

County may lose polls in small towns

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

Voting in Decatur County is likely to change for the August primary elections because of the Helping America Vote Act passed by Congress after Florida's vote-counting debacle four years ago.

The biggest change voters will see is that there may be just one polling place and they will have to use a touch screen computer to vote.

County Clerk Marilyn Horn, who serves as the county election officer, said the machines cost up to \$10,000 each and then the

software costs an additional \$20,000 each year there is a state or national election. She said they could use the machine for local elections for an additional cost.

Mrs. Horn said even though the machine is required, the county will still offer paper ballots. Some people are familiar with using technology like a touch screen computer on a regular basis, she said, with others may want to use the paper ballots.

Currently, the county has seven polling places, four in Oberlin plus polls in Dresden, Jennings and Norcatar. In Oberlin, are poll-

ing places at the Golden Age Center, American Legion and the courthouse. Mrs. Horn said they also do mail-out ballots for advanced voting or people can vote early in the courthouse, which counts as the seventh place.

When the law was passed, the idea was that the government would provide the machines, but Mrs. Horn said she isn't sure who will end up paying for them.

She said either way, the county will probably get only one machine, which will mean having just one polling place. The machines

are required by the federal law to help handicapped voters.

Mrs. Horn said she plans to have the polling place at The Gateway. She told county commissioners recently that the courthouse isn't up to code for the Americans With Disabilities Act which polling places have to meet.

There are two problems. The one is that the ramp on the east side of the courthouse is too steep. The other thing is that the hand-rail on the ramp has a point at the end and needs to be curved. The cost to fix the two

areas is around \$5,000.

The Gateway has already been reserved for the election days in August and November, she said.

Mrs. Horn said people who don't want to travel to Oberlin to vote can vote early.

Another change in the election process says that voter registration cards have to be signed in front of an election officer or motor vehicle officer. If they aren't done that way, she said, the first time the person goes to vote, they must be asked for either a (See VOTERS on Page 10A)

Hospital to take control

The responsibility for Wheat Ridge Terrace will change soon, but the manager won't.

Marcia Lohoefer has managed the facility just south of the fairgrounds for the Decatur Good Samaritan Center, and will remain when the Decatur County Hospital and Decatur Health Systems take over, said Hospital Administrator Lynn Doeden.

Connie Grafel, who sits on the hospital board, said the Good Samaritan Center came to the hospital last summer and asked if the hospital would be interested in managing the facility. Decatur County Retirement Housing, Inc., which owns the apartment complex, hadn't been able to make its payments on a \$1 million bond issue.

Mrs. Lohoefer said that was because the complex had not been full. Wheat Ridge has 12 apartment and only seven are occupied.

The bond issue, originally for \$1 million, will be refinanced with a bond issue of \$450,000, with \$250,000 to be paid on closing and the balance on a 15-year amortization at 4 percent interest. A balloon payment will be due in 10 years. Ms. Grafel said they don't know what the balloon payment will be because it depends on so many things. For example, if Wheat Ridge fills up then the retirement housing group could pay off the bonds early. If the facility drops in numbers they could have to pay off more at the end of the 10 years.

Ms. Grafel said the money for closing which is \$250,000 is borrowed from the hospital board. She (See MANAGER on Page 10A)

Board may look at policy

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

The Jennings School Board may review policies on the administration providing information to the board after a meeting at the beginning of the month.

With the arrest of Stanley Shimek, a former Jennings School custodian, on charges of molesting a child, parents and community members had questions for the board.

According to the unofficial minutes from the Monday, March 8, meeting, 12 parents and patrons talked during the meeting. There were many more present.

One of those was Jeff Hayward, who has family in the area. He said parents were questioning board policies and how they found out about the incident with Mr. Shimek. He said others asked why it wasn't presented to the board and whether anyone in the district knew it was going on.

Mr. Hayward said the board's lawyer, Kerry Gasper, handled some of the questions. There were some he said he couldn't because of legal issues with confidentiality.

It was an informal meeting, he said. The people who talked weren't on the agenda.

The two main issues discussed were what happened with Mr. Shimek and complaints about kids running around town tearing up the streets.

Mr. Gasper, a lawyer in Topeka, said although he has worked for the (See BOARD on Page 10A)



ASSISTANT ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR Lisa Stacey Crystal Franco and Tiffany Wheeler sat on the couch and held the microphone as Elva Shaughnessy told about when she got married during an intergenerational program Friday at the Good Samaritan Center. Jennings High Juniors listened to their teacher, Vickie Schmitz.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

Residents teach students

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

Two Jennings High School students learned some 20th century history when they interviewed women at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center about what it was like when they grew up and got married.

