

## City gets \$400,000 for sewer project

A piece of mail signed by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius almost got overlooked at the Oberlin City Council meeting Thursday night because it looked like an ordinary state announcement.

Towards the end of the meeting, Mayor Ken Shobe opened the envelope from the Kansas Department of Commerce to find

that the city had won a grant to help pay for a project to replace the current waste water system with lagoons.

The letter didn't say how much the grant was for, but it was signed by the governor.

Later, City Administrator Gary Shike found out that the city had received the maximum grant allowed at \$400,000.

The council applied for the full amount of the Community Development Block Grant, but wasn't sure if the city would get it.

This money could only be awarded after the city proved that a certain percentage of people living here were in the moderate-to-low income range. In order to do this, the

city mailed out surveys last spring to households. After a somewhat poor response, volunteers went door to door to have the surveys filled out.

It turned out the city met the requirements and the grant was submitted. Since it is a grant, said Mr. Shike said, the \$400,000 won't have to be paid back.

The city has borrowed \$2.958 million to pay for the new system from the state Revolving Loan Fund.

Mr. Shike said that money was secured some time ago.

The grant should help lower the payments for sewer users, although Mr. Shike said he didn't know the exact amounts.

## Lake bottom farm lease terminated

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

The Oberlin City Council decided to terminate the farm lease between the city and Jim Abbey for the lake bottom at Sappa Park at a meeting Thursday night, though he might wind up farming the land anyway.

The city had to notify Mr. Abbey prior to March 1 to terminate the yearly lease. Council members had three lease proposals to consider, including one from Pheasants Forever to have Mr. Abbey farm the area while growing wildlife plots and adding trees and other habitat.

Recently, the council decided to open up all of the city's farm ground, including the lake bottom, land by the airport and land on the old Cochran place south of town for cash-rent bids.

At the meeting Thursday night, the council received one last bid on the Sappa Park land from the Sunflower Chapter of Pheasants Forever. Ken Badsy, a member of the chapter, presented the bid for \$25 per acre for 140 acres. The lease would guarantee a return of \$3,500 to the city each year.

At a recent meeting, the council received bids from Jim Abbey for \$32 per acre and one from Kendal Fisher for \$53 per tillable acre.

Mr. Abbey has farmed the land for years, back when the youth ranch property was owned by Cookson Hills.

His plan for the lake bottom for next year was to plant sunflowers. Mr. Abbey said at a meeting at the end of the year that the crop would make the city an estimated \$8,554 on a share basis.

At the same meeting in December, Mr. Fisher said he wanted to plant alfalfa on the land. The lease he presented to the council would allow him to continue farming the

## City Roundup

At a meeting Thursday night, the Oberlin City Council:

- Decided to keep the old air conditioning system at the library and include a new one in next year's budget. Story to come.
- Agreed to terminate the lease with Jim Abbey for farming lake bottom. Story to left.
- Accepted two bids from men who are currently farming city-owned land. Story on Page 10A.
- Received a letter from Gov. Kathleen Sebelius notifying the city it has won a grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce to replace the sewer plant. Story above.
- Approved employee pay increases. Story to come.

property for five years after he harvested his first crop. If he wasn't able to harvest the crop until 2006 because of Mother Nature, the lease would end in 2011.

The presentation from Pheasants Forever said they wanted to farm 100 acres of the property but use the remaining land for food plots and riparian buffer strips for wildlife and hunting ground.

The agreement presented stated the group wanted to keep Mr. Abbey farming the property but the chapter would come up with a good crop rotation for habitat and the soil.

(See CITY on Page 10A)

## Books still open for incumbents, newcomers to file

Two of the six incumbents for the Oberlin City Council and Oberlin School Board have been filled for the upcoming election.

Dewayne Jackson, who serves in District 6, filed Monday for re-election. He has served eight years — two terms — on the school board.

Joe Stanley, who has served the past two years on the Oberlin City Council, also filed for re-election. Mr. Stanley was appointed to fill the seat left vacant by Mayor Ken Shobe when he was elected mayor.

This will be Mr. Stanley's first election. He said it has been interesting to see how everything works in city government — real educational.

