

Grant would lower cost of sewer plant

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The Oberlin City Council talked with a representative from Northwest Kansas Planning and Development about the possibility of getting a grant for a waste water treatment plant.

Development spokeswoman Amy Griffey said with the 2000 census Oberlin does not automatically qualify for a grant because it doesn't appear that there are enough low to moderate income people in town. That means, she said, that the city will have to do a door-to-door survey in the target area, which is all the waste water treatment plant users.

Mayor Ken Shobe asked if the survey results could be used for more than one pur-

City roundup

At the meeting Thursday night the Oberlin City Council:

- Talked with a representative from Northwest Kansas Planning and Development to learn about a door-to-door survey the city is looking into to get grant money to help pay for the waste water treatment plant. Story at left.

- Heard from one person during the public hearing and public meeting held so the city can get a loan for the waste water treatment plant. Story on Page 3.

- Talked with the city foreman about a new or newer air compressor. Story to come.

The only way to use the results for more than one grant is for the city to get creative and tie two projects together, she said. It's a lot of work, although there are cities that have done it.

The key to a successful survey, she said, is to make sure that everyone understands that it is not asking exactly what a person or a household makes. It will ask if the person or household is above or below a certain amount. The other thing people need to keep in mind is if the city gets the grant it will lower the user rates.

Who actually does the survey? asked Mayor Shobe.

Some communities have the council go door-to-door, others hire civic groups and

some hire professionals. She said her group can administer the survey. The other one is the Docking Institute out of Hays.

The survey can be done through a mailing but if not enough are returned then it will have to be done door-to-door. The surveys cannot be done by phone.

The city has to get an 80 percent response, she said.

Ms. Griffey said people need to know what is going on. Her office can help, she said.

The most the city could get in grant money is \$400,000.

If the city applies in September or October, it will 2005 before they find out if they (See SUREY on Page 12)

County, hospital set costs

Ambulance transfers decided

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Decatur County commissioners and representatives from Decatur Health Systems reached an agreement on what the hospital will pay for ambulance transfers of Medicare patients at the meeting last Tuesday morning.

Hospital Administrator Lynn Doeden and Human Resource Director and Business Office Manager Amanda Farr met with the commissioners and Ambulance Director Patrick Pomeroy.

Mrs. Doeden said the hospital received a bill recently for nine months of ambulance runs and it was astronomical. She said she found out other hospitals in the area are getting charged about \$250 a day and then paying mileage.

At a critical care hospital, she said, Medicare will only pay \$800 a day for each patient.

If the hospital gets billed \$1,000 for an ambulance run she said, that puts the hospital in the hole for that day. (See AMBULANCE on Page 12)

Chamber banquet planned

The annual Oberlin-Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce banquet will be held at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway.

As of a week out the Chamber had 37 reservations for the event.

The Gateway staff will be serving a steak dinner for \$15 a head for the banquet. Reservations for the dinner were due on Friday, but the money will be taken at the door.

Randall M. Thies, a cultural resource specialist and archeologist with the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka, will be the speaker.

Mr. Thies will talk about grave-stones. He has served as a research assistant and field supervisor for archeological digs in the Midwest since 1974. He was the project archeologist for the Kansas Unmarked Burial Sites Preservation Board.

He has also helped identify and transfer burial remains to Kansas Indian tribes.

Mr. Thies earned a bachelor of arts in sociology and anthropology from Washburn University in Topeka and a masters from Iowa State University. He taught archeology at both Emporia State University and Washburn.

Mr. Thies joined the Kansas Humanities Council Speakers Bureau in 2000 and is a speaker for the state historical society.

The Chamber will also be honoring area people.

Those attending will be voting for new board members. There are six positions open. So far there are three candidates for the positions: funeral director Derek Riner, Sappa Valley Youth Ranch Director Sue Glodt and city employee Judy Scott.

The DCHS Singers will be performing.



NEWLY RETIRED ADMINISTRATOR Joyce Ploussard (above) modeled a hat she was presented during festivities at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center on Thursday. "The Bag Lady", aka LaVern Burtis, (below) brought along "her" shopping cart full of goodies for the party. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

Center chief retires

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Staff, residents, friends, family and representatives of the Good Samaritan Society celebrated 25 years of a woman's work Thursday afternoon at the Decatur Good Samaritan Center.

The common room at the center was full of people who have been a part of Administrator Joyce Ploussard's life to wish her a happy retirement as she turned in her keys.

The group also got to participate in welcoming new Administrator Janice Shobe, who is also the administrator at Atwood's Good Samaritan Center.

