

## Voters to decide if schools get more

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Voters in the Oberlin School District go to the polls on Tuesday, July 29, to decide if the school board can raise the local option budget by 5 percent of total general-fund spending for no longer than five years.

The board decided last Monday to hold the special election after a petition signed by 172 people stopped the increase from going through without a vote.

Now workers at the district office and the board are preparing for the election, getting numbers together, writing a letter to teachers to explain the situation, talking with civic organizations and preparing for two town hall meetings.

If the tax issue doesn't pass, said Superintendent Glodt, the district will probably have to lay off six to eight teachers. Even if it does pass, he said, the district will probably still have to let some teachers go.

The reason the election was set so soon, said Mr. Glodt, is that the board needs to know what money they will have for next year's budget.

The local option budget is set at 13.1 per-

### If special election passes, taxes will increase

If the proposal to raise the property taxes for the Oberlin Schools is passed in a special election at the end of July, homeowners and farmers in the Oberlin School District will be paying more to help run the schools.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said with the accelerated property tax plan from the state Legislature, it should take an increase

of just 2 mills to raise the money this year. He said the figure came from the state Department of Education's chief financial officer, Dale Dennis.

Each mill will cost:

- \$15 a year on a house worth \$50,000.
- \$30 on a house worth \$100,000.
- 7 cents an acre for irrigated farm land.
- 3 cents an acre for dry land farm land.

• 1 cent an acre for pasture land.

The two-mill estimate is only for the first year. Once the accelerated tax plan is over, school tax levies will go back to normal. No one knows for sure what will happen next year, Mr. Glodt said, but people are saying that tax rates may skyrocket. An early estimate for a "normal" year was 6 mills, but that may not be right.

cent now, he said, and if the increase is approved, it can go to 18.1 percent. Mr. Glodt said he was wrong in the beginning saying it will take six mills to raise the money. It will actually be two mills the first year because of the escalated property tax collections approved by the Legislature.

The increase will raise about \$169,621, he said, and that will just cover fixed costs that have increased, including health insurance and utilities.

The obvious question, said Mr. Glodt, is if the district barely made it this year without a tax increase, how will the district make it next year? The answer, he said, is that the district probably won't.

Unless there is a huge influx of kids in the next four months, they probably will have to lay off some teachers, even with a tax increase. The question is how many.

Already, there is one position that the board thought would be filled that the dis-

trict just can't afford. Mr. Glodt said one sixth-grade position won't be filled, so there will be at least one class at the grade school where there is only one section. They expect only 33 sixth graders, 29 fifth graders, 24 fourth graders, 28 third graders, 26 second graders, 28 first graders and 30 kindergartners.

The district will also cut two football coaches for the new year, he said.

It's not that the schools haven't tried to

save money. Mr. Glodt said they have been using more volunteer labor and cut the budget for teacher supplies from \$500 to \$300 each.

Mr. Glodt said people want to know how come the district is broke. Part of the reason is that two years ago, the district and the teachers negotiated for a 5 percent raise for two years. Including taxes and everything else, he said, it ended up being more like an 8 percent raise. That raise brought teachers up to the state average for pay, he said, adding that the district is in negotiations again with the teachers.

There has also been a huge decline in enrollment, which means the budget gets less and less each year. In the last 10 years the district has lost 209 students. In the last five years the district has lost 128 kids. The district had in 1998 580 students, in 1999 548 students, in 2000 513 students, in 2001 519 students, in 2002 473 students and if the school starts tomorrow there are 452 students.

There has also been an increase in fixed (See VOTERS on Page 12)



### Fourth is fun for all

Oberlin and Decatur County residents and visitors enjoyed a hot and sunny Fourth of July on Friday. In the afternoon, Charles Keller (above), pastor of the Lyle, Clayton and Norcatour United Methodist churches, lent a hand at the grill at the Prairie Chapel benefit hamburger feed at City Park. Later, folks gathered near the fairground to watch the annual aerial fireworks display (left). While waiting for



things to get going, many youngsters (right) set off their own fireworks, including sparklers.

— Herald staff photos by Steve and Cynthia Haynes

## Rains slow harvest

### Cutting should be done soon

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

After almost two weeks, Decatur County's wheat harvest is starting to wind down, with farmers saying that it will probably be completed by the middle of the week.

It might already have been done, but rain showers and storms stopped the cutting last week, sending families to town on Sunday instead of into the fields.

In Oberlin, the two elevators have brought in quite a bit of grain, with a few trucks still coming in to dump.

At Hansen-Mueller grain, Manager Bill Gotchall said the firm had brought in around 350,000 bushels in Oberlin and Cedar Bluffs.

So far, he said, the reactions to the harvest have been really good.

