

Board agrees to cool schools this year

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

After over an hour of discussion and number crunching, the Oberlin School Board decided to accept a bid of \$220,000 to put in air conditioning and upgrade electrical work at both schools this summer.

The board talked about numbers for a long time at its meeting last Monday, since they are also entering a three-year roof project to reroof all three major buildings. What it came down to was a decision whether or not to take the leap and put in the air conditioning or to wait — and maybe never get the work done. The board agreed to pay for the improvements out of the capital outlay fund, rather than borrowing any money, though that may require a 2-mill tax increase.

Board Member Monte Moore said he was

School Roundup

At its meeting last Monday, the Oberlin School Board:

- Decided to change the late-start day next month to Wednesday, April 5. Story to come.
- Approved a bid of \$220,000 to put in air conditioning and upgrade electrical work at both schools this summer. Story to left.
- Heard that both schools will be offering summer school this year. Story on Page 3A.

• Heard that the district might have to use its reduction-in-force policy for teachers at Sappa Valley Youth Ranch to get them on different contracts, even though the facility is reopening in April. Story below.

• Approved republishing the budget so it can spend an extra \$11,000. Story on Page 5A.

a little concerned about having enough money for the air conditioning with the roof project carrying through for three years. It

will be tight for the capital outlay, he said, adding that he isn't opposed to the projects, but is concerned that there might not be

enough money.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said whether or not the board decided to do the air conditioning and electrical work, he plans to come to the April meeting and ask for a two-mill increase in the property tax levy for capital outlay, from four mills to six.

Mr. Glodt said he doesn't think the district has any option on the roof repairs. The district received insurance money for the repairs, he said, and if there is another storm and the roofs leak again, the district will have to pay the cost.

The bid for the first phase of the roof work was \$324,000 from Wray Roofing out of Newton, which the board accepted. The bid includes the elementary school except for the kindergarten building and the east side of the high school. That is about 45 percent

of the entire three-year project.

Every phase of the three-part project has to be re-bid, said Mr. Glodt. He said he thought the district should ask for bids again in August. The other two phases are to finish the high school and do the kindergarten building.

The board, principals and a few teachers in the audience discussed which rooms to air condition. High School Principal Charles Haag said he didn't know if the weight room needs to be air conditioned. The large fans there work well and it is used mostly in the morning, he said.

If the board doesn't decide to do the air conditioning and electrical work, Mr. Glodt said, the cost could be \$300,000 by next year.

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MONDAY AFTERNOON, custodian Bob Berls (above) headed outside with his snow blower to clean off the sidewalks around the Decatur County Courthouse. At Dollar

General (below), a man dressed in warm clothes cleaned up the parking lot.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Forecast is right as county gets hit with heavy storm

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Forecasters at the National Weather Service office in Goodland predicted a 100 percent chance of a winter storm starting Sunday night, and they were right.

By evening Monday, the area was covered with eight to 10 inches of snow, snowplows were bucking drifts and some highways were closed, along with many businesses, banks and government offices.

Mist fell through the weekend. Around 5 p.m. Sunday, sleet and snow started to fall, coating lawns in Oberlin in white. Then it stopped. Roads were a little slick, but there wasn't any more moisture. Still, gauges in town measured about half an inch of moisture by nightfall.

By midnight, there still wasn't

anything falling, but Monday morning everything was covered in white and the snow just kept coming.

By noon, there was about seven inches on the ground, not counting drifts, in and out of town.

Scott Blair, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Goodland, said the highest amount of snow accumulation in Decatur County was 12 inches. The area forecast was to get another 1 to 2 inches overnight.

Although schools were closed and the kids were home on spring break, it seemed that very few headed outside and not until afternoon. With blowing snow all day, people seemed to stay pretty close to home, although workers at Raye's Grocery said they were busy.



Congressman Jerry Moran was scheduled to be in Norcatur at 10 a.m., but made it to Norton and decided not to come the rest of the

way. His office said the meeting will be rescheduled.