A special visitor, the bag lady, helped start the afternoon with a shopping cart full of gifts for Mrs. Ploussard.

Center Maintenance Supervisor LaVern Burtis, dressed in a night shirt, sweats, sweater, slippers and bright red lipstick, pushed the cart in.

Out of it he pulled a side table, tissues, bug spray, animal crackers, a Kansas City Chiefs cup, the ingredients for S'mores, suntan lotion and reading material for the outhouse at Mrs. Ploussard's cabin.

Regional Director Randy Fitzgerald greeted the audience. He said he was there to officially install the new administrator, but first he had some business to take care of. Mr. Fitzgerald said that morning Ms. Ploussard had said about four times "what are (See FRIENDS on Page 12)



Sports pull fans to town

Tourneys set for three weeks

Red Devil fans should get ready for three action-packed weekends in a row with two wrestling and one basketball tournament rounding out the month at the high school.

It all kicks off at 10 a.m. Saturday with the Oberlin Invitational Wrestling Tournament.

Athletic Director Randy Olson said this is a fun tournament and will have a little different twist this year. Schools from Kearney and Sublette will return to the tournament, he said. There will also be wrestlers from Stockton, Oakley, Osborne, Hill City, Quinter and Yuma.

New this year will be wrestlers from Overland High School at Aurora, Colo.

Mr. Olson said he thinks there will be 18 to 22 athletes ranked in the top six in their respective weight classes at the tournament wrestling against each other.

The following week will kick off (See SPORTING on Page 12)

Sheriff requests deputy

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

With a shortage in the Decatur County Sheriff's Office, department heads asked the commissioners Tuesday morning if a shared employee between the sheriff's office and ambulance department could go full time with the law enforcement office.

Undersheriff Randy McHugh has been called back to active duty for the Army National Guard, said Sheriff Ken Badsky. That will leave just him and part-time Deputy Michael French.

Sheriff Badsky said Undersheriff McHugh will be going to Baghdad.

He said he has talked with Deputy French who is interested in going full time and staying on as a volunteer with the ambulance.

Deputy French was hired in October to work part time in both offices. Sheriff Badsky said Deputy French would become the undersheriff.

Ambulance Director Patrick Pomeroy said that would save his department about \$12,000 a year. Mr. Pomeroy has been asking the commissioners if he could hire a full-time person because of the shortage of volunteers on the Oberlin crew.

The commissioners had asked him to wait until after the new year.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said he thought they should wait until they are able to talk it over with Commissioner Doyle Brown, who was unable to make it to the meeting.

Commissioner Patricia Glenn asked Mr. Pomeroy how long he thinks it will take to hire a full-time person. Mr. Pomeroy said he didn't think that it would take very long.

Sheriff Badsky said he thought it would take him five to six months to find a new person.

Commissioner Brown should be back for the next meeting, said County Clerk Marilyn Horn.



INTRODUCING NEW Good Samaritan Administrator Janice Shobe, Randy Fitzgerald of the Good Samaritan Society was on hand for the changing of the guard.
— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

* Sporting events bring athletes, parents to town

(Continued from Page 1A)

the Oberlin Invitational Basketball Tournament.

The first game will be Tuesday at the high school, but Oberlin won't actually play its first game until Thursday, Jan. 22.

Mr. Olson said that is because the Red Devils first games are against Resurrection Christian School, which is a private school at Loveland, Colo.

The Loveland players will play here in Oberlin Thursday night against the boys and girls and then shadow the same students on Friday, Jan. 23, in school.

Mr. Olson said the tournament is about "getting out of the frying pan and into the fire."

On the boys side of play there is the Cambridge team who is ranked third in Nebraska and Quinter who is third in Kansas.

On the girls side there is Dundy County who is third in Nebraska and Hoxie who has a strong team and is ranked in the top 10 in Kansas.

"This will be a pretty competitive tournament," said Mr. Olson.

The final consolation games will start at 3:30 p.m. on Friday.

At 2:30 p.m. on Saturday things will kick off again. Then at 5:30 p.m. it will be the girls final game and at 7:30 p.m. the boys final round will be held.

The following weekend on Saturday, Jan. 31, the school will host the Northwest Kansas League Wrestling Tournament.

"This is probably the hottest eight-team tournament in the state," said Mr. Olson.

Starting time is 9:30 a.m., he said, with a packed day of ranked schools.

In Class 4A Goodland is ranked third and Colby is ranked seventh. In Classes 3-2-1A Hoxie is ranked first; Oberlin, fourth; St. Francis, fifth; Oakley, sixth; and Atwood, ninth.

