

Board cuts teachers, staff jobs

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The Oberlin School Board, in a marathon meeting that lasted well after midnight, voted early Tuesday not to rehire five teachers and to reduce five positions to half time for the next school year.

When the meeting opened at 7:30 p.m., every seat in the room at the Oberlin School District office was taken, but by decision time, close to 1 a.m., only five people remained in the audience.

Before making the decision, the board

met for 20 minutes behind closed doors for nonelected personnel without Principals Duane Dorshorst and Charles Haag. They called the principals back in and went into closed session for a hour, two 30-minute sessions, a 20-minute session and a five-minute session, a total of 2 hours, 45 minutes behind closed doors.

The meeting reconvened and the board took a five-minute break before returning to closed session for nonelected personnel for another 50 minutes, one 30-minute ses-

sion and two 10-minute sessions. Before closing the doors, a member of the board grabbed a large dry-erase board.

The board read resolutions to issue letters of intent to the teachers. As part of the cuts, members agreed to turn over special education programs to the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center. That meant all the teachers in the department would be cut. Three of them will have a job next year in the district through the service center if they want one, said Superintendent Kelly Glodt.

After returning to open session, the board approved issuing letters of intent to not re-new contracts next year to:

- Nealee Johnston, who teaches physical education at the high school and coaches junior high teams.
- Ashanna Richards, librarian at the grade school.
- Rhonda Barth, Mardi Lohofener, and Diana Steinmetz, who teach special education.

The board approved letters to offer half-

time for contracts next year for:

- Nita Lavielle, counselor at the high school.
- Sheila Jansonius, counselor at the grade school.
- Ruth Wolfram, school nurse.
- Tina Williams and Elaine Marcuson, who teach at Sappa Valley Youth Ranch.

The board already has received the resignation of one teacher and a request from another to go to half time, so the cuts totaled (See BOARD on Page 10A)

Sewer rates to go up

Base cost to increase \$5

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
Minimum sewer rates for Oberlin City users will jump \$5 on April bills, the City Council learned at its meeting Thursday night.

The base rate, now \$9.50, will go up to \$14.50.

Small users will get some relief, though, because the minimum usage was cut from 500 cubic feet to 300 cubic feet. The idea was to help out the 30 percent of the users who use under 500 cubic feet, council members said. Those people will be paying for only the 300 cubic feet they use instead of the minimum usage being 200 cubic feet more.

Everyone will pay \$14.50 a month for sewer service. If they use over 300 cubic feet of water, based on winter averages, they will pay an additional \$2.23 per 100 cubic feet.

The council has been discussing the increase as a way to save up money to rebuild the treatment plan. Depending on which loan the city will ask for, rates need to go to \$26 or \$31 on average.

The council found that about 30 percent of users pay the minimum.

The council discussed taking the minimum from 500 cubic feet to 300 cubic feet. Mayor Ken Shobe said the City Attorney Steve Hirsch pointed out if the minimum drops, then those who use 500 cubic feet (See SEWER on Page 10A)

Cops disagree on moves

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
A dispute about whose responsibility it is to transport juveniles and people at the jail to other counties brought the Decatur County sheriff and undersheriff to the Oberlin City Council meeting Thursday night.

The dispute started when Police Chief Wade Lockhart asked for a cage for at least one of the police vehicles for transports. Chief Wade Lockhart said the department recently had to take a boy from Sappa Valley Youth Ranch to the lockup in WaKeeney. He said he checked with the city's insurance provider, and they told him there have been lawsuits about officers injured during transports. The insurance agent suggested getting a cage in the vehicles to protect the officers.

