

Well changes could bring more water

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Oberlin could get 200 gallons more water a minute, or 288,000 gallons a day, by the summer if all goes well with the redrilling of well No. 9 east of town.

The well, said Thaniel Monaco, the engineer with Miller and Associates working on the project, hasn't been used much in recent years. Drilled in the 1960s, he said, it hasn't been very reliable because of old construction and the drought.

The well can pump a little bit of water, Mr. Monaco said, but it can't sustain a flow. Well No. 10 is just to the south, and the way the two wells work, they interfere with each other. No. 10 is the city's main water source.

Currently the city gets 450 gallons per minute out of well No. 10, around 100 gallons per minute out of No. 9 and around 250 gallons per minute out of No. 11, which is south of town by the bowling alley.

City to get farm lease bids

Bids to farm city land near the airport, on the Sappa Lake bottom and near the waste plant south of town are to be in by the council meeting Thursday night.

City Administrator Gary Shike said he hasn't heard a whole lot on the bids, but they are due for the meeting at 6:30 p.m. at The Gateway.

Mr. Shike said Thaniel Monaco with Miller and Associates, the city's consulting engineers, will be at the meeting to update the council and public about projects the firm is working on, includ-

ing wells and a new sewer plant.

A salary schedule for this year probably will be passed, said Mr. Shike.

The council also may pass a resolution accepting Generally Accepted Accounting Practices, which they do every year.

Mr. Shike said there is a closed session scheduled for non-elected personnel.

The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the downstairs meeting room at The Gateway, since there is an event upstairs. Mr. Shike said he didn't know if it would be aired on cable because of the room shift.

The redrilling project will move the well a little farther north and will include modi-

fications to well No. 10 so that it can be better utilized. That means the city should be

able to pump both wells at the same time, which could produce more water.

The project will also include a new control system for the water supply, Mr. Monaco said. A computer will allow the city to monitor the wells and turn them on and shut them off from the power plant. The city doesn't have that ability now. The system will also include a readout at the tower so the crew will know how much water is in it.

Basically, said Mr. Monaco, this will bring the city into the 21st century as far as water technology goes.

The test holes for the re-drill have been done, he said. They plan to set the well at a maximum of 400 gallons per minute of water. With a variable-speed pump on No. 10, the city could pump both wells together, which would give the city more water.

The firm is doing the final design for the well, said Mr. Monaco, and the plans will

then be sent onto the state in the next few weeks for approval.

He said they plan to start construction first thing in the spring and have the new well completed by June 1.

The city hopes to pay for the project with a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development administration. He said they have applied for a 100 percent emergency Community Water Assistance Grant, but haven't heard anything on whether it will be approved.

Mr. Monaco said the project will also include a portable generator to run a well. The city doesn't have one and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment suggests having one in case of a power failure.

In the near future, he said, the firm will be providing the City Council with options on water treatment techniques. The city will (See WELLS on Page 8A)

Storm closes schools

Town digs out from icy cover

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Students in Decatur County got an extended Christmas break, thanks to the snow and ice storm dished out by Mother Nature at the beginning of last week.

Oberlin Superintendent Kelly Glodt said on Monday, they ended up calling school off later than usual when roads began to ice up. He said Transportation Director Brian Simonsson called him at 5:30 a.m. and reported that he had driven several roads and said it wasn't that bad.

The buses were sent out and drivers started calling back in, especially those who went south of town, saying it was treacherous. Some parents called in, too, Mr. Glodt said, saying they weren't going to send their kids on the buses because of the roads.

There were reports of cars in the ditch near the feed lot north of town.

Mr. Glodt said they decided to cancel school around 7 a.m., and called the buses back.

For Tuesday, the forecast called for snow on top of the ice that already was on the ground, and school was called off again.

(See STORM on Page 8A)



UP ON U.S. 36, Frank Black (above) cleaned up the parking lot of Jr's Used Cars while a state truck (below) cleared the snow and slush left on the highway Thursday.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



Teachers get more work, less deductible

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

The Oberlin School Board and teachers have agreed to a new contract, which included more classroom days than last year and a lower deductible for employee insurance.

Most teachers will receive a raise this year through movement on the pay scale. A typical move down the scale, which is for length of time in the district, is \$740 a year, and the typical move across the scale for education is \$800 a year. There was no general increase to the base pay level, however there was a change in movement on the pay scale.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt estimated the raises to cost the district \$22,000. At the December meeting, hourly employees received a 20-cent-an-hour raise and bus drivers received 50 cents a trip and 1 cent a mile. Salaried employees, including administrators, received a \$500-a-year raise.

The negotiated agreement which was accepted in December is for the current school year. Although the agreement is normally decided by the beginning of the school year, Mr. Glodt said this year the negotiators took some time to look through the

agreement, change wording, correct errors and discuss all of the issues.