County Clerk Marilyn Horn, who is the county election officer, said Jody Robertson also has filed for the District 4 seat on the school board now held by Delayne May. Mrs. May hasn't filed yet. She said she hasn't decided if she will run for office again.

Others whose terms are up on the council are Jay Anderson and Stan McEvoy. Dr. Anderson said he hasn't decided yet if he will run again. He is just finishing his first term.

Mr. McEvoy was called on Monday, but couldn't be reached.

On the school board, the other seat is held by Chris Bailey, who serves District 5. He said he was planning on filing. Mr. Bailey has served six years on the board.

In Jennings, there are five at-large positions open for the school board.

Three are currently held by Vickie Bailey, Larry Miller and Gary Gillum. Those are for four-year terms. Two of the spots are for two-year terms held by Frances Bader, who has filed for re-election, and Alesha Vahling.

Mrs. Horn said it is important for voters to know that not everyone in the Oberlin School District will vote this year because there aren't any at-large seats up for re-election. Only people living in Districts 4, 5 and 6 will vote.

That means that residents in Finley, Logan, Sappa, Bassettville and Cook townships will not go to the polls, nor will some of the residents in Beaver, Liberty, Sherman, Olive, Oberlin, Summit and Prairie Dog townships. They won't be going to the polls because they live in Districts 1, 2 and 3.

Mrs. Horn said some Oberlin residents will have a school ballot and some won't. Everyone will have the chance to vote for city council even if they don't have a ballot for school board. She encourages everyone who can vote to do so.

The only way there will be a primary is if more than two people file for one position, said Mrs. Horn.

If there is a primary, it will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 22. That means the registration books will close at 5 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 7.

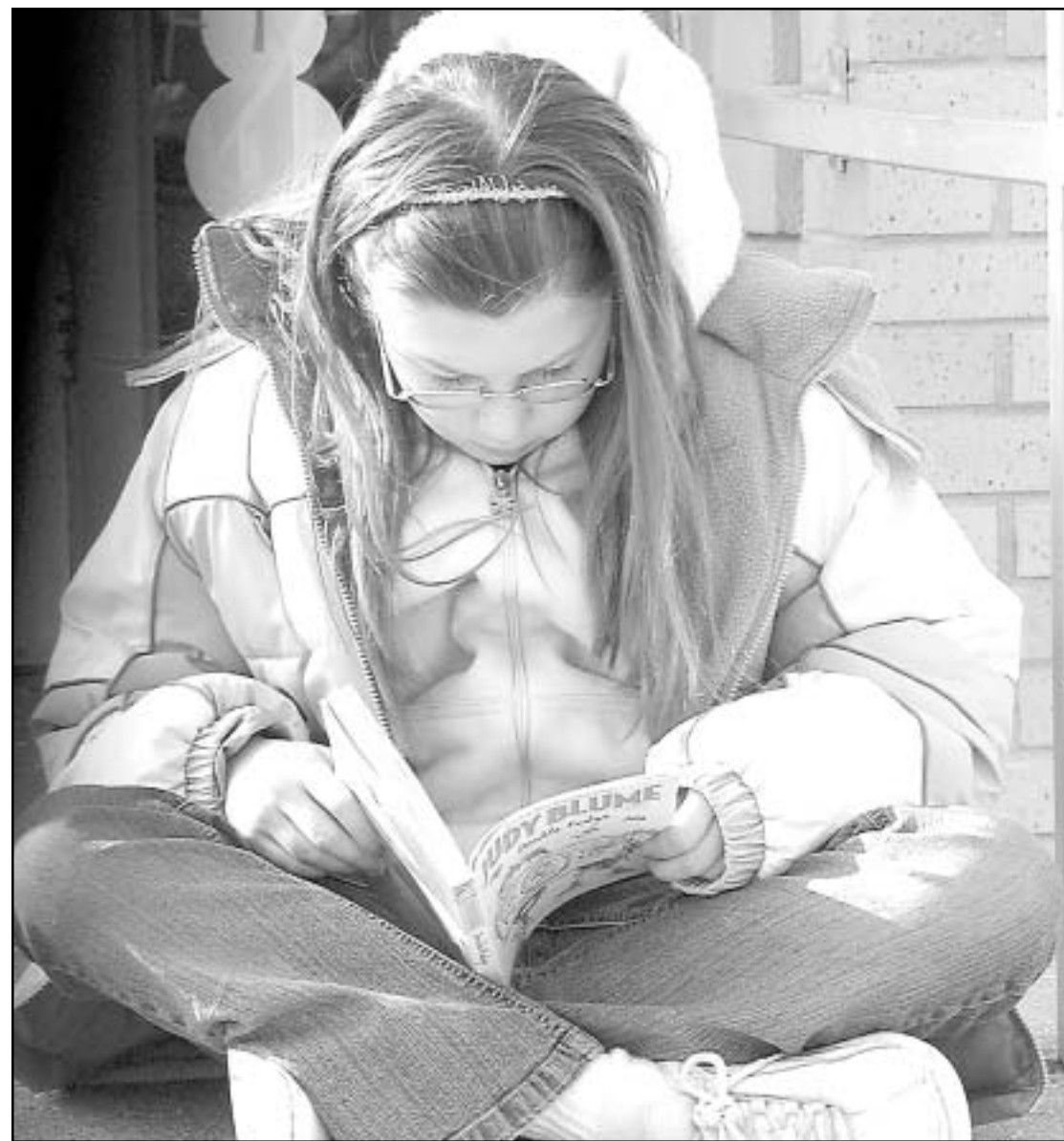
The latest time to file to run in the election is at noon on Tuesday. Candidates must file a petition signed by voters in the district or they can pay the \$5 filing fee.