Crystal Franco and Tiffany Wheeler, both juniors, went to the center with sociology teacher Vickie Schmitz to compare generations and look at different experiences.

Ms. Schmitz said one of the biggest differences between the time the women at the center were teen-agers and the girls' lives today is technology. The residents have seen the advent of radio, television, telephones and now cell phones and computers.

She said what the teen-agers do in an average day is a lot different than what the older women had to do. People were more self sufficient back then.



Resident Dena Gillespie said she used to get up at 5 a.m. to milk three cows.

Assistant Activities Director

Lisa Stacey said the kids then would get up and help with the chores. Both Mrs. Stacey and Ms. Schmitz agreed that the residents

probably had more children than people today. The residents' had anywhere from eight to three siblings. (See RESIDENTS on Page 10A)

County, city meet with officers to work out kinks

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

The Decatur County commissioners, Oberlin City Council, sheriff and police chief met last Tuesday morning to iron out details of cooperation between the two departments.

At a recent City Council meeting, there was confusion over whose job it is to transport kids from the youth ranch to other facilities, who was doing it, why and who was paying for it.

Sheriff Ken Badsky said he had set up a meeting among himself, Peggy Pratt with the state Juvenile Justice Authority, Police Chief Wade Lockhart, and Sue Glodt, administrator at the youth ranch, for last Wednesday. The idea, said Sheriff Badsky, is to get everyone on the same page. If the group has to

meet again, Terry Campbell from Clarence M. Kelley Youth Services, which operates the ranch for the city, will come out.

Councilman Joe Stanley asked if this is all over one situation or is there more going on?

Chief Lockhart said the whole thing started with his statement that Sheriff Badsky had declined to transport one youth. The chief was at a council meeting to ask for prisoner cages for the back seat of his vehicles. Later, the sheriff said he'd just been too tired that night.

He said back in 2000, Steve Hirsch, who is city attorney and county attorney, wrote a memo that said if the kids from the ranch run away and don't commit a crime, they should be taken back to the ranch. Chief Lockhart said he feels

if a kid runs, they are going to do it again. In some cases, the ranch will contact the outside case manager and they will hire a safe transport for the kids, he said.

If the kid runs and commits a crime, like stealing a vehicle, Chief Lockhart said, the situation is different.

He said he knows Sheriff Badsky gets a little irritated on the whole thing and so does he. The chief said they will work the transport thing out.

Chief Lockhart said last summer he had a mental patient committed to either Lamed or Norton by a court order. He said he was told if he picked the patient up, then he would have to take him. It was a state district court order. Chief Lockhart said it was his understanding that person

eventually was taken to the hospital by his family.

Chief Lockhart said he had a prisoner who refused to stay in the jail because the judge sentenced him to weekends. The county refused to handle the in-and-out bookings. At the time, the city got an attorney general's opinion which said the jail can't refuse a court order.

When things like this happen, said Chief Lockhart, he and Sheriff Badsky need to just work them out then. Commissioner Ralph Unger said he agreed.

The ranch isn't a locked facility, said Chief Lockhart. The kids can't be placed in a locked room there.

Once a kid tries to run, said Mr. Unger, he should be bumped up to a detention center. That is determined by the state, Mr. Hirsch said.

Once picked up, a juvenile can only be held for six hours in the jail.

If the juvenile committed a crime here, asked Councilman Patrick Pomeroy, does the sheriff have to go pick him up and bring him back to see the judge.

It depends on the crime, said Sheriff Badsky. Would interactive television to handle remote hearings be worth the cost? Mr. Pomeroy asked. Yes, said Sheriff Badsky.

When dealing with mental patients, it is the only way to go, said Chief Lockhart.

Sheriff Badsky said he has had two people come to him and say if he deputizes and pays them, they will transport prisoners for the office. He said they have the car. To go to WaKeeney, it costs the (See OFFICERS on Page 10A)

City seeks advice

Alley hearing is continued

The Oberlin City Council decided Thursday to adjourn a public hearing to vacate the alley between Fidele Electric and the old cafe on Main Street until the meeting on Monday, April 5.

The first part of the public hearing was held before a council meeting last Thursday night. The council received a letter from Steve and Cynthia Haynes, owners of The Oberlin Herald, and that was the only public comment. Greg Fidele, owner of Fidele Electric, was also at the meeting.

City Attorney Steve Hirsch said Mr. Fidele filed a petition to have the alley vacated. Mr. Hirsch said the city will need to maintain an easement because there are utilities running through the alley.