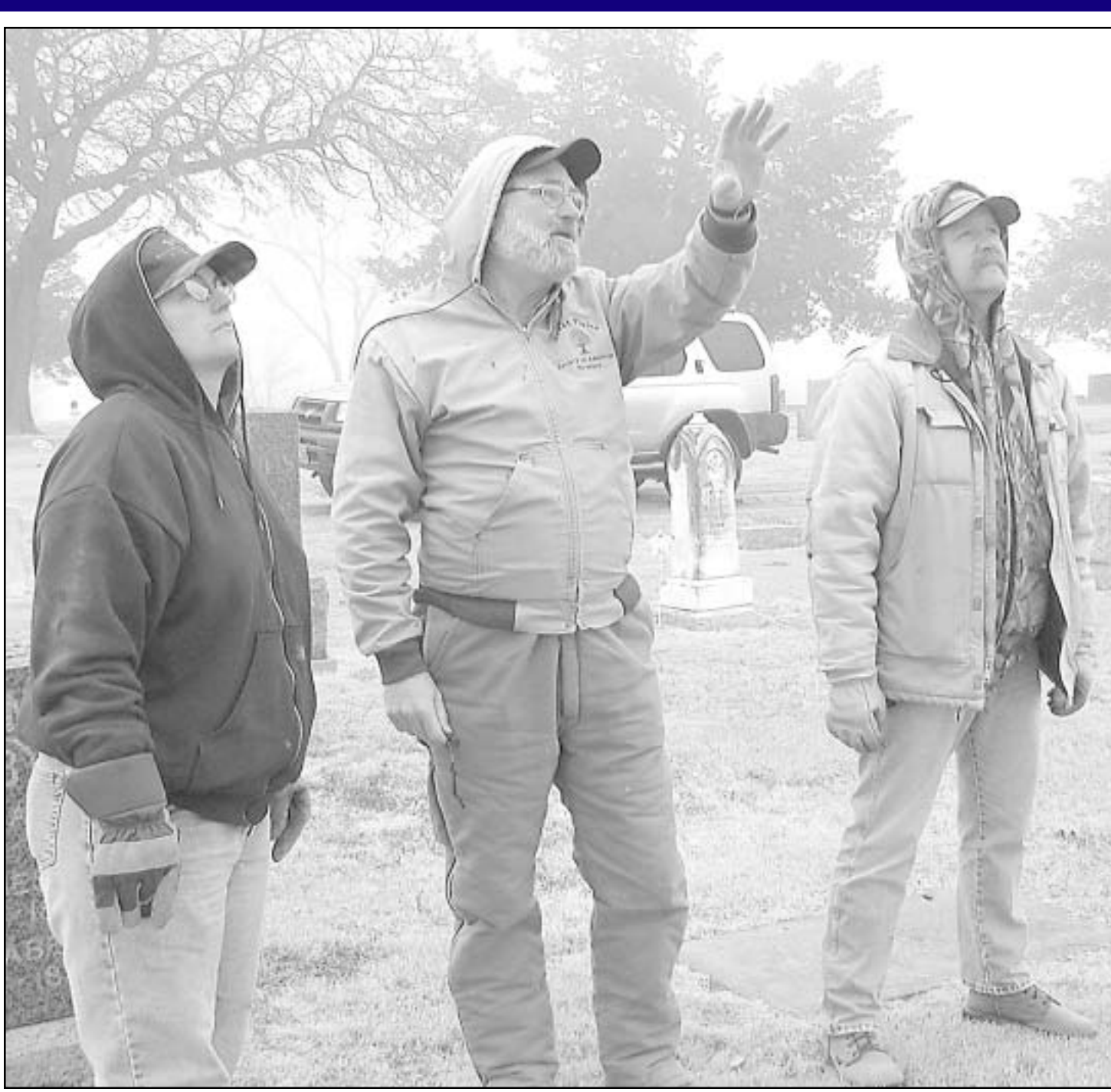
The question came up as to why the city police hauled the juvenile when it is the sheriff's job.

After a discussion that pointed fingers at the sheriff's office, the county and Kelley Youth Services, Sheriff Ken Badsy showed up at the meeting to explain what had happened.

Since the meeting, the commissioners have invited the city administrator, council, police chief and sheriff to meet at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 16, at the courthouse.