Last year, when the district was trying to save money, the teachers and board agreed to five less "contact days" with students in return for a higher insurance deductible. The district was forced to cut teaching staff, and by the end of the year had cut several staff members.

The district had 72 employees last year who had contracts for insurance. The premium was \$280 a month, which meant the district paid \$242,066 a year for health insurance.

The district switched insurance providers, from Blue Cross/Blue Shield to Preferred Health Systems. In the 2002-2003 school year, the staff had a \$100 deductible for insurance. Last year it jumped to \$2,500. The teachers agreed to the change in return for five less days of school.

This year, those five days were picked back up so there will be 189 contact days with students. The state average is 186. Superintendent Kelly Glodt said the board didn't think having fewer classroom days was educationally sound.

(See TEACHERS on Page 8A)

Only one filing for six open seats

Only one person has filed for one of three positions open this year on the Oberlin School Board, and no one had filed so far for three seats on the Oberlin City Council.

The city and school election will be held Tuesday, April 5. A primary will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 22, if more than two candidates file for any one position. Deadline to register to vote in school and city elections is 5 p.m. Monday, Feb. 7, said County Clerk Marilyn Horn, county election officer.

Jody Robertson filed back in September for the District 4 seat on the Oberlin School Board now held by

Delayne May, who has not filed for re-election yet.

Other seats up for election on the school board are District 5, held by Chris Bailey, and District 6, held by Dwayne Jackson.

Council seats up for election are those of Stan McEvoy, Jay Anderson and Joe Stanley. None of the incumbents has filed so far.

Candidates can file at the Decatur County clerk's office in the courthouse before noon on Tuesday, Jan. 25. Anyone interested in running may have a petition signed by voters in the district or they can pay a \$5 filing fee.

Couple surprised when baby delays arrival until New Year

Doctors and nurses at the Decatur County Hospital welcomed the first baby of the new year at 1:31 a.m. on Friday, Jan. 7.

Not only was Jayden Cleo Fenner the first baby born in Decatur County this year, but she is the first child of Brandon and Jennifer Fenner of Hoxie.

Mrs. Fenner said she knew about the New Year's baby giveaways but didn't think it would matter since she was due at the end of December. Then the baby decided to come a little late.

She said they decided to come to Decatur County since the hospital in Hoxie doesn't deliver babies. She is originally from Decatur County, having been raised in Jennings, and Mr. Fenner is from Hoxie.

Mr. Fenner works for the City of Hoxie while his wife works at the Comfort Inn in Colby.

With a little over a year of marriage behind them, Mrs. Fenner said this was a planned pregnancy. She said her daughter's middle name, Cleo, is for her great-

granddad, who is deceased. Her first name, Jayden, isn't a family name. Mrs. Fenner said she had heard it before and really liked it.

Since Jayden was born through a cesarean section, the Fenners spent the weekend in the hospital. Mrs. Fenner said Sunday afternoon that she hoped they could go home on Monday.

Grandparents of the New Year's baby are Dave and Diane Carter of Jennings and Brian and Joey Fenner of Hoxie. Great-grandparents are Eleanor Morel of Jennings and the late Cleo Morel; Naomi Carter of Jennings and the late Willard Carter; Albert and Vola Fenner of Goodland, and Herb and Doris Weed of Wray, Colo.

Since Jayden is the first baby born in 2005, her parents are eligible to get a carload gift from area businesses. Those include a \$25 gift certificate from Adleman Drug Store, a case of baby food from Raye's (See BABY on Page 8A)



THE 2005 NEW YEAR'S BABY, Jayden Cleo Fenner, was born to Jennifer and Brandon Fenner of Hoxie early Friday at Decatur County Hospital.

— Photo by Othelia Vacura



IN THE PARKING LOT at Raye's Grocery Store on Thursday, contractor Wayne Goltl (above) pushed and pulled snow out of the way. A banker at work, Jesse Carter (below) shoveled the walk outside Farmers Bank and Trust after the storm last week.

* Storm leaves area scraping ice layer

(Continued from Page 1A)

Students stayed out of school last Wednesday as the snow continued to fall. By Thursday, however, the doors were open and classes started with an hour delay.

Mr. Glodt said it's unusual for them to call off school the day before. He said if they know for sure, though, they like to let the parents know early. They did that last week with closing school and the one-hour delay on Thursday.

This was a tough storm to call, he said. When the area gets a storm, he always checks with other superintendents to see what

they are going to do. Atwood didn't get the ice Decatur County did on Monday, he said, and they were making different decisions.

Mr. Glodt said he thinks it is always better to err on the side of caution. The worse-case scenario that way is that there are too many snow days and the district has to make some up at the end of the year or add time to each school day.