The law requires that the notice be published one time, which was done on Feb. 18, and then 20 days have to lapse before the hearing.

Mr. Hirsch said Mr. Fidele signed the petition and Mori Zodrow and Ken Morgan signed a consent form because a very small part of the alley was paid for by the owner of the building the two men own now.

In the letter, the Hayneses noted that the taxpayers and property owners had paid to pave the alley. Mr. Hirsch said the property owners had paid the cost.

He said it isn't uncommon for the city to vacate an alley. When that is done, the alley will become the property of the joining properties and the city will collect tax revenue on it.

Mr. Fidele said he bought the old cafe and will be putting building supplies in it. There will be times, he said, that he may get a large load of supplies and will need the alley to store them. He said he would like to put a gate at each end of the alley and lights in the alleyway.

There have been a lot more people driving through the alley, he said. It isn't safe because a vehicle has to pull out halfway past the canopies so the driver can see traffic.

What materials might be stored on the ground? asked Councilman Jay Anderson. Dimensional lumber, shingles, things like that, Mr. Fidele replied.

What kind of gates will be put up? said Councilman Stan McEvoy. Mr. Fidele said he was thinking about six- or eight-foot chain-link gates.

One electrical meter will be outside the gate and one will be inside, said Mr. Fidele. He said he didn't (See COUNCIL on Page 10A)

* Council waits to decide issue on alley vacation

(Continued from Page 1A)

have any problem giving the city a set of keys to read the meters.

Mayor Shobe asked if Mr. Fidele was planning a building to connect the two, but he said no.

As it exists now, the alley is a fire break, said Mr. Anderson. Once it is full of lumber, it won't be a fire break anymore. The alley won't be filled all the time, said Mr. Fidele.

City Foreman Dan Castle asked if the center will be open for water drainage, and Mr. Fidele said it would, because people will be coming in to get supplies.

Councilman Patrick Pomeroy said when he first heard about it, he didn't like the idea because of public safety.

He said then he started to think about it and he has never needed to drive an ambulance through the alley. He said he doesn't think he could get an ambulance down the alley.

The councilman said he wasn't sure about the looks of a chain-link gate. Mr. Fidele said he could always set it several feet back from the road so it won't show much.

Mr. Hirsch said in signing a vacation order, the city can say how far back the gate needs to be put or that foot traffic will be allowed through during the day.

Mr. Anderson said he was a little uncomfortable giving away the citi-

zens' property.

City Administrator Gary Shike said he talked with Fire Chief Bill Cathcart, who said they don't fight fires from the alley and he doesn't have a problem with the vacation. Police Chief Wade Lockhart, who was in the audience, said it didn't bother him to have the alley vacated. He said if there is a car coming out of the alley and there are pedestrians around, they had better watch out.

Councilman Ray Ward said in the beginning, he had assumed the taxpayers paid to pave the road, but knowing that they didn't, and the fire chief doesn't have a problem with the vacation, then he doesn't. He said he can see a problem with people pulling out of there.

Mr. Ward said he doesn't want to discourage any business in town from expanding. Maybe the council needs to promote that a little better.

Mr. McEvoy suggested the council wait until the next meeting to hold the rest of the hearing giving the public time to comment. Mr. Fidele said he wanted an answer as soon as possible but didn't have a problem with getting more comment.

The council voted to adjourn the public hearing until April with Councilman Joe Stanley abstaining from the vote because of "public perception."

* Residents teach two young girls

(Continued from Page 1A)

lings. The girls have families of four and five. Ms. Schmitz said she has eight brothers and sisters, but her father had 13.

A big difference the residents have probably seen, said Ms. Schmitz, is in health care. It used to be normal when residents were growing up to lose a brother or sister to illness, but that doesn't happen as much now.

Mrs. Stacey said when the residents were growing up, people didn't have much money. When parents said then that they didn't have any money, they really didn't. Today when young people get married, they think they need two cars and a home. When most of the residents got married, they probably didn't have a whole lot, she said.

Fern Anderson said when she got married, they had their wages and a place to live that was furnished. It was an old grain bin that had been fixed up for hired help to live in. She said she had to keep the milk separator cleaned in exchange for the place to live. The crops burned up that year and she and her husband were kicked out, so they had to live

with her parents.

Lois Buchholz said when she married her husband, he had just got out of the Army, but they had it pretty good for a while. The couple built a house 50 miles outside of Denver. She said it was rough, but worth it.