He said last Wednesday or Thursday were probably the busiest days at the elevators, but things have started to slow down considerably. There is still the occasional truck though, said Mr. Gotchall.

At the beginning of harvest, he said, they saw some army worm damage in the wheat.

Farmers were shocked to see that, said Mr. Gotchall, but since then it is spotty.

He said that before many in the area could get into the fields to cut, they had heard about the damage on the news.

Across the street at the Decatur Co-op, General Manager Karol Evans said they, too, saw some damage from army worms in the beginning but then it started to trail off as harvest got into full swing.

At all the co-op's six locations, said Mr. Evans, they took in a little over 3 million bushels.

He said that matched the six-year average, which is the goal they try to hit every year. He said harvest was about 85 to 90 percent done by Fri-

(See HARVEST on Page 12)

## Governor views harvest from combine

By TOM BETZ

The Goodland Star-News

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius said she was impressed by the bountiful wheat harvest after getting a first-hand look at it Thursday from the cab of a combine and watching wheat unloading at an elevator in Goodland.

"We wanted to come here to visit Ken Palmgren and celebrate the good wheat harvest," Sebelius told more than 60 people who gathered at the Buffalo Inn Convention Center after she had toured the fields and the Mueller Grain elevator.

"This year's crop looks to be 70 percent larger than last year and bigger than 1999," she said. "In Kansas, 40 percent of the jobs statewide are agriculture related, and when ag does well, we all do well."

"This is a win-win situation, as it is good for the shortline railroads like the Kyle, and the elevators are pretty empty to hold the bumper crop.

### Sebelius answers questions after touring wheat harvest

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius talked with about 60 people Thursday morning at Goodland's Buffalo Inn Convention Center about the "streamlined" sales tax law, unemployment, prisons and beef imports.

She told the audience it was good to be in northwest Kansas, and while she was familiar with the Norton area, where her husband grew up, she had not traveled to the Goodland area as

much.

"It is good to be here, and I hope to come back again to share with you," she said.

On the sales tax law which went into effect July 1, the governor said she had approved a six-month delay in enforcement, including a provision which required merchants to collect the tax rate where merchandise is delivered, not from where it is shipped. (See ANSWERS on Page 12)

"What I want to tell you, it is good for the entire state. When you do well, Kansas does well."

The governor spent the early part of the morning at the Palmgren farm near Edson, where she got a "per-

sonal acquaintance" with the wheat harvest and took a ride in a combine with Travis Palmgren, who was harvesting wheat near Edson.

"I had to come out here to meet the famous man who is reported in the

Washington Post, Ken Palmgren," Mrs. Sebelius said of her host, who is chairman of the Kansas Wheat Growers Commission.

Accompanying the governor was her new secretary of agriculture, Adrian Polansky, who farmed in the Scandia area and then worked for the Department of Agriculture.

The governor said it was good to be in northwest Kansas, and that the good news of the wheat harvest was good news for the state as the new fiscal year begins.

"From the year I inherited, we had \$11 million in the bank," she said. "To many that is a lot of money, but it is not enough to cover expenses or even make a payroll. We finished the year with \$130 million in the bank, and it is projected to be \$160 million next year."

"We were able to keep money in schools and not impose taxes on people. Kansas is in sound fiscal condition, and we have made a good (See SEBELIUS on Page 12)

## Speed limit goes up in Selden after audit

Anyone driving through Selden lately on U.S. 83 may have noticed that they are allowed to drive five miles per hour faster.

The speed limit changed from 40 miles an hour through the northwest Sheridan County town to 45 after a road safety audit by the Kansas Department of Transportation.

Tom Hein, public information liaison for the department in Norton, said the department is starting to take a proactive approach to the road safety checks and are now doing one every three years on the state's highways.

The highway through Selden, was done this year. It included a speed study, which looks at the current speed limit, what speed

people are actually driving and whether it is safe.

Mr. Hein said at Selden the majority were driving five miles faster already and it was determined to be safe.

He said if most people are already driving a higher speed and it is safe, then that speed limit usually is changed.

The mayor, city council and county commissioners are all notified so they can have some input on the audit, he said.

Jacque Boultinghouse at Karls Cash Store said people in town weren't too happy about the change, but there didn't seem to be much they could do about it.

Mayor Darrel Bruggeman didn't return a call to comment.

