

County ready to bid on unpaid taxes

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
Decatur County has published its delinquent real property taxes and is getting ready to sell those properties where taxes have not been paid at least once in the last three years.

The county doesn't make money off the sale but is able to clean up the books.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch said even though the notice printed in *The Oberlin Herald* advertises a tax sale, the only bidder in the procedure is the county. If the taxes aren't paid by the first Tuesday in

September, the bid procedure is started.

This year, there were 232 delinquent taxes printed for a grand total of \$87,701 that the owners had not paid for the last three years. The publication starts at the beginning of August and then runs for three consecutive weeks. It lists unpaid taxes for real property, meaning houses, buildings and land.

The real estate taxes are due Nov. 1 of each year. They become delinquent if not paid by Dec. 20 and June 20 (for the second half). After Nov. 1 the county gets a lien

against the property if the taxes aren't paid, Mr. Hirsch said.

The confusing part is that the taxes are really due at the beginning of November, but aren't considered delinquent until the later dates, said Mr. Hirsch. If a homeowner pays half by Dec. 20 and waits to pay the other half in June, they aren't delinquent. If they don't pay the first half by December, though, they are delinquent.

When a property owner is delinquent on taxes, the county charges 9 percent interest rate plus the \$16 for publication costs. If the

property is foreclosed on, there is an additional 10 percent for the court costs.

While real property taxes become delinquent if not paid for one year, the county has to wait three years before taking action. In reality, Mr. Hirsch said, the whole process is four years.

The exception is that if property is abandoned, the county only has to wait one year after taxes aren't paid, so the process takes only two years.

Once a piece of property is sold at a sheriff's sale, said Mr. Hirsch, that's it. The

buyer becomes the owner. About one home a year is foreclosed and sold in the sheriff's sale, he said.

Sometimes there is a problem when the county can't get a property sold and the county has to go in and tear it down. There have also been success stories where vacant properties were foreclosed in Jennings and a brand new house is sitting on the land now.

The majority of the properties in the tax sale are mineral rights which have been sold separately from surface ownership. The (See COUNTY on Page 8A)

Bond issue on hold

School board decides to wait

The Oberlin School Board has told its facilities advisory committee to put plans for a bond issue on hold, although the coordinators will continue to meet and work on plans to improve both school buildings.

With the district's budget so tight and the state's economy so slow, said Dr. Mark Olson at a board meeting Monday, the committee wanted some direction on what to do. In not so many words, board members said to put the project on hold, thanking the committee for their time and work.

The committee has been working on a bond issue to renovate both the grade and high schools for nearly two years, pretty much since the first proposal failed.

Dr. Olson said the three coordinators, including himself, Paul Shields and Lee Copeland, are willing to continue work on a plan to fix up the buildings for years to come.

But, he said, the group thinks students are the priority, not the buildings. He said he doesn't know how people feel about a bond issue, but the building needs have not gone away.

Two years ago, a bond of just under \$6 million failed at the polls. The new committee was formed to gather information, and Dr. Olson said, they already have saved the taxpayers \$3 million to \$4 million.

The committee has put together a \$2.5 million plan to fix up both of the schools for the next 30 years, using local contractors, Dr. Olson said.

Dr. Olson said he doesn't feel that the committee can go ahead with a planned survey until they know about what will happen to the schools staff and programs.

If the district doesn't go for a bond issue to fix up the schools, he asked, would the board be willing to use any of the \$611,000 left in capital outlay to work on priorities at the buildings. One of those is new windows to keep water out and for safety. Another item is the electrical wiring in the auditorium at the high school.

Dr. Olson said an alternative would be a smaller bond issue to fix (See SCHOOL on Page 8A)



INSIDE THE CANDY WINDOW at the Sunflower Cinema, Kayla Bose (above) scraped tape off the glass. Peggy Ream (below) wound up a long extension cord the group

had used for a vacuum cleaner while cleaning the theater on Saturday.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

Volunteers clean theater Saturday for opening night

Volunteers met Saturday afternoon to clean bathrooms and refrigerators, vacuum the carpet and tear out old seats at the Sunflower Cinema to get things ready for the reopening at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 30.

About 15 men, women and kids met with cleaning supplies in tow to clean the building, which has been closed for over a year.

