

## Longer, wider runway plan proposed

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

The Oberlin Airport, just north of town, could be the home of a longer wider runway if plans to help bring customers to a Jennings bus factory work out.

The airport, paved in 1964, has a 4,300-foot paved runway along with a few sod runways that pilots still use.

Spray planes, personal planes and air ambulances use the field, as well as a few helicopters. The city owns the property, but the fixed-base operator, Bob Fraker, manages the terminal and sells fuel.

City Administrator Gary Shike said the city set up an airport committee with five members. The committee advises the city council on issues pertaining to the airport.

### Meeting scheduled for airport

Anyone interested in the future of the Oberlin Airport should attend a meeting at 1 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway set to discuss the idea of building a longer runway.

City Administrator Gary Shike said he, Councilman Jay Anderson and Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Area Eco-

conomic Development Corp., made phone calls and wrote letters last week to invite people to the meeting.

Mr. Shike said they have invited the city's consulting engineers from Bucher, Willis and Ratliff representatives with Bus and Coach International (See MEETING on Page 8A)

Bus and Coach International, which bought the old Jennings School, asked the county to build it a 5,000 foot runway, said Mr. Shike. Now, however, the firm says it needs a 7,000-foot runway.

At the BCI open house at the be-

ginning of the month, Phil Oldridge, chief executive officer and president, said that an expansion to the airport will expand the community like there is no tomorrow. He said BCI needs an airport with a longer runway to help get parts in here and

do transit sales. Currently that can't be done without someone in a truck driving 4 1/2 hours.

The longer runway, said Mr. Shike, could be important for economic development, and not just to help the Jennings firm. It could help

get other businesses here, he said, because a lot of companies that look at moving here ask about the airport. They want to know how they can get people and products in and out of this area, he said, and a 7,000-foot runway could handle most business jets.

For a 5,000-foot runway, said Mr. Shike, the project will cost \$2 million to \$3 million. That includes land and making the runway not only longer, but wider than the present 50 feet.

A legal notice published by the city in *The Oberlin Herald* in October says construction of a 5,000-foot by 75-foot runway, including grading, drainage and paving, would cost \$2.8 million. A taxiway to serve it would cost \$300,000. Installing

new medium-intensity runway lighting, precision approach path indications and medium-intensity taxiway lighting would cost \$280,000. To buy land and construct a fence could cost \$315,000.

That's a total of \$3,695,000.

That price doesn't include the \$68,000 for an updated airport layout plan or preparing an environmental assessment, the administrator said.

Mr. Shike said he's not sure yet what a 7,000-foot runway would cost. He said the company decided it needs a 7,000-foot runway because that is what freight haulers need.

The city, he said, will probably apply for financial help with the (See LONGER on Page 8A)

## Game bird numbers drop with no food

Pheasant and quail numbers could be knocked down drastically, thanks to the recent winter weather in western Kansas.

Randy Rodgers, small game biologist with the Kansas Wildlife and Parks, said it could take several years depending on the reproduction of the birds to recover from a winter weather event like the state has seen in the last few weeks.

After the initial blizzard, he said, he was still optimistic because pheasants are tough critters, but the snow hasn't melted and the bad weather has gone on too long. Some of the ground cover needs to melt so that the pheasants and quail can get to the food underneath.

The birds are severely stressed, said Mr. Rodgers, and highly vulnerable to predators. The snow needs to melt off and quickly.

Obviously, he said, winter weather like this, with the area receiving over 30 inches of snow since the end of 2006 can dramatically change the numbers of the birds.

Pheasants can go 10 days on the

top side without food, but they are bigger birds. Quail, said Mr. Rodgers, can't live as long without food.

The birds will go to wherever they can find bare ground for food, he said, which in many cases brings them to the side of the road. Of course, that leaves the birds vulnerable to being hit by vehicles.

Under normal circumstances, said Mr. Rodgers, he would never suggest people scatter food for the birds, but given the severity of the weather in this case he would. He said it would help the birds if people put out corn, milo or wheat for them. The thing is, he said, is that if people do scatter grain for the birds they need to be careful not to put it near a good perching place where an owl or hawk might get them.

Good places are in thick Cedar cover or other places where the birds can hide and eat.

He said he was hopeful early on in the storms, but now he isn't as hopeful.