# \* Answers given on tax changes, employment

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 "We are losing Internet and catalog sales which are estimated to \$70 to \$120 million in sales tax," she said. "The ability for anyone to purchase through the Internet without paying sales tax puts our Main Street business owners at a disadvantage. "We are part of a framework of 20 states representing 10 percent of the national population, to get the federal government to implement a destination sales tax. This is a change in the whole way we have done taxes, and both the state and businesses will need months to ramp up. It will take a minimum of six months to have processes in place. "Nebraska and Missouri use this type of sales tax collection." A question was asked about whether the unemployment figures were going up. "There are areas that are still pretty depressed," Mrs. Sebelius said, "the Wichita area especially, and high tech workers in the northeast. "We are below the national average at 5 percent, and with these pockets out, we are down to about 3 percent." The governor was asked if the state was going to build more prisons because the present ones are nearing capacity. "We need to keep dangerous criminals off the streets," Gov. Sebelius said. "I am looking at leasing as an option because it would be

more cost effective than building prisons. We are going to reduce the number of first-time drug offenders by increasing the community treatment programs, but if they screw up, they will be back in prison. "In the face of the current financial situation it seems better to look at leasing and not start a building program." Mike Schultz of the Kansas Cattlemen's Association said he was concerned about the recent outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or "mad cow disease," in Canada, and the opening of borders for unchecked imports. He asked the governor to encourage the state's senators to continue to support the Country of Origin labeling program, under which meat in retail counters would have to be labeled. "There are stories out there that this is very expensive," Mr. Schultz said, "but studies show the cost is not that high." Mrs. Sebelius said she understood the impacts and that she has been discussing this with the Japanese consul in Kansas City. "Japan imports Kansas beef and sells it as Kansas beef, and there are delivery trucks with the governor's picture," the governor said. "Part of the reason for the visit was to get a new picture. "(The consul) said he was concerned about the Canadian beef because his people like the beef labeled from Kansas."



GOV. KATHLEEN SEBELIUS took a ride in a combine with Travis Palmgren, who was harvesting wheat near Edson, on Thursday. —Staff photo by Shannon Davidson

# \* Harvest slowing as wheat fills bins

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 day, but the elevator was still receiving some wheat. On Saturday, things in the Oberlin area started to slow down, he said. Mr. Evans said it seems the weight has been pretty good most places, though it has been lighter than normal at the Oberlin location. Mr. Evans said that may be because of the drought and the fact that some of the wheat wasn't fertilized. He said they have already started shipping some of the crop out, filling 20 to 30 rail cars. In Ludell, said Mr. Evans, the co-op has 20,000 to 30,000 bushels stored on the ground because the elevator is full and farmers are still bringing it in. Down the road at Norcat Grain, Manager Janice O'Hare

said the elevator is full with 380,000 bushels. She said she was hoping to fit more in, but the bins couldn't take anymore. She said they filled up Friday evening. There is still some cutting in the area, but they are either storing it in their own bins or taking it to other elevators. The test weight average for the elevator has been 58 pounds. She said she would have like to see 60 pounds this year, but farmers sure aren't complaining. Mrs. O'Hare said the elevator has already sent out 15 full rail cars. When they started loading them, she said, she saw some army worm damage but the wheat was accepted and they have seen very little damage since then. Now the elevator will start working on getting the grain sold so it can be moved out, so they can get ready for the fall crops.

# \* Sebelius talks about taxes

(Continued from Page 1)  
 start at getting out of the financial difficulties." Sherman County Commissioner Kevin Rasure asked the governor about the future of the demand transfers, a revenue sharing program

which returns state tax money to the cities and counties and accounts for \$90 million statewide. Gov. Sebelius said that while former Gov. Bill Graves made half the transfers last year, there will not be any this year.

"The state is taking 7 percent cuts," she said, "and to spread the financial cuts around, the transfers are about 2 percent of city budgets. "I know it is critical to you, but I can't wave my magic wand."

# County finishes loan paperwork

Decatur County commissioners signed papers to close out a micro loan grant the county received to help out existing and new businesses grow and create jobs. Randy Hrabe, director of the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission, met with the commissioners at their meeting June 24. The county received \$100,000, all of which has been loaned out to help businesses. Under the grant, he said, the county was expected to create six jobs and actually there were eight. Vickie Bailey, a member of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. board, asked if the group and county are on their own now with the administration of the loans.

erate-income people. The second is if the help eliminates slums and blight, and the third is an urgent need. Mrs. Griffey, with help from Mr. Hrabe, went through programs the agency can deal with, including community facilities, water and sewer, economic development, micro-loan, housing and neighborhood development, a homeowner rehabilitation plan, urgent need, downtown revitalization, community capacity building grants, comprehensive development, attraction development grant and the Kansas

small town environmental program. Commissioner Doyle Brown said the senior citizen center has a leaky roof. Is there a program to help the county replace the building? Mrs. Griffey asked if the city or county could do some of the work as an in-kind match. Mrs. Griffey said commissioners could check to see if the roof or building would work as a project. She said to keep in mind that low-to moderate income for the county for grants is \$25,150 or less for a family of one and \$35,900 and under for a family of four.