Some worked at the concession stand, scrubbing out the candy counter and peeling tape off the glass. Others were in the main theater space, tearing out broken seats that need to be repaired, and still others worked in the back of the theater, scrubbing bathroom floors and refrigerators.

Jennifer Auxier, one of the board members, said the whole first row will probably be closed off for awhile because there are so many broken seats. She said she may have her dad, Jim Plotts, take a look at the broken ones and

see if he can help fix them.

Board Member Jan Badsy said the original plan was to teach people how to use the projector that afternoon, but that didn't work so another work night will be set up. Anyone who is interested in learning how to run the projector can call Mrs. Badsy or Board Member Duane Dorshorst.

Otherwise the work day went excellent, she said. People were really supportive.

Those who couldn't stay donated supplies and others brought brooms and work clothes and just got in there and did what needed to be done.

There were some things that needed to be purchased at Stanley Hardware. Anyone who would like to donate to help defray some of those costs can send money to Sunflower Cinema 220 N. Penn Ave., Oberlin Kan., 67749.

The plan is to open with "Pirates of the Caribbean" on Aug. 30. Everyone is invited to come out for opening night. Tickets are a flat rate



at \$5 for evenings and \$4 for a Sunday matinee. The theater will have shows at 7 p.m. Saturdays and 2 and 7 p.m. on Sundays.

Water usage drops

Oberlin water usage has continued to stay under 1 million gallons a day this last week, although the city still isn't out of the drought or the heat.

People on the Oberlin water system used:

- 479,000 gallons on Monday, Aug. 11.
- 749,000 gallons on Tuesday, Aug. 12.
- 822,000 gallons last Wednesday.
- 827,000 gallons on Thursday.
- 875,000 gallons on Friday.
- 833,000 gallons on Saturday.
- 679,000 gallons on Sunday.

Mother, wife dies after Nebraska accident

A motorcycle accident at 9:58 a.m. Thursday morning in Grand Island, Neb., claimed the life of an Oberlin woman and left her husband with a broken arm.

Rose and Gerald Stritt, both 41, were on their way to the Kansas State Troopers Association motorcycle ride to the Sturgis, S.D., area, said Trooper Travis Phillips. He said the association has a ride every year. This one had already started, and the Stritts were trying to catch up.

Mrs. Stritt operated a daycare service out of her home southeast of Oberlin. She and her husband have three children, Jessica, 18; Jerred,

13; and Rachel, 6.

Capt. Pete Kortum of the Grand Island Police said the Stritts were on their 2003 Honda Goldwing, northbound on U.S. 281. Pamela G. Lindsay, 48, of Grand Island, was southbound in a 1997 Lincoln Continental in the left turn lane. Ms. Lindsay turned left at Faidley Avenue into the path of the motorcycle and the two collided.



Rose Stritt

Witnesses at the scene, said Capt. Kortum, said the light was in the process of changing.

He said both of the Stritts were wearing helmets and Ms. Lindsay had on a seat belt, but all three were taken to St. Francis Medical Center

by ambulance.

Mrs. Stritt was flown shortly after that to Bryan Lincoln General Hospital Medical Center West in Lincoln, Neb. The hospital, Capt. Kortum said, specializes in trauma cases. Trooper Stritt was later taken to the same hospital.

Trooper Phillips said Friday afternoon that Mrs. Stritt had died that morning. He said both Lt. Doug Griffiths and Capt. Kelley McGuire, who are Trooper Stritt's supervisors, had gone to Lincoln to be with him after the accident. Trooper Lonnie Whitten, who is assigned as a support trooper, also went along.

Trooper Phillips said when a trooper or a spouse of a trooper dies, each trooper in the state sends \$10 to the family and there is also a

flower fund. He said he didn't know of anything else that was being done for the family. He said he imagined at the funeral there would be some kind of memorial set up.

Capt. Kortum said the case is still under investigation. The Grand Island Police will work with the Hall County Sheriff's Office or the Nebraska State Patrol to reconstruct the accident. He said he doesn't know how long the investigation will take.

The motorcycle received an estimated \$14,000 damage and the Lincoln \$8,000.

Capt. Kortum said that U.S. 281 has had quite a few accidents if you look at the raw numbers, but it is heavily traveled and the intersections are busy.

(See ACCIDENT on Page 8A)

School rooms 'smart'

Grant paying for technology

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
Fourth and fifth graders returning to Oberlin Elementary School will have new "technology rich" classrooms from grant money the school won last year.

