

## Bill would leave school district short

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

The school finance bill on the table in Topeka includes an increase in the per-pupil base, but it won't give the Oberlin School District enough to really help.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said if the bill becomes law, and enrollment stays the same, the district would gain \$79,799 in the general fund, just enough to cover increases in "fixed" costs, including employee health insurance with Blue Cross/Blue Shield, liability insurance and fuel.

That will leave the district no money to

increase teacher salaries or to help with contract negotiations.

The bill will decrease low-enrollment weighting, which will hurt the district, and then increase the per-pupil base. The increase will be \$244 to the base rate, Mr. Glodt said, bringing it up from \$3,863 to \$4,107 per pupil.

Mr. Glodt said the consensus of people he has talked to is that the state Supreme Court won't approve the bill. The law went to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius last week.

"The Legislature has acted on school fi-

nance," she said, "and I am pleased they have taken a first step in funding Kansas schools. As soon as I receive the bill, I will allow it to become law without my signature and forward it immediately to the Supreme Court."

If Oberlin enrollment stays the same next year and the bill is passed, it will mean more money for the district despite the cut in low enrollment money.

Mr. Glodt said the district would get an increase in money for "at-risk" students of \$20,698. At-risk money is based on the per-

centage of low-income students, defined as those on free and reduced lunch. That money would go for some kind of extended learning opportunities for those students, tutoring or possibly after-school activities. Committees at each school are revising the at-risk program, he said.

He said the school would get \$15,678 in the special education fund as well.

Mr. Glodt said the money in the general fund is the only one that matters when it comes to teacher salaries. Enrollment, said Mr. Glodt, will dictate if there needs to be

any cuts in the district.

There is a small senior class this year, he said, so the district will get a little reprieve. The following year, there will be 50 seniors graduating and 25 or so kindergartners, so the district may take a hit then.

Another part of the bill, said Mr. Glodt, is that it allows districts to increase the so-called local option budget to 27 percent. The highest it can go now is 25 percent, but the Oberlin district is only at right at 19 percent. The local option budget comes from local

(See DISTRICT on Page 10A)

## Postal worker elected to council; incumbents return

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

A postal worker won a seat on the Oberlin City Council in voting Tuesday, joining two incumbent members to fill three seats.

Rob McFee, a Scoutmaster and church leader, had 85 write-in votes to fill the seat being vacated by Stan McEvoy.

In the only other contested race on the ballot, incumbent Delayne May was re-elected to the Oberlin School Board with 81 votes. Her opponent, Jody Robertson, got 60 votes for the District 4 seat.

Voters wrote in the names of six candidates for the open council seat, some of whom had told friends they would take the job. No one had announced for the seat by last week, however, and no one mounted much of a campaign.

Among the write-ins, McFee had 85 votes, Rose Riffle 46, Mr. McEvoy 33, Robert Rouse 31, Jim Reeves 13 and Undersheriff Michael French 12.

Mr. McEvoy decided not to run again for re-election earlier this

year. That left an open spot on the ballot, and no one filed to take his place.

Asked if he was surprised, Mr. McFee said, "A little, yeah."

"I told a couple of guys I would do it. I thought they were yanking my chain."

"I think three people asked me. One came in today and asked me. I kind of got a little spooked, and now I'm real spooked."

The councilman-elect has been before the council this year to appeal a notice to clear junk vehicles from his property. He said he didn't think much would change though — "we only changed one person" — but he wonders why the city always has to bow to federal mandates for expensive projects like a new sewer plant.

"This is the first time I've ever been drafted," he said. "They quit that right after I got out of high school."

Incumbent Joe Stanley was the top vote getter Tuesday with 428. He said he doesn't have any agenda (See COUNCIL on Page 10A)

## Write-in candidates dominate ballots in small city elections

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

Norcatur voters made a start at Tuesday's election, but did not fully settle the issue of who will be on their city council for the next four years.

With the mayor's job and four council seats open, no one filed for the election in Norcatur.

Doug Dempewolf won re-election as mayor with 46 write-in votes to Fred Molzahn's 13 and 2 each for Carl Lyon and Troy Wentz.

Norcatur had three four-year terms and Mr. Lyon got the most votes with 42, followed by Linda Hunt, 26, and Mark Bailey 24.