Councilman Jay Anderson asked if Kelley, which runs the youth ranch for the city, picks up their juveniles. Chief Lockhart said if they commit a crime here, then officers here deal with them.

Chief Lockhart said before taking the youth to WaKeeney, he called (See POLICE on Page 10A)



CHECKING OUT THE TREES in the cemetery, James Strine, (center) district forester with the Kansas Forest Service, discussed which trees would be best to replace lost or dead trees with Sexton Nan Stanley (left) and City Foreman Dan Castle.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

Cemetery trees need some replacements

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The fog was heavy, the air was chilly and a light rain was falling last Thursday morning as two city officials and an expert from Kansas State University checked out the trees at the Oberlin Cemetery.

James Strine, district forester with the Kansas Forest Service, came to town to look at trees at the cemetery and give Sexton Nan Stanley and City Foreman Dan Castle some ideas.

Ms. Stanley said there are 154 trees at the cemetery. Of those, around five could be taken out.

Ten years ago, she said, there were 212. That means in the last 10 years the cemetery has lost 58 trees that haven't been replaced and faces losing another five.

Mr. Castle talked with the City Council in February about establishing a memorial fund to replace trees. He was told the city would just need to set up a line item in the budget to start one. To make a donation for replacement of trees at the cemetery, call the city office at 475-2217.

Mr. Strine said the city needs to have a replacement plan for the

trees so when one comes out, another is set to go in. The group talked about what size of trees to put in. Mr. Strine said smaller ones, with a trunk of an inch and half or under, actually are easier to care for than the bigger ones. The bigger the trunks, he said, the longer Ms. Stanley would have to care for them.

Mr. Strine said the last three or four years of drought and hot weather have taken a toll on the trees.

The group looked at about 50 trees, including older trees that

were dead or partially dead, and some young trees that hadn't made it. Most of the problems are with the elm and ash trees that were planted some time ago in the cemetery, Mr. Strine said, but other species are having problems too.

With a harsh planting site, he said, there are a few species of trees that will do well. Two he could think of were the male thornless osage orange and the male Kentucky coffee tree. Both, he said, are hard to find. He said (See TREES on Page 10A)



MAKING A POINT, State Sen. Stan Clark (right) talked to constituents in Oberlin on Saturday. State Rep. John Faber (left) and Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline took part in the tour.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

Bonds will be paid off

Hospital may take over Wheat Ridge

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The Decatur County Hospital Board has been working with Gold Bank to refinance bonds for Wheat Ridge Terrace and take over payments, since the nonprofit organization that owns the senior apartment complex hasn't paid them.

Board President Chuck Frickey said at this time the hospital is not technically buying Wheat Ridge Terrace, but the board is working on refinancing the bonds, which are in default. He said they want to keep the apartments in local hands.

The apartment complexes south of the fairgrounds technically are owned by Decatur County because the county issued the revenue bonds, said Mr. Frickey. Although the county issued the bonds, Decatur County Retirement Housing Inc. is responsible for making the payments.

The housing group is a nonprofit organization that is responsible only for Wheat Ridge Terrace. The county, said Mr. Frickey, isn't liable for the bonds, but they had to be the issuer.

Mr. Frickey said the bonds were issued in 1999 when Wheat Ridge was built.

When the hospital board found out the bonds on the complex, which houses senior citizens who are living independently, were in default, he said, members decided to get involved because there was a possibility that the project would be foreclosed. If that happened, said Mr. Frickey, then ownership might pass outside the community.

Mr. Frickey said the board feels that Wheat Ridge is an important part of the health care system in the community and it needs to be under local control.

He said the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center manages the home, but they aren't responsible for any of the payments.

With the refinancing, he said, the (See COMPLEX on Page 10A)

Lawmakers visit with folks in Oberlin

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline accompanied State Sen. Stan Clark and Rep. John Faber to a town hall forum in Oberlin on Saturday.

The officials met with 20 people in the courtroom of the Decatur County Courthouse and talked about school finance, rural development, health care woes, farm animal identification programs and justice.