## Kids keeping warm

AS THE SUN started to come out Monday afternoon, the fourth graders at Oberlin Elementary School were let out to play for the afternoon recess. Although heavy coats were still the uniform of the day, it was a lot warmer than it had been. On the hard surface, Cassidy Shields (above right) and Cheyenne Soderlund jumped over a long red, white and blue jump rope while friends Hannah May, Kaylee May and Taylor Macfee waited their turns. Next to the kindergarten building, Jordin Wasson (right) read a book by Judy Blume.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



## Woman asks if schools would use pool

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

The Oberlin School Board discussed how students could use a proposed indoor swimming pool at the meeting last Monday night, but made no commitments to gym classes, swim lessons or a swim team using the pool.

Anna Shaw, with the city Pool Commission, updated the board on what the commission has done so far. She said for grant purposes, she has been talking to groups around town to see what kind of support they would give. Mrs. Shaw said she wasn't talking about money, but about use of the facility.

She said she talked with the hospital about hydrotherapy, but the only way they were interested was with an indoor pool.

The city council hired a pool engineer, who reported that it isn't economically feasible to continue renovating the old pool. The water isn't being completely filtered, she said, and things are growing on the outside of the pool and coming inside.

## School Roundup

At a meeting last Monday, the Oberlin School Board:

- Talked about the sidewalks at the kindergarten building again, but decided to wait to have the playground committee talk about the proposal. Story on Page 3A.
- Heard about the five-year improvement program for accreditation. Story to come.
- Discussed how students could

use an indoor pool if one was built. Story to left.

• Learned how to set up their account with the Kan-Ed computer program and how students can benefit from it. Story on Page 2A.

• Heard the 2004 fiscal year audit report from Mapes and Miller, which showed that the district is in the same situation it was in two years ago. Story to come.

possible grants. She said she and Mirla Coleman went to a grant-finding workshop. The problem was that they couldn't find a single grant for an outdoor municipal pool.

The only way to get grants is to have an indoor pool that encompasses the entire community, she

said. Mrs. Shaw said the commission is thinking of two pools: a three-to-four-lane lap pool in a simple building, and another room with a hydrotherapy pool.

An outdoor pool would have six lanes, four feet deep and 25 meters long. There would be a "zero-depth" entry for the kids to play in and a deep end with boards.

Mrs. Shaw said the commission thought four feet of water might cost less to heat.

She said what she needed from the board is to know if they would be interested in having the schools use the pool for athletics, gym class, swim lessons or maybe a swim team. The commission needs everyone to brainstorm uses of the pool so that community uses can be shown for grant applications.