Principal Duane Dorshorst said the school received the Enhancing Education Through Technology grant from the state Department of Education last January after co-writing a grant with the Abilene School District.

Each school received about \$80,000 worth of equipment and training.

He said they were able to write into the grant what they wanted to use the money for in the classrooms.

Mr. Dorshorst said the whole thing started when the curriculum coordinator in Abilene called and asked if the Oberlin school was interested. The coordinator there, Dennis Gay, formerly taught math and computers in the high school here.

Part of the grant specifications was that schools have partners. Mr. Dorshorst said he and Mr. Gay talked about what they wanted from the grant.

There were some basic stipulations on what the money could be used for. There had to be one laptop computer for every two kids in the classroom, for instance, or each student would get a hand held computer.

Oberlin opted for a laptop for every two students in both the fourth and fifth grades. There is two classrooms with the technology, but all of the students will use the rooms.

The fourth grade will focus on math and the fifth grade will focus on reading, he said. Students can use the rooms to work on other areas, too.

The grant money was only for fourth and fifth graders because those are the grades the state gives assessment tests.

Mr. Dorshorst said Oberlin and Abilene also teamed up with Solomon and Osawatomie to hire a coordinator/trainer who will travel among the four schools. He said the other two schools received the grants, too, but decided to do the hand helds instead of the laptops.

There were stipulations on certain software to use, he said.

With the grant money, the school bought "smart boards" which is a different kind of chalk board and a piece of equipment so students can write on individual boards on their desks and it will show up on the blackboard.

Even though some of the equipment is in, he said, it will take the teachers a while to learn the best way to incorporate the equipment into learning for the students.

It isn't something that will start right away.

Mr. Dorshorst said since it is a grant, the school won't have to pay any of the money back.

He said he doesn't know if the school can get another one in the future, but what he would like to see happen is to move into the sixth grade and then eventually do every room this way.

Technology is expensive, but it is important for students. It helps students learn faster and better, said Mr. Dorshorst.

Teachers who will be in the technology-rich rooms are Sherri Ruff for the fourth grade and Jeri Buchholz for the fifth grade.

* School project on hold

(Continued from Page 1A)
up some of the things in the buildings.

The committee plans to spend the money wisely and efficiently and spend it to the best of the community's ability, he said, adding that nothing had to be decided that night.

Board Member Dewayne Jackson asked if any of the projects, like the windows, could be done without messing up anything else? Does everything have to be done at the same time?

Dr. Olson said that the windows could be done, but to do all of them would cost around \$800,000.

Board Member Barb Olson said the projects would have to be things the board can complete. She said she doesn't want to start doing things piece by piece and then having to redo them.

Dr. Olson said he is 98 percent sure that with the plan they have now, nothing would have to be redone.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said he didn't think it was a decision that the board needed to make at the meeting. With the staff the district has now, the general fund and supplemental fund will be used for salaries. The capital outlay will have to be used to fix anything that breaks.

"We are going to have a tough time getting to the end of this year," said Mr. Glodt.

The capital outlay was earmarked by previous administration not just for fix ups but to work on buildings. Mrs. Olson said the board intended to do that but didn't know the budget would be this tight.

The board basically agreed that the survey and bond issue should be put on hold.

County finishes spraying

The Decatur County noxious weed department will finish up spraying for puncture vine this week and then will start spraying to kill trees in roadside ditches.

Noxious Weed Director Gaylen Huntley said a few townships have asked for help with tree control. The county will be spraying trees in the ditches and rights-of-way.

Next year, said Mr. Huntley, he would like to have a seminar to help stockmen manage weeds in their pasture. The last couple of years, he said, the pastures have been beaten up by the drought. Invasive weeds are moving in. There are some chemicals that can be used for things like cheat grass, he said.

Mr. Huntley said that it would be good to help farmers reclaim their pasture and good public relations for the department.

He said there are new requirements for chemical application licenses now. For each license, he said, he needs eight hours of classes. Mr. Huntley said he has three licenses.

This fall, he said, he will probably start looking for a roadside spraying truck again and see what can be found.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Held a 10-minute closed session for non-elected personnel. There was no action taken.