Sen. Clark said that if Medicaid expenses and state revenues continue at the present rate, they will take up the entire budget by 2020.

The state and federal government are promoting people setting up health saving accounts, he said. These would allow people to have more say in how their health-care dollars are spent. The government will provide \$1,000 per individual or \$3,000 per family in tax credits for people who set up these accounts.

He handed out sheets, which showed how much school districts have spent over the last several years

and how much each spends per pupil. He noted that the Salina district, which has "yelled the loudest" about the low-enrollment weighting formula of the school finance act, spent more per pupil last year than Oberlin. He did note that Salina is paying off a bond issue, however, while Oberlin isn't.

On rural development, he listed programs that the state has or is planning to put in place to help people stay in rural areas.

Oberlin Herald Publisher Steve Haynes noted that the state seems to be taking away jobs with the right hand faster than it offers programs with the left, noting that the Social and Rehabilitative Service office in Oberlin had just closed and the jobs sent elsewhere.

"The state is massively disinvesting in rural Kansas," he said.

Rep. Faber said that as a farmer and rancher, he opposes a proposed animal identification program that the Kansas Livestock Association is (See OFFICIALS on Page 10A)

* Board reduces payroll

(Continued from Page 1A)
about seven and a half full-time positions.

Mr. Glodt said this is the board's intent and the letters have been approved to be delivered to the staff, but the decision still could change. The district has the right to recall any staff member for the next two years, he said. There could be a change also if someone who has not been named tonight decides to resign.

Before the meeting, Mr. Glodt had said the teachers who were possibly going to be cut had already been notified. They were told that it depended on what happened at the special election for the district's local option budget last week.

A certified teacher costs the district around \$42,000. Without a yes vote, the superintendent said, that would mean an equivalent of nine teachers would have to be cut. With a yes vote, he said before the election, the district would have to cut the equivalent of five teachers.

The vote failed 613-404. Mr. Glodt said without the addition to the local option budget, the district needed to cut \$378,000. Some of the big savings, he said, were reorganizing so more teachers were at the youth ranch. The special education shift saves \$70,000. He said teacher Susan May wrote this week to request a part time position this year and teacher Tucker Woolsey had resigned.

Even after the letters of intent go out, Mr. Glodt said, there will still be a lot of reorganization. No one knows all the variables yet, he said, but there will be reassignments in the district.

Mr. Glodt said even with the decisions made at the meeting Monday night, there could be more cuts to come. Next year, the district isn't going to be totally in the clear, he said. Look at all the other schools in the area that had to make cuts like this, he said; it took them two years.

He said he can't predict whether the district will have to cut more or if they will need to bring more people back next year.

The only decisions made at the meeting were for certified staff contracts. The board still has time to make decisions on the supplemental contracts, including coaches and activity sponsors.

Staff members who will receive a letter of intent have to get it in writing by May 1. Each teacher has the right to request a hearing.