"That isn't an issue yet," said Mr. Glodt. "Bottom line, though, is the safety of our kids as the biggest concern."

At the board meeting scheduled for Monday night, he said, he will report on how many "contact" hours students and staff have had, how many snow hours there have been and how many contact hours there will be next semester.

Not only did the weather keep schools closed, but some businesses



on Main Street decided not to open last Tuesday and Wednesday. There were very few out and cars were scarce on Penn Avenue.

By Thursday when the snow stopped, things started moving a little more. The Decatur County road crew got up early that morning and cleaned the airport and hospital streets and then headed out to the county to clean roads. Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman said by 4:30 p.m. that afternoon, everything was clean.

There was some drifting on the county roads, he said, but there weren't any problems or break downs.

In the city, the road crew started to push snow around 5 a.m. Thursday, and by Friday afternoon the last few piles were being loaded up and moved out into the country.

Professor to talk about Oz at Chamber dinner

The Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce' annual banquet is planned for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 20, at The Gateway.

The dinner will cost \$14 per person. Deadline to register is Monday, Jan. 17. Call the Chamber office at 475-3441 or send in a check to reserve a spot.

The banquet is open to everyone, not just Chamber members, said Glenva Nichols, manager.

Eric Eicher with the state program "History Alive" will speak on "Oz to Ah's" and talk about how "The Wizard of Oz" has helped and hurt the state of Kansas.

Mr. Eicher has a doctorate in En-

glish from the University of Kansas and received his master's from the University of California at Berkeley, and teaches English at Fort Hays State University.

He included in his doctoral dissertation a chapter called "The Wonderful Weirdness of Oz," after studying L. Frank Baum's Oz series for over a decade.

In 2003, he joined the Kansas Humanities Council speakers bureau.

The banquet will feature election for three people to serve on the Chamber board. Retiring directors are Marilyn Noone, Derek Riner and Judy Scott.

* Teachers to work more

(Continued from Page 1A)
To get the classroom days back, he said, the board was bound to go back to a lower deductible because of the agreement last year. The deductible this year is \$1,000.

This year there are 66 employees who receive insurance, six less than last year, but the premium jumped \$70 per month per person. The premiums were \$280 a month and are now \$350.

The district is paying \$840 more a year per employee, said Mr. Glodt.

The district pays \$277,944 a year for health insurance, which is actually an increase of \$35,000.

If the district still had the 72 employees on insurance, though, it would cost them \$303,000 a year.

Mr. Glodt said the district is supposed to have 100 percent participation in the insurance group with some exceptions. For instance, if an

employee gets insurance through a spouse's group, that is OK.

The district pays for the employee's insurance and the employee pays for family coverage. For part-time employees, the district pays half of the insurance cost.

Mr. Glodt said when it is time to renew the policy, the district's insurance committee will look at other options.

The board and teachers agreed to change the salary schedule as well. The board, said Mr. Glodt, looked at pay scales from other districts and noticed that Oberlin's salary schedule only went six steps while others had more. He said they tried to equalize the steps across and down.

Teachers move across for added education and down for the length of time they have worked in the district.

The group agreed to add another

step down, which means that a teacher who doesn't take any more schooling after they're hired can earn up to \$31,400 instead of \$30,365. Depending on how much education teachers get, they can move across the schedule and down. Mr. Glodt said the district wants to encourage teachers to continue their education.

Even when the district was on a salary freeze last year, teachers were allowed to move across the schedule.

Negotiators for the teachers were Leigh Davis, Nathan Copeland and Rhonda Barth. Board members were Jeannie Martin and Monte Moore. The same board members will serve as negotiators next year.

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* Wells to pump more

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probably want to get into one or more pilot studies to see what can be done to treat the water, which is heavy with dissolved minerals.

Mr. Monaco said the next step will probably be to install a water treatment facility, possibly on the new land the city purchased south of town. A well there can't be used

because it carries too much uranium.

The good thing, he said, is that the water project completed a few years ago included the pipelines needed to get water to that area.

Mr. Monaco will be at the council meeting Thursday night to update members on the water project and the waste water system project.

* Baby dues for some gifts

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Grocery, a pizza for two from Pizza Hut, a photo album from Custom Trophy and Engraving, a gift from Fredrickson Insurance Agency, a \$10 gift certificate from Ben Franklin in McCook, a gift from Ray Jewellery, a \$10 gift certificate from Ward Drug, a gift certificate from The

Dresser, a \$25 savings bond from First National Bank, a \$10 gift certificate from Stanley Hardware, a \$40 gift certificate from Rocking R, a year's subscription to *The Oberlin Herald* and best wishes from KFNF Radio.

All of the gifts and services must be claimed within 60 days.