

* Storms a welcome sight to students, workers

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 decided to call school off for the day. Snow may mean a day off for the students, but for the county road and bridge crew, it means it's time to get to work.
 Supervisor Tim Stallman said the crew got out Tuesday evening and cleared the streets to the hospital and the airport runways. Then last Wednesday, they went out to get all of the roads cleaned up.

It seemed the further south they got, the deeper the snow was, he said. Up in the northwest was the lightest. The rest of the county seemed fairly even.
 There were some drifts, but most of them were only a foot to foot and a half.
 For the storm this week, which started Monday morning, he said that if they didn't get any more snow than had fallen by 4 p.m., the crew most likely wouldn't have to clean

any of the roads.
 Monday morning, the whole area was under a blizzard warning. A little after 10 a.m., snow started blowing, though the temperature was about 40 degrees. It was a wet, slushy snow which around lunch time started to cover the lawns and roads in town.
 Although some area schools decided to close early, the Oberlin District has a board policy, said Mr. Glodt, that once the students

are in school, they stay in school.
 In inclement weather, the parents are welcome to sign their kids out and pick them up, said Mr. Glodt, but classes are not called early.
 Mr. Glodt said the decision has to be made on days like that if the buses will run. At enrollment time, all students who live on a bus route have to provide a back up address of a place to stay in town just in case.

On Monday afternoon, the buses ran, so those addresses didn't have to be used.
 The district did decide to cancel a concert at Oberlin Elementary School set for Monday night. It was rescheduled for 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the school.
 The junior high basketball team was to have started play in the Northwest Kansas League tournament, which also was postponed.

Wrapping for money



AT SUNFLOWER CINEMA on Sunday, Anthony Marshall and his mother Debbie wrapped Christmas presents at a fund raiser for the Decatur Community High School band. The group will be at the theater again Sunday before the 2 p.m. movie, during the movie and after.
 — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

* Money may be short to end school district year

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 sions, but did discuss how they will get through the end of the year and how much the district will be short next year.

The figures don't include possible increases for heating, electricity and some other operating costs. He said there could be additional savings from food service, reducing the use of substitutes, limiting field trips and reducing overtime that haven't been included in the numbers.

The teachers, said Mr. Glodt, have done more than anyone could have imagined to help with the budget, agreeing to changes from cutting supplies to a cutback in health insurance.

By February, he said, the district will have to have a plan on what to do if it won't have enough money to get to the end of the year. Mr. Glodt said he can't see how they can cut anything else, except classified staff.

No decisions were made at the meeting on what the plan will be.
 Mr. Glodt walked the board, principals and eight teachers in the audience through how state funding for the budget works.

He said for each "student" in the weighted count, the district receives \$3,863 from the state. Each full-time student counts as one and each kindergartner counts as a half. Then the enrollment is adjusted for students who are counted as "at risk" — basically, those receiving free and reduced-price lunches — those taking vocational agriculture students, those riding a bus to school, and other factors.

The district has been using a

three-year average for enrollment, he said. This year, that figures out to 836.5 students, which means the state pays \$3,231,400.

Last year, that number was 892.4, meaning the state paid \$3,447,341.

The projected number for next year is 793, which would be a drop of 43.5 and means the state would pay only \$3,063,359. That would mean a decrease in the budget of \$168,041.

Mr. Glodt said some of the cuts that were made this year are things that will need to be reinstated. Those include:

- The curriculum council, \$9,000.
- Five days of school, \$15,000.
- An increase in insurance costs, \$50,000.
- Improve insurance benefits, \$50,000.
- Build demand transfers reserve, \$50,000.
- Increase in supplies and equipment, \$6,000.
- Decrease in local option budget funds, \$30,433.

The items reinstated and the decrease in the local option budget add up to \$378,474 which is needed in the general fund to cover the costs.

The reason there is a cut in the local option budget, he said, although voters approved an increase this year, is because there will be a decrease in the budget. The local option budget is limited to 18.11 percent of the total of the general fund, so if enrollment drops and the overall budget goes down, the local share goes down as well.

The board could ask for the local option budget to be increased to 25 percent, said Mr. Glodt, and that

would bring in around \$180,000, but if the state takes a percentage of the increase it would only bring in around \$150,000.

Mr. Glodt said the way he sees it, the minimum that needs to be cut is \$378,474. The average certified employee costs the district \$42,000 a year. That is equivalent to nine teachers.

Mr. Glodt said if the district could increase the local option budget, the number of certified employees to be cut would be the equivalent of five teachers.

The rearranging of programs and services in the district could lower the number of certified staff members who could be without a job, said Mr. Glodt.

"All cuts will have a detrimental effect on our district and our students," said Mr. Glodt.

The people the board will have to make decisions about are good teachers and they are doing a good job, he said. This is different than getting rid of a bad teacher who isn't doing their job. That is easy, because the decision is the best thing for kids, he said, but this isn't going to be good for kids.

Board member Dewayne Jackson said he was curious about what the board is really looking at, since the \$378,000 number didn't have some fixed costs in it. Mr. Glodt said he thought the \$378,000 is the minimum. There is no way to tell how much some costs might go up, like heating.