On Main Street in Oberlin, (See SNOWFALL on Page 5A)

Teachers might get new contracts for work at ranch

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

The Oberlin School District may need to use its reduction in force policy for teachers who taught at Sappa Valley Youth Ranch to get the staff on different contracts, even though the facility is going to reopen in April.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt told the school board last Monday that he is waiting on a call from Dale Dennis, assistant commissioner of the state Department of Education, to see if the board is going to have to send reduction in force letters. The board was ready at the meeting to read and approve the letters for five teachers at the ranch, but didn't because Mr. Glodt wasn't sure if they will still have to use the policy.

The teachers had been working at the ranch when it was run by Clarence M. Kelley Youth and Detention Services, but the old operator has pulled out and will be gone by the end of the month. Teachers are under contract until the end of the school year, however.

The Oberlin City Council approved a contract with a new operator, Kings Camp, at a special meeting just before the board meeting. Dick Kelsey of Goddard, owner of Kings Camp, is planning to take over April 1 and have 21 kids in the

facility by April 17. Those 21 kids will need to be educated, Mr. Glodt said.

He said when the ranch announced it was closing, he called Mr. Dennis. It was going to cost the district \$125,000 from the in-town budget to honor the contracts for the teachers if the state decided not to reimburse the district for the school at the ranch.

The state agreed to pay the rest of the year for the state aid for the ranch school, said Mr. Glodt, but basically said not to let it happen again. There is nothing in the contracts for those teachers that says what happens if the ranch closes, he said.

The district might have to issue letters letting the teachers go and rehire them under a different contract, said Mr. Glodt.

The issue might be worked out in negotiations with the teacher union, he said; he just isn't sure yet.

The school district never had a contract with Kelley? asked Susan May, who teaches at the ranch. Should it have one with the new company?

The school district doesn't have any say over what the company does, said Mr. Glodt. Mr. Kelsey, he said, told him that they wouldn't

(See CHANGE on Page 5A)

Community invited to help write goals

The committee set up to help generate a 10-year vision statement and goals for Decatur County will host a "community conversation" at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, April 6, at the high school cafeteria.

Terry Woodbury, president of Kansas Communities LLC., said the group will be serving a free dinner before the session discussion at 6:15 p.m. Since the Oberlin City Council is meeting the same night, he said, members will adjourn their meeting and go to the high school.

The idea is to bring the entire community together and talk about the future, the consultant said.

Jesse Carter, with the steering committee, said this project will help people in the county recognize our existing assets. Hopefully, he said, the project will help the county build on those assets and also recognize opportunities to grow.

Anyone who has any interest in the county's future should be at the community conversation, said Mr. Carter. Many people have asked about the project, he said, and the best way to find out about it is to come to the meeting.

Throughout the evening, people will work together to generate lots and lots of improvement ideas for

the county, he said.

The ideas will then be used for a "vision retreat" a month later. The 35 people to attend the vision retreat will be nominated at the meeting next month.

Those ideas, said Mr. Woodbury, will be fashioned into a 10-year visions statement and four to six goals at the retreat.

Citizen action teams will be formed after the retreat and it will be their job to implement programs to achieve the goals.

Mr. Woodbury said the steering committee has already raised the \$3,000 seed money it needs to get the project started.

After the conversation and the retreat, he said, the committee will be asked to finish raising money for the year by recruiting investors. They will have to raise another \$7,500, he said, which should be matched by the Kansas Health Foundation and the state Department of Commerce.

This entire project is about getting more people involved and developing more and different leadership, he said. The project is designed to get people focused on a few goals that everyone can agree on to improve Decatur County.

Fair housing decree alone on city agenda

The Oberlin City Council will meet at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway for its second meeting of the month.

City Administrator Gary Shike said Mayor Ken Shobe will read a proclamation on fair housing since

April is fair housing month. As of Monday, that was the only item on the agenda.

The meeting is open to the public and will be aired on local access cable channel 7.