THURSDAY MORNING, Sgt. David Vitera (right) and Officer Doug Whiles (left) of the Grand Island (Neb.) Police Department received a call that there had been an accident between a car and a motorcycle at the intersection of Faidley Avenue and U.S. 281. The officers got some help that morning from Hall County Sheriff's Deputy Clark Finecy (center).

— Grand Island Independent photo by Gerik Parmele

* Accident takes woman's life

(Continued from Page 1A)

Grand Island Independent Publisher Robb Krecklow said that intersection is considered one of the most dangerous in town.

Mrs. Stritt was born on Oct. 5, 1961, the daughter of Donald Ray and Charlotte Rose (Sayer) Myers, at St. Francis. She attended school at Benkelman, Neb., and graduated from high school in Wauneta, Neb., in 1980. She graduated from Midland Lutheran College in 1984.

She married Trooper Stritt on May 19, 1984, at St. Catherine's Catholic Church in Indianola, Neb.

Her family said she loved spending time with family, enjoyed scrapbooking and baking and was a professional seamstress. She shared her love with many children through her "Buttons and Bows Daycare." She received the 2001 Smart Start Award of Excellence for early childhood professionals.

Mrs. Stritt was a member of St. Patrick's Catholic Church of McCook and the GWTA Chapter V Republican River Riders.

Survivors also include her parents, who now live in Hamlet, Neb.; her mother-in-law, Mary Ann Stritt, Indianola; two brothers, Charles and Kathy Myers, Peyton, Colo., and Virgil and Joanie Myers, Tribune; two brothers-in-law, Pat and Ivy Stritt, Bartley, Neb.; and Dale Stritt, Indianola; five sisters-in-law, Joan Quella, York, Neb.; Janice and Phil Bamesberger, Indianola; Donna and Ted Kraszewski, Torrence, Calif.; Mary and Lloyd Ogorzolka, Indianola; and Gloria and Barry Kohl, McCook.

She was preceded in death by her maternal grandparents, Charles Simon Sayer and Rose (Singley) Sayer Lindsey and paternal grandparents, Arch D. Myers and Pauline Freda (Pfister) Myers.

Mass of Christian Burial was to be held Tuesday morning, at the church in McCook with Father Gary Brethour and Father Donald Zimmerman officiating. Burial was to be in the Oberlin Cemetery.

A scholarship fund has been es-

tablished for her children as a memorial. Contributions may be sent to Carpenter-Breland Funeral Home, 305 West C, McCook, Neb., 69001.

* County tax sale to be held soon

(Continued from Page 1A)
owner then has the right to production to minerals underground, typically oil.

Back in the 1930s, said Mr. Hirsch, it wasn't uncommon to sell the mineral rights because people needed the money. Speculators would buy the rights. Others sold the land and kept the minerals. It just seems some people get tired of paying taxes on mineral rights, he said, especially when there is no oil.

With minerals, it means the county has to send out tax state-

ments for \$.20 to \$.30. It costs a lot for the county to have to file mineral properties.

The taxes are set for the potential value of minerals on the property. Many are under a couple of dollars each year.

About seven or eight years ago, said Mr. Hirsch, the county tried to get a state representative to get a bill passed to say that the county doesn't have to send out tax statements for anything under \$5, but nothing was ever filed. Nothing has come of it since then, he said.

Police give tickets in several accidents

The Oberlin Police Department has given three tickets for inattentive driving in the last few weeks.

The first one was Friday, July 25, when Marty Anderson, 29, from Colby was driving a 2001 Chevy Silverado, pulling a long trailer. He tried to pull into an alley near the 600 block of East Maple and hit a parked 1979 Chevy Monte Carlo belonging to Lacey Woodard of Oberlin.

There was damage to the Monte Carlo on the driver side's right front fender, officers said.

The second was given to Michael J. Battin, 33, of Bogue. He was driving a 2002 Ford pickup east on U.S.

36 when he missed his turn to North Wilson and hit a stop sign, breaking the post.

The third was for an accident at 10:20 a.m. last Wednesday when Myrtle Warner, 96, of Oberlin was driving a 1994 Buick Skylark on South Elk.

Mrs. Warner said she went to adjust her seat and hit the side of a parked 1999 Chevy belonging to Dean and Ardith Louderback of rural Oberlin.

There was damage to Ms. Warner's passenger side and to the Louderbacks' driver's side and front fender.

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