(See POOL on Page 10A)



# Judge swears in officials

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

To start off the new year, Magistrate Judge John Bremer swore in county officials elected in November during a commissioners' meeting last Tuesday.

The "new" officials included Commissioners Doyle Brown and Ralph Unger, County Attorney Steve Hirsch, Sheriff Ken Badsky, Treasurer Jean Hale, Register of Deeds Judy Gaumer and Clerk Marilyn Horn, all re-elected to new four-year terms.

Judge Bremer will not be sworn in until Thursday.

Mrs. Horn said all of the deputies for the offices need to be sworn in by her and sign the deputy book.

The commissioners discussed having an open enrollment for the employee health insurance carried through Corporate Plan. They called Dan Escalante with the company.

Mr. Unger suggested having open enrollment from Dec. 15 to the end of the year. Mr. Escalante said it normally is one the whole month before the plan begins. Those covered by the insurance will still be able to change their policy during the year, he said. For example, someone could be dropped or added if their is a change of job and there is no insurance, or in case of a divorce, marriage, death, birth or adoption.

Dental coverage, said Mr. Escalante, is a special plan and the commissioners are in charge of the set-up and coverage of it with help from the insurance company.

The commissioners agreed to make open enrollment for this year retroactive to Dec. 15.

Mr. Escalante said he would get the commissioners a contract for their next meeting.

Mrs. Horn asked the commissioners if the county should purchase a laminator. She said they use packaging tape on many items. The commissioners weren't interested.

Mr. Hirsch said the county attorney's office has one the courthouse could use. Also said the Jennings Museum has one to do newspaper pages, so maybe the county could call them if it was something big.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Appointed Mr. Brown as the chairman for the year.
- Designated the Bank, Farmers Bank and Trust and First National Bank as depositories.
- Approved the 2005 holidays, which includes New Year's Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving and the Friday after it and Christmas.
- Set the meal allowances for employees traveling out of town as \$7 for breakfast, \$7 for lunch and \$11 for dinner.

# \* Board gives ideas

## Pool group seeks users

(Continued from Page 1A)

Some have said if there is an indoor pool, they will donate money, she said, although she doesn't know how much.

If the schools decided to use the pool for gym class, she asked, would there be a special fee collected at the beginning of the year?

Principal Charles Haag said he would think that with any entity using the pool, students would pay a special user fee.

Would the proposed size of pool work for a swim team? asked Board Member Barb Olson. Mrs. Shaw said there are 14 kids going to McCook to join the winter swim team. There could be a swim team here, although they couldn't have meets in the proposed pool because of size. They could practice here, she said, and go to other meets.

What about insurance liability? asked Board Member Delayne May.

Mrs. Shaw said they could call the school in Holyoke and see, because they do lessons. Mrs. May said she was sure the school's insurance company would know.

A swim team would be worth looking into, said Board Member Barb Olson, and so would swim lessons and treatment for athletic injuries.

Mr. Haag said he could see special-needs kids using the pool. He said he wasn't sure about starting a swim team because he didn't know if the kids really had time for something like that, but those who participate in the summer would have a place to practice. He said he could see kids having a pool party.

What about gym class at the grade school? asked Mrs. Shaw. Principal Duane Dorshorst said they would have to look at that carefully because of the schedule. The kids would have to be bused to the pool, then would need changing time. He said there probably wouldn't be enough time for gym classes to use the pool.

He said he could see using the pool as a reward or for an after-school program.

Mrs. Shaw said she had talked to Superintendent Kelly Glodt about a recreation levy.

Board Member Chris Bailey said there is more to recreation than just swimming; there is also a summer ball program. He said he thought it was a good plan.

Board Member Kurt Vollertsen said if they canvassed the downtown businesses, he didn't think they would want an increase in the sales tax to pay for a pool. Mrs. Shaw said an increase in sales tax wouldn't pay for a new pool.

Mrs. May said she had deeper concerns for the school than a new pool. She asked who would run it?

The city would run the pool, said Mrs. Shaw. They would need to hire a manager year-around.