Garrah Gaumer said when she got married they had a horse and a Model T Roadster. She was 20 years old, and from that time to six years ago when her husband died, they were always saving money for farm equipment.

These women walked to school, rode horses, traveled in a horse and buggy and had Model T vehicles. But since those days, they have had the chance to see someone walk on the moon, watch airplanes in the sky, use cell phones and now view information that is being sent to space.

Ms. Franco said things are a lot different now from the time the residents grew up. She said this generation is spoiled. Kids don't have to milk cows or anything, she said; they just have to walk to the grocery store, and they have more money to spend.

* Officers, officials talk transports

(Continued from Page 1A)

sheriff's office \$36 plus gas.

If the sheriff and his one officer can't take a transport, said Councilman Stan McEvoy, and the city does it, then the county should reimburse the city.

If the city officers take the transport, it will be overtime for them, said Mayor Ken Shobe. They are all deputized, said Sheriff Badsky, so maybe they can just be paid a straight wage from the county.

Mayor Shobe asked who dispatch reports. The county commissioners, Mr. Unger replied. The public perception is that dispatch is under the sheriff, Mayor Shobe said.

Dispatch is not just for law enforcement, Mr. Unger replied, but for the fire department, the county bus, the ambulance and sometimes helps out with the road and bridge department.

The city and the county, said Commissioner Doyle Brown, are too small to fight one another. They need to work together.

Mr. McEvoy said the city has some financial strains and is going to have to do something with the swimming pool to keep it running and probably the airport. Those services are used countywide, he noted.

Sheriff Badsky said as a county resident, he would pay taxes for the pool. It gives kids something to do in the summer and keeps them out of trouble.

That is something the group probably needs to talk more about, said Mr. Brown.

There is a recreation levy, but it is supposed to run through the school district, said County Clerk Marilyn Horn.

Mr. Brown said they are talking about Oberlin, but as county commissioners they have to remember there are three other cities, so when new policies are done, they have to be kept in mind, too.

Making the mixture



A WORKER FROM Roger Goltl's drywall business in McCook was finishing the walls in the old Bohemian Hall last week. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

* Manager will stay the same

(Continued from Page 1A)

said it is a loan.

The remainder of the bond issue, which will be \$200,000, is what the retirement board's first priority is to pay off. The rent money paid by residents will be used to make payments to Gold Capital Management, who owns the bonds, for the next 10 years.

Once that is paid off, the hospital will have the right to make the decision on whether they will take control of the facility or if they want the

retirement board to pay back the \$250,000.

Ms. Grafel said the retirement board was working with Gold Capital Management on the refinancing but without the loan from the hospital board they wouldn't be able to do it.

The resolution says that the hospital board, on behalf of Decatur Health Systems, will advance Decatur County Retirement Housing the \$250,000 for the closing of the new bond issue.

Mrs. Lohofener said she was concerned for those seven people now living at Wheat Ridge. They aren't ready for a nursing home, she said, and they want to continue the independent living situation they have.

Since the facility opened in 2000, 19 people have lived there, she added.

The women at Wheat Ridge will host a Chamber coffee hour from 9 to 11 a.m. on Tuesday, April 20. Everyone is welcome.

* Board gets visitors

(Continued from Page 1A)

board for years, the meeting was the first he had attended.

He said the people were primarily stating their opinions on information they had heard. The board, said Mr. Gasper, isn't at liberty to discuss employees or the kids.

The people in the audience addressed the board. Mr. Gasper said his role was to tell the public that the board could hear their comments, but couldn't discuss anything because of confidentiality issues.

One of the great things about this country, he said, is that people can express their opinions to elected officials.

After the session, the board went into a closed session for personnel. There was no action taken.

Mr. Gasper said the only thing that came out of the meeting is that the policies or procedures about how the administration gets information to the board may be reviewed.

Several of those who spoke at the meeting were contacted and many of them were left messages on their answering machines. One, Eugene Mrstik, was listed as speaking. He said he didn't want to comment on the meeting or the issue.

* Voters will see changes

(Continued from Page 1A)

driver's license or a Social Security card.

She said anyone running for office who carries registration cards needs to tell people to wait to sign them until they are in front of the proper officer.

Mrs. Horn told the commissioners at the meeting on Tuesday, March 9, that she is working on an election resolution which will include all the changes. She said she will also ask for an increase in the payment for the polling places and the workers.

Mrs. Horn said she would like to see the payment for polling places go from \$25 to \$50 per election and for workers from \$5.15 to \$7.50 an hour.

Mrs. Horn said she isn't sure if the state will pay for the new machines and software or if they will become the responsibility of the county.

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