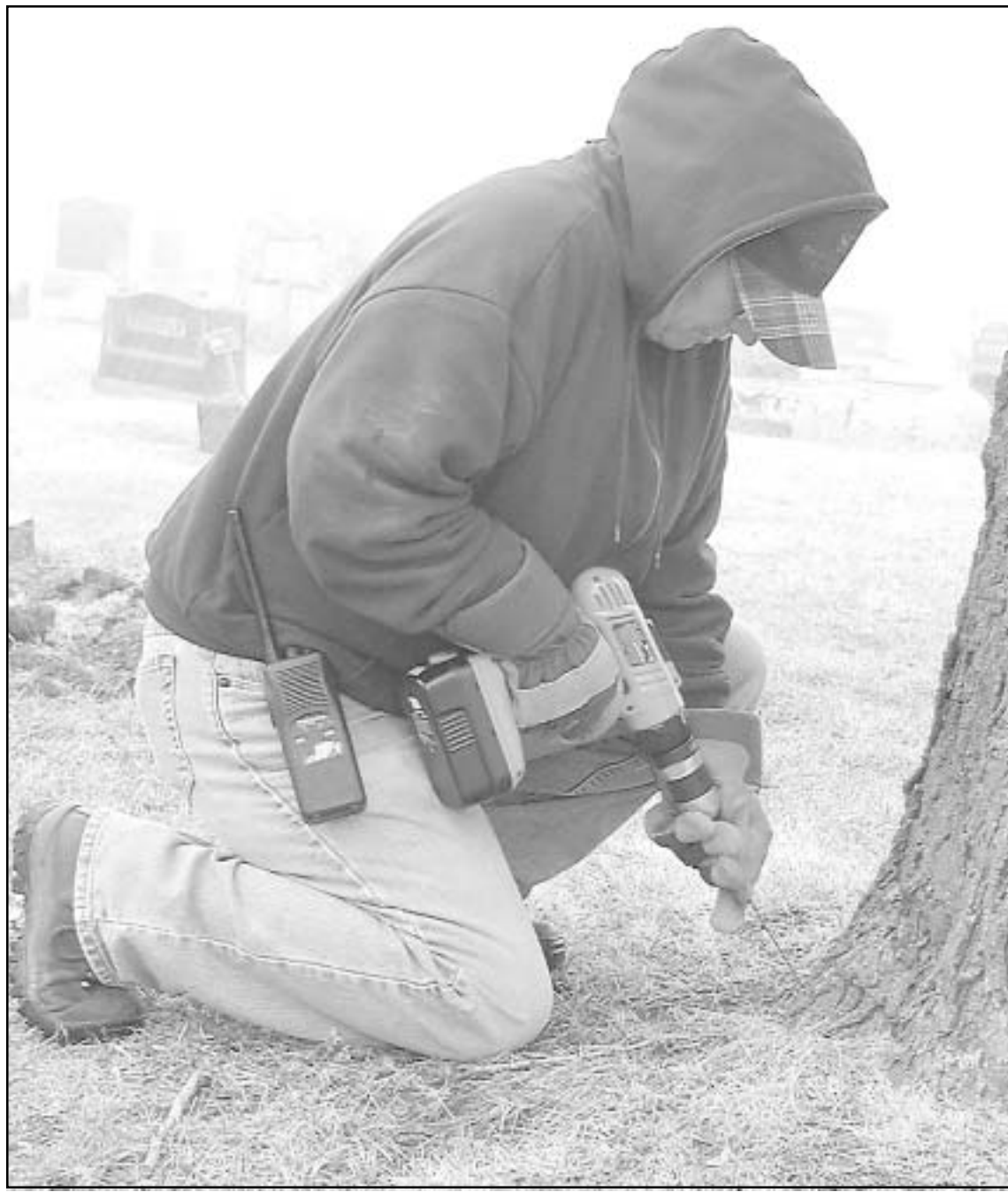
* Complex gets help

(Continued from Page 1A)
bonds will be paid off in 10 years. He said they have a closing scheduled for the end of the March or beginning of April.

Part of the negotiations have said that once the bonds are paid off, the hospital can have the choice to purchase the apartments, said Mr. Frickey. He said he doesn't know in 10 years if the board will want to purchase the complex, but they will have that option.

Mr. Frickey said Gold Bank bought the bonds and has been cooperative with the board in working on the refinancing.

Most of the negotiations have been handled in closed session during hospital board meetings for acquisition of real property, he said.



CEMETERY SEXTON NAN STANLEY drilled a hole in the base of a tree to check for decay. She was working with an expert from the Kansas Forest Service to see which trees need to be replaced.
— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

* Trees needed to fill in gaps

(Continued from Page 1A)
they didn't want to recommend anything that produces pods or acorns.

Pine trees can be planted, but deer like to rub against them. Ms. Stanley said they had already lost one on the south side of the cemetery because of deer.