Other vote getters were Charles Hixon, 20; Jean Pelkey, 8; and Jeanne Pelky and Carolyn Plotts, 1 each.

Norcatur also has a two-year unexpired terms open and Mr. Bailey

got the nod with 23 write-in votes, followed by Ms. Hunt, 15, Mr. Lyon, 7 and Mr. Hixon and Ms. Pelkey, 3 each.

Decatur County Clerk Marilyn Horn, who serves as county election officer, said that she will send out certificates to the top three vote getters for the four-year term and a second certificate to Mr. Bailey for winning the two-year term. Mr. Bailey will have to tell her, she said, which seat he will accept. After that, the Norcatur City Council will have to select someone to fill the vacancy.

Mayor Bob Jones won re-election in Jennings, as 32 people wrote his name on the blank. Eugene Mrstik and Larry Johnson each got two write-in votes.

Only Louise Cressler was on the ballot for City Council in Jennings. (See VOTERS on Page 10A)

## Retired reporters make stop in Oberlin

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Two retired newspaper reporters made a stop in Oberlin Sunday night to have dinner with the mayor and interview the publishers of the town's newspaper for a piece about community newspapers and changes on the High Plains.

George Anthan from Kansas City and Jack Coffman from St. Paul drove in Sunday, stayed at the LandMark Inn, and left Monday morning.

The men said they met as reporters at the *Des Moines Tribune* in 1966, where they covered state government and politics into the 1970s.

Mr. Coffman went to the *Minneapolis Tribune* to be the oil and gas reporter while Mr. Anthan worked in the Washington Bureau for the *Des Moines Register* for 32 years. Mr. Anthan retired in 2001 and Mr. Coffman in 1999.

Since then, both the men have been doing some freelance writing.

Mr. Coffman said they received a grant from the Alicia Patterson Foundation to write about declining population on the Great Plains. The stories were printed in the foundation's quarterly.

Now the men have received money from the Fund for Investigative Journalism, part of the Knight Foundation, to write about community newspapers and changes on the plains. He said they started the project last year.

"We love the Great Plains," said Mr. Coffman. "For two city guys, it has been a delight to talk to people."

The project has been tinged with sadness, they said, because so many towns have lost population and young people are abandoning this part of the country.

It is a huge part of the nation's history that is being abandoned, said Mr. Coffman.

Mr. Anthan said they heard about (See MEN on Page 10A)



## Fun with colors

**KOLE BRETH** painted a zebra (above) during preschool Thursday while his classmate **Brittney Wesley** (left) colored a lion. The students have been learning about the alphabet and the zoo. They have visited various business places during the year to find something for each letter.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



**GEORGE ANTHAN** and Jack Coffman sat on the steps of the LandMark Inn Monday morning. The men stayed at the inn Sunday night while researching a story here.

## Fair won't feature demolition derby

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

When the fair board decided to try something new for Saturday night at the Decatur County Fair this year, the Oberlin Lions Club declared they wouldn't sponsor a demolition derby on another night.

As things stand, there apparently will be a tractor pull in front of the grandstand on Saturday, nothing on Friday and no demolition derby.

The fair board decided to try something new, said Ken Badsky, president, and booked the Colorado Truck and Tractor Pull Association to put on a tractor pull on Saturday night, Aug. 13, the last evening of the fair.

Jack Benton, with the Lions Club, said that he got a call from a Fair Board member saying they couldn't have the derby on Saturday night, then the club received a letter about a month later. The club sent the board a letter saying if that was the decision, they would skip the derby

this year.

He said the fair board has sent another letter inviting Lions representatives to the next meeting at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, April 13.

In the past, Saturday night has been set aside for the Demolition Derby. At the beginning of the month, Mr. Benton sent a letter to the fair board and the Decatur County commissioners saying that since Saturday had been taken from them, the Lions would not sponsor a derby this year.

The Lions Club used to have a derby on Friday and Saturday nights, said Mr. Benton, but Friday night wasn't as well attended and they didn't get as many cars, so the club decided to drop that evening.