The board didn't make any decisions at the meeting Monday afternoon. Mr. Glodt said he would give the financial presentation to the staff Friday morning at the high school.

The board agreed to have a special meeting at 2 p.m. Thursday, which will be held in closed session. The meeting will include a closed session for non-elected personnel to discuss the superintendent's evaluation. There will also be a closed session for non-elected personnel to discuss the certified staff who possibly will receive a reduction in force letter.

The board said it will not make any decisions about cuts until the next regular meeting at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 12.

* Plans for new sewer plant sent to state agency

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 of water treatment plant the city decides to put in. He estimated around 70,000 to 100,000 gallons a day.

Dr. Anderson asked if there are more things that have to be treated in the water if there will be more water going to the sewer plant each day.

Another engineer, Chris Reed, said it depends on what kind of plant the city chooses, whether it is ion exchange or reverse osmosis.

If the city goes with a smaller plant, it may already be at capacity, said Dr. Anderson.

The city runs about 225,000 gallons a day through the current sewer plant. The smaller plant which the council is looking at is a 300,000 gallon a day, and with the water treatment added in, that could be maximum use.

Councilman Stan McEvoy said he asked City Attorney Steve Hirsch to check into what would happen if the city decided not to do anything with the plant.

Mr. Hirsch said the fines can range from \$25 to \$10,000 a day under state law. He said the process is administrative, with no penalties to the members of the council.

Councilman Patrick Pomeroy said he had run some figures about a 40-year financing plan through the U.S. Department of Agriculture on a 450,000-gallon-a-day plant. The

city also could borrow from a state revolving loan fund for 20 years. The engineers estimate the lifespan of the plant at 20 years or more.

Mr. Pomeroy said the big selling point for him on the 40-year loan is that on a 20-year note, the city would have to pay \$195,820 a year in principal and interest while on the 40-year note the city would pay \$124,000 a year.

That is a difference of nearly \$72,000, he noted.

Mr. Pomeroy said there are people in Oberlin who simply can't afford the extra \$9 a month which the more expensive plan would require. He said he really believes that the 40-year plan will be better for the people of Oberlin.

Mayor Ken Shobe said another thing to consider is that the city will more than likely have to build a water treatment plant and that will be another cost for the users. Mr. Pomeroy said the city could pay off the sewer plan earlier than 40 years with no penalty.

Mayor Shobe said he didn't think that it was wise, prudent or healthy for the city to do nothing.

Personally, he said, he was for the smaller plant with a 20 year loan, but now he said he sees the importance of the 450,000-gallon-a-day plant.

Judy Scott, a Gateway employee, asked what the cost difference between the larger and smaller plant

would be and what the taxpayers would see on their bill.

Mayor Shobe said the average residential bill now is \$13.50. With the federal loan, he said, the average bill will be \$26 on both plant sizes. That is double the average now.

With the state loan, the 450,000 gallon plant will produce an average bill of \$35 and the 300,000-gallon plant will average of \$31.

There will be users above and below the average, the mayor pointed out.

Kent Ploussard, a Gateway employee, asked if everyone's bill will go up the same percentage. Mayor Shobe said that is what will happen in the ideal situation.

The base rate is \$9.15 a month today, he said, which is 40 percent less than the average now.

Mr. Ploussard asked if the city went with the smaller plant, what happens if demand is over the 300,000 gallons a day. Mr. Monaco said the plant would be less efficient.

At the current rate, asked Mr. Ploussard, if the city goes with a 300,000 gallon plant, will that be

limiting the city on the water treatment?

Mr. Miller said there isn't a simple answer for that. Mr. Monaco said he thought it would be a problem to run the plant at peak all the time.

Foreman Dan Castle said the city probably runs a 225,000 gallon average on the sewer plant now, and that is only 75,000 gallon away from the peak.

That is a fine line, said Mr. Miller. It may need to be a 350,000-gallon-a-day plant.

The 450,000-gallon-a-day plant is almost double what the city uses now, said Mr. Ploussard. He said he hates to see the city spend money on something that isn't needed.

Roxie Pomeroy, who was in the audience, said a lot of people are living on Social Security and can't afford the extra \$9 for the difference in the 20- and 40-year plans. The city needs to do something the community can afford, she said, because wages in this town are not going to go up to pay that extra \$9.

Mayor Shobe said that extra \$9 could cover the increase for the wa-

ter treatment plant.

The council also talked about becoming eligible for a state/federal Community Block Development Grant, which requires an income survey and a finding that the city has many low-to-moderate-income residents.

The council didn't decide on the size of the plant or the money source, but did approve the plans being sent to the state for approval.

HELP WANTED

We are looking for a person to be a Public Relations Clerk for Decatur Health Systems.

The following requirements for knowledge, skills and abilities are needed. Requires a high school diploma or equivalent too; experience in working with different computer programs and proficiency in typing.

This person will be responsible for the following functions: the DHS website, creative posters, notices and information packets, the video projector presentations, public relation events, patient satisfaction surveys, typing and updating policies and procedures.

This is a 36-hour position. Please pick up an application at Decatur Health Systems, or call Human Resources at 785-475-2208 with any questions.

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