There is nothing wrong with using cedars, said Mr. Strine. Ms. Stanley said the only problems with those is that if they grow together, the workers can't get the loader through to dig a grave, or the tree loses a branch.

The group checked out a honey locust tree in the older section of the cemetery. Mr. Strine said it looked like it had a lot of dead wood.

Whether or not to take out any of the trees is for the city to decide, he said. They have to determine what the risk is in leaving them there.

The group took a drill and drilled a small hole into the locust to check the wood. Mr. Strine said when a tree is wounded, it sets up a barrier wall, making it more difficult to drill through the outer layer of wood, but then it becomes easier.

If the tree is removed, he said, there won't be any in that area. Ms. Stanley said they took out the dead cedars next to the Last Indian Raid Memorial and they haven't been replaced.

Mr. Strine said with the established part of the cemetery, they could put something in and not upset the root system. He said he would encourage setting up a memorial fund to provide new trees. Ms. Stanley said that is what they want to do, then use the money just for trees and shrubs.

* Officials visit, talk to Oberlin people

(Continued from Page 1A)
pushing. He said that it would add about \$23 a head to the cost of raising an animal for small ranchers because of the extra paperwork.

He said he is not in favor of the state purchasing the Circle K Ranch near Hays for the water rights. He doesn't feel the state keeps the weeds sprayed.

He also said that highway money needs to be protected, but he is not in favor of issuing more bonds that will leave our grandchildren paying for worn-out roads.

The state is also looking at requiring standards for abortion clinics, he said. Right now high standards are required of veterinary clinics.

Mr. Kline talked about justice and, what he called an activist judicial system.

Too many youth do not feel there are absolutes in right and wrong, he said. They feel that the government should set the guidelines and that moral relativism is a problem.

"There are absolutes," he said,

"and we need to restore them."

He decried an increasingly activist judicial system, with judges trying to make the laws instead of interpreting the Constitution.

"With the legislative process, you can fix the mistakes," he said. "You can't do that with the judge."

In particular he pointed to Judge Terry Bullock, who is hearing the case against the school finance law. The judge is trying to set policy, Mr. Kline said, and that is not right. It isn't up to the courts to decide how schools will be financed.

"The legislature shall make suitable provision for financing education," is what the Constitution says, Mr. Kline said. This does not mean a judge should decide how schools should be paid.

Mr. Kline also said that he wasn't happy about sentencing.

"We're letting some bad people out (of prison)," he said.

The men stayed about an hour and then left for Norton to do it all over again.

* Police disagree on moving inmates

(Continued from Page 1A)
the sheriff, but he said he couldn't do it. He said he couldn't speak for the sheriff's office about why.

Mayor Ken Shobe asked if the sheriff's office had a car equipped with a cage for transports. Chief Lockhart said they do.

Kelley, said Dr. Anderson, is a private organization. They should haul their own moneymakers.

The juveniles don't just run away, said Mr. Hirsch. They steal cars and other things and are charged in district court.

Dr. Anderson said they should ask for reimbursement from Kelley for this trip. Chief Lockhart said that suggestion hadn't been too well received.

Technically, said Chief Lockhart, once a juvenile walks into the jail, he is a county problem. The jail can only hold a juvenile for six hours, however, and WaKeeney is the closest licensed lockup.

Councilman Stan McEvoy said the county charges the city for using the jail, so then the city can charge the county for transport. Or just take the fee off what the city pays, added Councilman Joe Stanley.

"We are sticking our taxpayers for a county responsibility," said Dr. Anderson.

Mayor Shobe said he thought it would be good to get a cage anyway.

Mr. McEvoy said he wouldn't have a problem with purchasing a cage for each of the vehicles. It is for officer safety, he pointed out.

Later in the meeting, Sheriff Badsky and Undersheriff Michael French showed up. The sheriff said he got a few phone calls at home from people watching the meeting

on cable. Sheriff Badsky said in the last 20 years, the office has always transported juveniles and mental patients. The night in question, he said, Chief Lockhart called him and he said told the chief he was too tired. He said he could have made it to WaKeeney, but not back.