Ken Badsky, president of the fair board, said Saturday night was the only night the tractor pull could be held. It will feature five classes of tractors and the weighted sled will (See BOARD on Page 10A)

# \* Council gets new face

(Continued from Page 1A)  
for the next four years, but will try to do what's best for all concerned. Mr. Stanley said he was surprised by the number of write-in candidates who got votes.

Incumbent Jay Anderson received the second-highest votes with 319. He said he wants to work on economic development in the next four years.

Since Mr. McFee received the third highest total, he will be given a certificate and receive a seat for the next four years.

Mrs. May said the school board has a full slate of items to work on in the next four years, including continuing to work on the buildings, budget problems and declining enrollment. Mrs. May said all of that needs to be handled while maintaining the quality of the schools.

Mrs. Robertson, who filed for the seat back in September, wasn't available for comment.

Incumbent Dwayne Jackson received 123 votes to retain his seat on the board representing District 5. Incumbent Chris Bailey received 77 votes to keep his seat representing District 6. Neither had an opponent.

County commissioners will canvass the ballots at 10 a.m. Friday to make sure all of the numbers are correct. At that time, they will decide how to handle any provisional ballots.

# \* Voters write in names

(Continued from Page 1A)  
She won the election with 43 votes. With two other positions also open, write-in candidates Don Bolt was elected with 10 votes and Raymond Yahnee with 5. Warren Tacha had 3 and Mr. Mrstik received 1.

In Dresden, there were three open seats on the council and no one filed. Delores Dempersmidt won the election with 12 votes, followed by Don Ritter with 9. Lillian Sulzman and Russell Rhodes each received 1 write-in vote.

Mrs. Horn said that the county commissioners would probably determine the third seat by a coin toss, since it was a tie.

In the Jennings School Board election, there were five seats open. Frances Bader, who was appointed to fill an unexpired term, was on the ballot to complete that term. She won with 138 votes. Another unexpired term was won by Alisha Vahling with 16 votes. Jeanette Krizek and Jerry McKenna each received 3 votes for the two-year term.

With three four-year terms open on the board and no one on the ballot, the commissioners may have some more work.

Gary Gillum was the top vote getter with 31 and Mrs. Krizek came in second with 20 to win two of the seats. However, the third seat was a tie with Ms. Vahling and Lawrence Carter each getting 16 votes.

Others with write ins were Warren Tacha, 11; Jerry McKenna, 10; and Pat McKenna, 2.

Mrs. Horn said that in this case, Ms. Vahling will have to decide which seat she wants. If she takes the two-year term, Mr. Carter will get the four-year one. However, if she wants the four-year term, it will be a coin flip and the school board will have to fill the two-year term.