There are an even 30 athletes, who are ranked among the top five in the state, said Mr. Olson. It should make for a real competitive tournament.

All the tournaments at the high school are open to the public.

Mr. Olson said all the weekends will bring in people from out of town, some of whom will stay the night.

For this weekend tickets to the tournament are \$6 adults and \$4 students for all day. For the second round tickets are \$4 adults and \$3 students.

Decatur Community High School season passes will be recognized.

* Friends show up for retirement gala

(Continued from Page 1A)

you going to do; fire me?"

"Well Joyce," he said, "you're fired!"

With Commissioners Patricia Glenn and Ralph Unger in attendance he read through the induction and Mrs. Shobe was officially named the new administrator.

She received a standing ovation.

Mr. Fitzgerald introduced administrators from across the area, who had come up for the festivities and lunch. He then shared several letters from past bosses in the society.

"Out of my 28 administrators, Joyce is the only one who sends me letters," said Mr. Fitzgerald, "everyone else sends e-mails. So, out of you other administrators, someone needs to drop me a letter."

The staff passed the baton to Mrs. Shobe with a giant bar of chocolate and six bottles of Pepsi.

Kent Ploussard, Ms. Ploussard's son, introduced the family. He and his son Aaron presented her with gifts including a fishing pole, hat, pipe and fishing net.

He said the fishing pole is because for the last 47 years his mother has been saying she hasn't had time to fish.

"One more thing," said Mr. Ploussard, "I want to whisper to you that we are all witnesses that Randy fired you and you can draw unemployment."

The staff presented Ms. Ploussard with a limestone Bronco rock, at which time she said she was speechless.

* Ambulance costs cause hospital pain

(Continued from Page 1A)

She said she agreed with Mr. Pomeroy on certain charges for runs and an agreement was drafted.

When she got the agreement, she said, the charges weren't the same.

Mrs. Doeden said she wants to see the ambulance get paid, but she doesn't want to see the hospital doors close either.

Mr. Pomeroy said it costs around \$1,000 to transfer a patient to Kearney, Neb. Mrs. Doeden said she is willing to go double what they agreed on.

With secondary insurance, doesn't Medicare forward what isn't paid? Ms. Farr said the hospital bills the secondary insurance unless it is Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

Mrs. Doeden said when they talked, they agreed to a charge of \$250.19 for one way to McCook. Can't the 19 cents be knocked off? she asked.

She also asked what insurance companies pay.

Mr. Pomeroy said probably the most the ambulance department gets out of any insurance company is 70 percent of the bill.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch said he thought they should do a flat rate. Commissioner Ralph Unger said they should set up a fee chart.

Mrs. Doeden said they did that, but she wants to see what the ambulance department is getting from commercial insurance.

Mr. Unger said the ambulance

County roundup

At the meeting Tuesday morning the Decatur County commissioners:

- Talked about possibly moving a deputy to undersheriff while the current one is away. Story on Page 1.
- Approved up to \$5,000 for the road and bridge supervisor on a hardware auction. Story on Page 3.
- Heard that the ambulance director can train emergency medical technicians. Story on Page 3.
- Agreed on prices for Decatur Health Systems to pay for ambulance Medicare inpatient ambulance trips. Story on Page 1.

department still needs to bill the hospital the full amount, but then agree that the hospital would only pay the set fee.

The agreement was that the fees would be \$250 to McCook and Norton, \$500 to North Platte and \$650 to Kearney and Hays, one way.

The group agreed with the numbers. Mr. Hirsch will revise the contract.

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* Survey would be needed for city to get grant

(Continued from Page 1A)

get the grant. With that in mind, the city shouldn't start building.

Ms. Griffey said it is important to work with engineers and get the design but that would not be paid for out of the grant money.

She said it is more likely for the city to get the grant if all their ducks are in a row for the project.

Thaniel Monaco, who works for project engineers Miller and Associates, said that the city would need an extension for the project, but thought it would be a justifiable reason.

Ms. Griffey said if the city wants to wait on the surveys until the end of February or beginning of March the income limits normally go up.

The city has to show an 80 percent response with 51 percent of those being in the low to moderate income brackets

Telethon to honor troops

The Seeds of Hope Telethon committee has decided to try something new with the annual telethon this year and honor some of the county's men and women in the armed forces.

The committee would like to be able to interview these men and women or a family member.

Anyone wanting to participate should contact Kimberly Brandt at 475-2206 or 475-3510.

Ms. Brandt asks the family members to be interviewed to bring a picture to show on the air.

The telethon will start at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 28, at The Gateway and will run until 10 p.m. It will be aired on local access channel 7.