It is a good idea, said Board Member Monte Moore, and a good place to start.

Mr. Haag said he didn't think the community could do without a pool. He said when his kids were young, they used to drive to Oberlin to let the kids swim. If this happens, he said, he hopes that the city hires an adult to manage the pool. A pool needs to be run very well to sell to adults, he said.

The group also talked about making it more of a water park, adding slides and sprinklers.

# Council says yes to two cash leases

The Oberlin City Council accepted two bids Thursday from men who are currently farming land owned by the city at the airport and south of town.

In December, the council asked for cash bids for the three farm properties owned by the city that are leased out each year.

The council received a bid from Greg Lohofener for the land at the airport.

Mr. Lohofener farms the ground without any expense to the city or without paying the city any of the profit. In return, he mows all of the



## Supper brings in cash

**IN FRONT OF THE BIRD AVIARY** at the Good Samaritan Center, Garrah Gaumer and LaVerne and Coleen Rippe (above) greeted those who attended a soup supper held by Dennis Brown and the Forget-Me-Nots. Mr. Brown (right) served soup which he made. The event raised money to replace the aviary at the center, which is old and outdated. As of Monday, there was no final count on the money raised although officials at the center thought it was over \$1,100 raised, which meant there would be a \$500 match from Mr. Brown's organization.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



# \* City wants answers on bid for farm land

(Continued from Page 1A)

Dr. Anderson said he liked the lease with Pheasants Forever because they will buy seed from local dealers, keep it as farm ground and provide hunting. It is a win-win situation for everyone, he said.

How long is the lease for, asked Mayor Ken Shobe? That is up to the council, said Mr. Badsky, adding that the chapter understood that the lease was for a year.

He said he talked with Mr. Abbey about the lease and he said he wanted to continue farming the land and would do it the way the chapter wants him to.

It would be nice to have a longer lease, said Mr. Badsky, because it takes longer than a year to get things like trees and habitat established.

Dr. Anderson said he thinks this is a long-term project, but it will benefit the whole community. He suggested a three year lease.

If the city allows for another entity to sub-lease the land, asked Administrator Gary Shike, is the city giving up some rights?

Councilman Patrick Pomeroy said he thought the presentation in December about turning that area into a wetlands and ponds said that it would then not be suitable to farm.

What they said, said Mayor Shobe, is that if the ground got saturated it couldn't be farmed.

Dr. Anderson said he thought the lease option helped ease the city into the wetlands project.

Mayor Shobe said he couldn't see a downside to the project. There will

be less farm ground, but the city isn't in the farming business. Most likely it take at least two years to get water discharged out there. A presentation in December showed that water from the sewer system could possibly be discharged to the lake area and reused for a wetlands, but it will take some time to get the new sewer system in and a pipe built to the park if the council decides to go that route.

City Attorney Steve Hirsch said he had some questions. What kind of organization is this? he asked. Mr. Badsky said the contract would be with the local chapter. Who will be responsible for making the payments if the chapter fails? Mr. Badsky said he thought it would probably be the board members.

If the group isn't incorporated, that would make it harder to collect Farm Service Agency payments, said Mr. Hirsch. The organization might not be able to get them. Mr. Badsky said Pheasants Forever isn't in it for the money.

Some of the members wanted to do something on a bigger scale to help habitat and the land, he said. The chapter is at full membership and the members are excited to be doing this project.

Councilman Joe Stanley asked if the national chapter was helping? No, Mr. Badsky said, all the money is raised locally. Anything that is raised here stays here, except the national dues.

Councilman Stan McEvoy said he would like to get some of the

questions answered about the insurance, lease and other items. He said he didn't want the city to enter into something that they could get in trouble for.

Mr. Hirsch said the council didn't have to make a decision on the lease tonight. The only decision they needed to make was whether they were going to terminate Mr. Abbey's lease. He said it has to be

done 30 days prior to March 1. The city can renew with Mr. Abbey or accept another offer at the later date.

The council decided to terminate the lease.

Mr. McEvoy said it didn't make any sense to terminate a lease to take less money. Dr. Anderson replied that he thought the contract with Pheasants Forever was taking a step into the future.

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