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## Decatur County hit with more snow over the weekend

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

The forecast called for an inch or two of snow, but it seemed forecasters were a little off, as Decatur County got another five inches over the weekend.

The snow started to fall early Saturday morning, lasting all day.

There was enough Sunday morning for some churches to cancel services. The announcer on KFNJ Radio noted that both the *Salina Journal* and *Wichita Eagle* got to town, but the carriers couldn't get out to deliver them.

By Sunday afternoon, the sun was out, the flakes were done for the most part, and people headed outside with shovels, snow blowers and larger equipment to clean off the sidewalks, driveways and streets.

Late that evening, Oberlin school officials decided to call off classes for Monday. Superintendent Kelly Glodt said he went out and drove the county roads, which had already been plowed. He said he could hardly get his four-wheel-drive pickup up and down them, let alone a bus.

He said he could have decided to run the buses on storm routes and whoever could get to school would get there, but that would still mean kids driving on some of those roads.

The person who normally cleans off the parking lots at the schools wasn't able to do the job, he said, because he was stuck out of town.

At 10 p.m., after talking with other superintendents, district transportation Brian Simonsson, and Tim Stallman, county road and bridge supervisor, the decision was made. The news made it on some stations, said Mr. Glodt, but not all, because the nightly show was over for some.

## School canceled for storm

Recent storms have kept students and staff out of school for five days so far, but Oberlin's school superintendent says he isn't worried that those days will have to be made up sometime.

The minimum number of hours set by the Kansas Department of Education that students have to be in school is 1,116, said Superintendent Kelly Glodt. The district is set up to go around 1,300 said elementary Principal Duane Dorshorst, so there's still plenty of leeway.

At this point, unless the district has a ton more snow days, everything will be fine, said Mr. Glodt.

Last year, he said, the district had about three snow days and still wound up around 70 hours over the minimum, he said.

"We aren't in jeopardy of going over," said Mr. Glodt.

Mr. Glodt said he tries to err on the side of caution when it comes to the safety of the kids.

Mr. Glodt said since there wasn't any school Monday, the scheduled junior varsity girls and C boys basketball games that evening had been canceled, too. The school can have (See STORMS on Page 8A)



AT PRACTICE, Coach Gay Leitner (above) showed a gymnast the moves in the routine for the upcoming telethon. Jenna Long (below) worked on the routine. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

## Gymnasts prepare to show their moves at annual telethon

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Head over feet, she went down the long, red mat.

At the end, the girl stood, faced the opposite direction and went again, head over heels to the other side.

It was the beginning of class, which included warm-ups. As the girls did somersaults and other basic tumbling moves, the coaches watched, helped and corrected.

After finishing their moves, the girls got into a circle, stretched, then lined up to learn their routine for the upcoming Seeds of Hope Telethon on Saturday, Feb. 3, at The Gateway.

Every Friday afternoon, more than 50 girls and boys meet at the Bohemian Hall at the Last Indian Raid Museum for gymnastic lessons through Creative Movements.

The main office of Creative Movements is in Atwood, but for the past three years, said coach Diane Sis, the group has run a satellite clinic in Oberlin.

Mrs. Sis said Creative Movements is celebrating its 10th year. Before the satellite clinic in Oberlin, she said, about 18 kids were commuting to classes in Atwood. So were several of the coaches, so the nonprofit group found a place to rent and started to

have gymnastic lessons here.

The head coaches here, said Mrs. Sis, are Robyn Rouse, Gay Leitner and Susan May, assisted by Stephanie Blau, Sarah Howland and Kasey May.

Each of the coaches has certificates for professional development program level 1, USA gymnastics safety and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Mrs. Sis said the classes are for kids 3 and older. Sometimes, she said, teens continue with gymnastics into junior high and high school.

Gymnastics, she said, builds coordination, strength and flexibility and teaches the students self-discipline.

Mainly, said Mrs. Sis, the coaches teach the kids tumbling, although they also have a carpeted beam and use wedges and trapezoid pieces. They have a vault and spring board, she said, but concentrate on the floor.

The gymnasts perform at basketball games or wrestling matches in Oberlin, at the annual tumbling meet in Atwood on Saturday, March 10, and at tumbling meets in Nebraska.

Creative Movements also tries to send the gymnasts and coaches to camp once a year, she said.