The office is short handed, said Sheriff Badsky, and the two officers cover a lot larger area. He said he thought that was the first time they hadn't transported someone. He said it would have been unsafe for him to go that night.

What happens if a juvenile escapes and steals a car? asked Councilman Patrick Pomeroy. Sheriff Badsky said then the sheriff's office has to go pick them up and bring them back for court and then take them back to WaKeeney.

Mr. McEvoy said it sounded like this has happened more than once. Sheriff Badsky said it hadn't. He said he didn't think any of the officers wanted to do transports.

If this happens again, said Mr. McEvoy, it would be fair that the city send the county a bill. You can do that, said Sheriff Badsky, or use the sheriff's car.

Mayor Shobe asked how the sheriff thought the relationship between county law and the city was? Sheriff Badsky said there is some friction and that communication is the No. 1 problem right now.

The council told the chief the purchase of the cages were in his spending authority. The cages would cost in the area of \$339 to \$449 per car. With the parts to protect the side windows, each would cost \$700 to \$800.

* Sewer fees to go up

(Continued from Page 1A)
will be paying more.

City Administrator Gary Shike said some cities aren't doing a minimum but using a flat rate.

The problem with using a flat rate is that the city wouldn't have any way of setting a goal on the revenue they want to generate, he said.

Councilman Stan McEvoy suggested doing a three-tier rate with a price for 300 cubic feet, 500 cubic feet and then anything above that. That way, the lower usage people on

a fixed income are taken care of, so are the middle-of-the-road people.

Councilman Ray Ward said he thought the issue needed to be taken care of at the meeting. The longer the city waits, he said, the less revenue will be generated.

A motion and second were made to accept the scenario but then were rescinded so that Mr. Hirsch could type an ordinance and the council approved that.

The increase should generate just over \$100,000 a year.

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Officials file papers

County Commissioner Doyle Brown and Sheriff Ken Badsky filed petitions for the primary election on Tuesday, Aug. 3, last week.

They are the first county incumbents to file, although everyone who is up for a county position has picked up a petition, including County Clerk Marilyn Horn, Commissioner Ralph Unger, Treasurer Jean Hale, Attorney Steve Hirsch, Register of Deeds Judy Gaumer and Magistrate Judge John Bremer.

Mrs. Horn, who serves as the county election officer, said no one other than incumbents has picked up a petition.

The paperwork has to be filed by noon on June 10 to make the primary ballot.

County purchases used dozer for \$16,000

The county road and bridge department purchased a 1987 dozer from federal surplus for \$16,000 just in time: the one at the landfill broke down and it will cost \$10,000 to \$20,000 to fix.

County commissioners told Road and Bridge Department Supervisor Tim Stallman to check on federal surplus, which are items the federal government is selling, while he was in Topeka recently.

Mr. Stallman said he bought a 1987 Fiat/Allis D6 Dozer with 546 hours on it. He said it would have cost \$131,000 new, but it was priced at \$45,000 with federal surplus. The price had been lowered to \$32,500, and with the 50 percent moving sale, it was \$16,000.

Mr. Stallman said it will take some work to get it running well, and that will cost around \$10,000. He said he called Commissioner Ralph Unger to get his OK before purchasing the machine.

The commissioners ratified a motion made earlier for Mr. Stallman to make the purchase for the machine and for steel.

The old dozer was a 1975 model with 8,500 hours on it at the landfill, plus 6,000 to 7,000 on it when the county bought it.

Mr. Stallman said when they dropped the oil pan, it smelled bad and there were chunks of metal in it. He said he talked with the Martin Tractor service manager, who said the dozer would probably bring more for salvage than trying to sell it.

The commissioners approved an agreement with Norton County to do some bridge work in Allison Township, which is on the county line. Norton County will do the work and Decatur County will pay for part of it.

Commissioners held a five-minute closed session for non-elected personnel. There was no action taken.