agreed to insert a handout which talks about money and why the additional 5 percent is needed and run a half page ad in the paper.

Mr. Glodt said he knew of one teacher who had written a letter to the editor in favor of the increase and said he had asked that others write also. The board members suggested talking with people and asking them to write letters.

Board Member Barb Olson said she has a calling list but isn't sure if she should call her voters before the public meeting and invite them or before the election and remind them to vote. She said people she has talked with still think this election has to do with a bond issue, which it doesn't. This is just to pay increased costs in the general budget and keep the district running, she said.

Board Member Kurt Vollertsen asked how much impact a signature page in the paper would mean. Mr. Glodt said he thought a lot if they could get a number of signatures.

The board agreed that President Chris Bailey and Mr. Jackson would attend the public meeting in Norcat and Mrs. Olson and Mr. Vollertsen would attend a meeting in Oberlin.