# Book on trees available

"What Tree Is That?," a pocket guide for identifying trees, is available from the National Arbor Day Foundation. The 72-page guide will help you identify 135 trees found in the eastern and central U.S. Well-known trees are included: oaks, maples, spruces, and pines. Also included species such as horse chestnut and mockernut hickory, sassafras and shadbush, persimmon and pawpaw and pecan. Dozens of drawings illustrate leaves or needles and acorns, berries,

seed pods, cones and other identifying features. The book is organized to make it easy to identify trees in a simple step-by-step fashion. "Helping people enjoy and appreciate trees is central to the educational mission of the Arbor Day Foundation," said John Rosenow, the Foundation's president. To obtain the guide, send your name, address and \$3 to "What Tree Is That?," The National Arbor Day Foundation, Nebraska City, Neb., 68410, or go online to arborday.org.

# Development group busy marketing Oberlin

The Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. board and its marketing director have been busy, making contacts with new businesses and getting information out on the community. Marketing Director Connie Grafel met with the Oberlin City Council on June 19 to let them know everything that has been going on. She said the corporation has been contacted by two businesses about the land the group has an option on north of town. One of the businesses is already in Oberlin and looking at the possibility of expanding and the other one is a new business. Ms. Grafel said the group would like to set up that area like an industrial park to prepare for future businesses too. Ms. Grafel said they are still working on financing with the businesses. The hospital, which received the Duckwall's building on Main Street from Joe and Patty Currey as a gift, wants to put in a wellness center unless there is another business that wants to go into the space. The group is working on expanding the strategic plan, said Ms. Grafel. So far, she said, there has been over \$5,000 pledged for an electronic sign at The Gateway. Ms. Grafel said they will hear soon about a grant the committee applied to for help pay for the sign. The one-day travel itinerary for the area has been updated and sent to Hays Convention and Visitors Bureau, which distributed it to social, bank travel and retirement groups. The Oberlin Convention and

Visitors Bureau made table tents this year to put on tables at restaurants to let people know everything that is happening throughout the summer. Ms. Grafel said she has received positive feedback on these. The group has worked at keeping a prime position in the Northwest Kansas Hunting Guide. Ms. Grafel said she is getting information to expand the listing in the state Getaway Guide, which is picked up a lot by tourists. The information has to be in by the middle of July. She said she has been working on the "Lifelong Community" initiative. This is something that Councilman Jay Anderson found out about and she is helping with. The idea is to prepare and develop a community that better serves people in their retirement age who want to settle here. Ms. Grafel said she is working on getting a steering community together and they will then work on an assessment tool which covers the government, community services, businesses, housing, transportation and health care. Ms. Grafel said she also has been helping the Czech Museum in Jennings with grants.

# \* Voters may say yes, no

(Continued from Page 1)  
 costs, the largest of which is insurance. Mr. Glodt said they are looking for other options on the employee health insurance, but it is going up for everyone. Mr. Glodt said the district gets money from the federal government through "title" programs, state government by a per pupil formula, and the local property tax. One of the biggest misconceptions, he says, is that the district has money to spend because of the improvements being made, including buying land, grass seed and the recent building repairs. Mr. Glodt said that those are being paid for from the capital outlay budget, which can only be used for improvements. This election won't take the place of a bond issue for building renovation, he said. This election is about the general operating fund of the school. Mr. Glodt said just this last year in northwest Kansas, Hoxie increased its local option budget from 11.8 percent to 25 percent with no protest, and St. Francis went from 12.3 percent to 25. That leaves only Oakley that has a lower local option budget than Oberlin at 12.9 percent. As the superintendent, said Mr. Glodt, his job is to fight for kids and teachers. He said he believes when a district has to get rid of a teacher, it hurts the kids. "Each teacher cut will affect the quality of education in the district," said Mr. Glodt. Something has to give, he said. Either the state has to give more money or the district has to get it by raising taxes. If the people aren't willing to help where the state left off, there will be some drastic changes in the school. The state has guaranteed that the \$3,863 per pupil budget base won't go up, but will probably stay the same, he said. A study the state Legislature paid for said that Kansas should be paying \$4,650 per pupil for a suitable education, he said, but that isn't going to happen this year. Mr. Glodt said he encourages everyone to register to vote by 5 p.m. Monday, July 14, and to attend the town hall meetings about the tax issue.

Board to explain tax increase

The Oberlin School board will hold two Town Hall meetings to explain its reasons for asking for an increase in the local option budget, which comes from property taxes on homes, businesses and farms. The first will be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday, July 17, in the Decatur Community High School auditorium in Oberlin. The second meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, July 23, at the Norcat School. Everyone is invited to the meetings. Voters will decide on the increase in a special election on Tuesday, July 29.

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