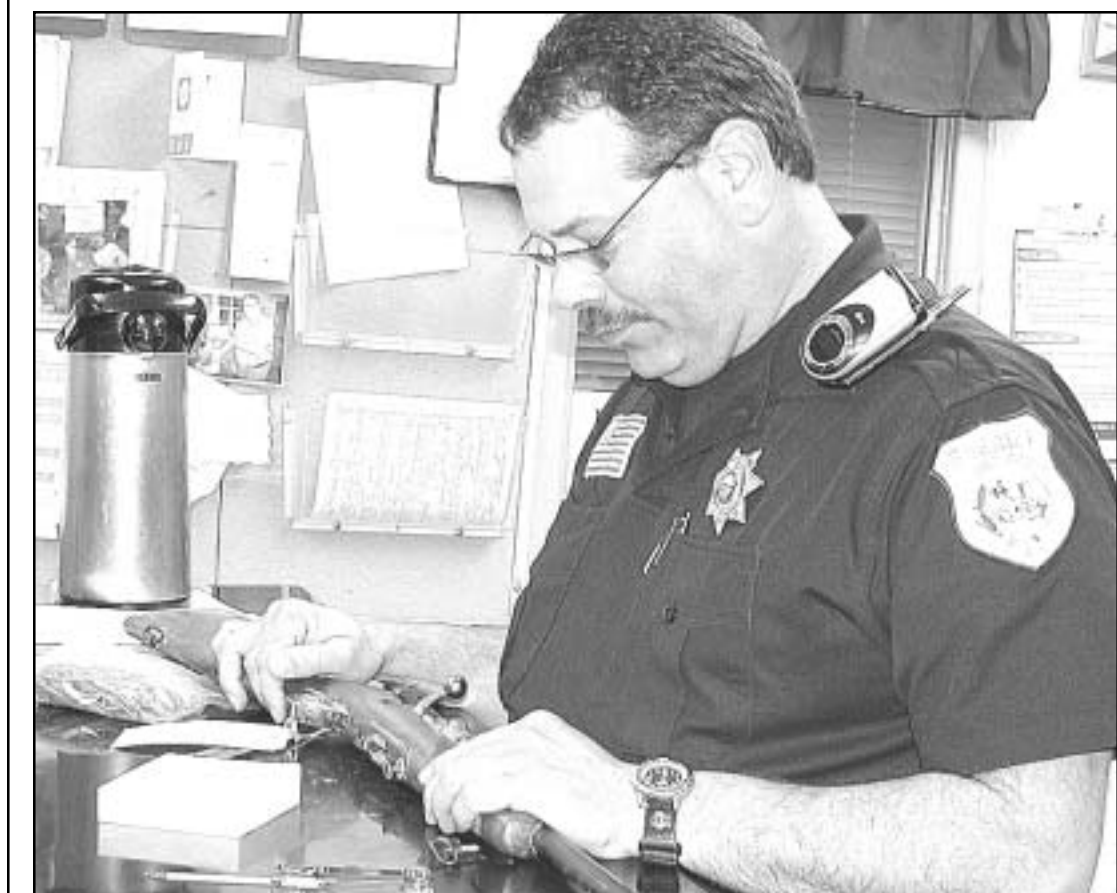
# Marriage issue gets strong yes

Decatur County voters overwhelmingly approved changing the Kansas Constitution to include the so-called marriage amendment in voting Tuesday.

In Decatur County, 77 percent of the 814 people who voted on the amendment, or 662, wanted to add it to the constitution. That left 152 people who were against the idea.

The results were similar to the vote across the state. At 10 p.m. Tuesday night, with 133 out of 210 precincts reporting across the state, the amendment had won or was winning in all of them by 70 percent. The partial preliminary vote was 307,492-130,722.

The amendment, which was published in papers across the state and



**UNDERSHERIFF** Michael French tagged one of the recovered guns into evidence (above). He recovered the 15 stolen guns (below) last Monday in Gorham, near Russell. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

# Officer recovers guns

A call from a man in Gorham on Monday led the Decatur County Sheriff's Office to 15 guns stolen March 16 from a home a mile and half east of town.

Undersheriff Michael French said he got a call from a man who had the guns. The man said he had read a story in the *Hays Daily News* after the guns were stolen from Evan Robertson's home and was starting to get worried. Undersheriff French said the man didn't want to identify himself at first, but did later.

He said Ronald Scott, 48, said he bought the guns from Billy Lasiter 35, for \$500. He said the two met while working on an oil rig together. Mr. Lasiter still lives in Oberlin.

Undersheriff French said he drove to Gorham on Tuesday to re-



cover the guns. Last Wednesday, the guns were tagged and put in the county evidence locker.

The collection, which comprises of some antiques, some collector pieces, some guns that belonged to Mr. Robertson's dad and some that he uses today, is valued around \$9,000.

The guns won't be returned un-

til after the court proceedings, Mr. French said.

Mr. Lasiter was arrested on Friday in McCook after he had his probation revoked.

He is being held in McCook. Undersheriff French said Mr. Lasiter has been summoned to court on Monday for charges of theft, burglary and felony possession of a firearm.

# \* Men writing article about newspapers

(Continued from Page 1A)  
Oberlin when they were at Iowa State University talking with some economists. They talked with Cornelia Flora, who heads a program dealing with rural development issues. She had been to Oberlin and identified it as a community trying all the things it should to survive. Mr. Coffman said Oberlin has a good leadership group and they aren't afraid to take risks.

The reporters came out a year ago and spent the day. At that time, they talked with Mayor Ken Shobe. Mr. Anthan said they wanted to come back and talk with the mayor again and stay at the LandMark, since it was full the last time.

The men said they will complete the newspaper story sometime in May.

They have talked with newspaper owners from the Canadian border in North Dakota down through Kansas. They met a 90-year-old school

board reporter and a professional oboe player who is also a publisher.

Mr. Coffman said they spent their lives in the newspaper business covering politics.

He said they were both spin doctors, Mr. Coffman but in all the years in the business they never got straight answers. In the last year on the project, they have talked with 250 to 260 people, he said, and it has been a delight to meet people who are anxious to talk.

Mr. Coffman said Steve Haynes, publisher of *The Oberlin Herald*, put it pretty well when he said it is important to have a newspaper in town to maintain the social fabric of the community. A newspaper is one of the institutions that helps hold everything together, he said.

Monday morning, the men headed out for Concordia. Mr. Anthan said they will talk with a few more publishers, and then to press association officials.

# \* District may get some more money

(Continued from Page 1A)  
property taxes; an increase usually requires a vote of the people.

The problem is, said Mr. Glodt, that big districts they have no problem increasing that budget because people don't care so much about property taxes.

The Oberlin district tried to increase it to 25 percent in 2004, but the voters said no.

"This plan," he said, "doesn't take the pressure off the local taxpayers."

The Legislature was under the gun from a Supreme Court ruling

that it wasn't spending enough on schools. The lawsuit is about the state being able to fund education in Kansas, he said, not the local taxpayers.

If an increase in the local taxes board with no option but to cut staff again.

Money for education should come from the state, said Mr. Glodt. If the state would do what they should be doing, then the money would come from the state and districts would have to rely less on local taxpayers.

# Storm starts, puts out fire

During the lightning and thunderstorm last Tuesday night, the Jennings Rural Fire Department was called out to a grass fire two to three miles east of Clayton on the south side of U.S. 383, but never could find it.

Chief Kerry Green said the call came in around 8:30 p.m. He guessed that lightning was the cause, but when they got to the location, it was raining and they never did see any flames. He said he figured the storm started it and put it out.

# \* Board asks Lions to next meeting

(Continued from Page 1A)  
come out of Colorado.

The board, he said, wanted to hold the demolition derby Friday night and then the tractor pull on Saturday to help fill the grandstands more nights of the fair.

"Our club has had this event on Saturday night for many, many years," wrote Mr. Benton. "We feel that to have participants, it needs to be on a Saturday night. Most people that have cars work during the week and would not be able to be here for a Friday-night event."

In the past, he said, they have had cars from all over and there is no way for many drivers to get off at 5 p.m. and get here.

Mr. Benton noted that the derby is often the most popular event at the grandstands, and the Lions always give the Fair Board 10 percent of the profits. The rest of the money goes back into the community for club projects, he said.

Mr. Badsky said the board will get the entire gate for the truck and tractor pull and then hopefully will make something after expenses.

Most people who have things at the grandstand give the board 7 per-

cent of the gross, he said, but the Lions Club give 10 percent of the net.

Commissioner Patricia Glenn said she thought the fair board should have contacted the Lions Club before the decision was made to have the tractor pull on Saturday night to see if the Lions would be interested in Friday night.

The board also is planning a "mut-ton bustin'" event on Tuesday night, and the Colgate Country Showdown music show one night, maybe some area entertainers and the truck and tractor pull. That means if the demo derby isn't held on Friday night, there will be one evening open.

Mr. Benton said the Lions would not be holding the derby on Friday, but did ask for the grandstands for the Saturday night of the 2006 fair.

"We wish you the best of luck on trying to find entertainment that will fill the stands and return 100 percent to the community," he wrote.

Mr. Badsky said it is always good to have variety at the grandstands. The board thinks the truck and tractor pull will get people into the stands, and to the carnival afterwards.

Horn said that she was pleased with the turnout.

This year, she said, 38 percent of the county's 2,420 registered voters went to the polls.

"We went back 10 years, and we normally run 33 percent," she said. "We had very poor advance voting. We normally have 100-some. This time we only had 76."

There was a strong vote in the small cities, she said. "Dresden, Norcatur and Jennings had very good turnouts," she said; in Dresden, 58 percent; Norcatur, 48 percent; and Jennings, 48 percent of the eligible voters cast their ballots.

In Oberlin, 484 people cast their ballots out of a possible 1,382 for 38 percent.

Decatur County Clerk Marilyn

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