

* Airport plan could mean longer runway

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Mr. Weisenburger said he didn't know if a 7,000-foot runway can exist at the current site. The city will need two miles of land. The closest runway of this size is in Garden City and that won't work here.

After all of that, he said, they will do a set of drawings. That will be sent to the agency to make sure there aren't any air space conflicts or anything. Finally a financial plan with the costs will be done.

This all takes about a year to do, said Mr. Weisenburger. The federal agency doesn't work fast.

Can this meeting today, asked Council woman Rhonda May, be used as the kick-off meeting? Mr. Weisenburger said it was up to them, but the paperwork will need to be done.

He said they were talking about a 7,000 foot runway for cargo planes, but companies like UPS have smaller planes that can land on shorter runways.

What needs a 7,000 foot runway to land, asked Councilman Ray Ward. Is that a 737. Yes, but that depends on altitude and temperatures. It could need to be longer.

Sometimes, said Mr. Weisenburger, the Federal Aviation Agency doesn't have the money to pay for all of the project in one year, but maybe they can do a 5,000 foot runway this year and then do the rest the next year.

Ed Young, with the Kansas Department of Transportation Aviation Division, said when the project started with the department, the goal was to have an airport that could work with an air ambulance every 30 miles. The department's program ends this year.

Oberlin, said Mr. Young, does already have \$450,000 from the federal agency for their airport.

The transportation department does have a small pot of money available, but it is a high-demand program. There aren't any guarantees.

The Kansas Department of Transportation funds projects at 90 percent, said Mr. Weisenburger, while the federal agency funds them at 95 percent.

At this juncture, said Mr. Young, it wouldn't make sense for Oberlin to ask for the transportation department to pay for the project; not until Oberlin spends the \$450,000 from the federal agency. The city should be getting another \$150,000 this year from the agency, but it hasn't yet.

What's wrong with using the McCook Airport, asked Dale Soderlund, for a year or two, before spending all of that money. It is only 25 to 30 minutes to get to Oberlin.

That is exactly what's happening now, said Larry Brennan, vice president with BCI. That is where the jet flew in landed and is parked.

What is the benefit for Oberlin for a longer runway? asked Mr. Soderlund.

This is a community airport, said Mr. Brennan. It is a building block for the whole county; it isn't just for the Bus and Coach International company. Mr. Brennan said on Jan. 5, the company did three turns, or three planes into McCook. Each time that meant purchasing \$9,000 to \$10,000 in fuel that was purchased in McCook. There was a ground crew each time and people who serviced the plane.

That was just in one day, he said,

and all of that money went to McCook.

Each place that we land, said Mr. Brennan, the company spends thousands of dollars in fuel. All of that money goes to that city, why not have it go to Oberlin. The airport also creates jobs.

Mr. Brennan said when they started looking for places for the company one of the things they were looking for was an airport with a 5,000-to-6,000 foot runway. He said they decided to build the headquarters in Jennings, without that length of runway.

No one predicted that when I-70 was built that all of those businesses would pop up along it, he said.

The City of Oberlin doesn't sell jet fuel, said Mr. Soderlund.

The city can't, said Bob Fraker, who is on the airport committee, because their facility isn't there, but that doesn't mean that with jets landing here the facility can't be built.

"There aren't any guarantees," said Mr. Brennan, "but I know that if we don't do it, those jets won't land here and Oberlin won't have the facility."

The comment was followed with applause from most of the audience and a few "that's right."

How much money is your company going to put into the project, asked Mr. Soderlund.

Mr. Brennan said the company wants to start doing transit buses, which means getting parts in and out of here. The original concept was to build a runway near the facility in Jennings. That didn't work.

The next best thing was to look at the existing facilities and the company entered into a memorandum of understanding with Decatur County to expand the facility.

In the long run, said Mr. Brennan, Bus and Coach International wants to expand the business.

"We'd rather see that money come into this community," he said, "instead of into McCook."

"We want to build buildings and improvements here," said Mr. Brennan. "I am authorized to purchase land for that."

Gus Wolters asked how much dollar wise is the company going to put in?

How much land are you going to sell the company and for how much money? answered Mr. Brennan.

"Don't think for a minute that the people in McCook aren't using the numbers from Bus and Coach International to ask the Federal Aviation Administration for money to improve their airport," said Mr. Weisenburger.

Marilyn Noone, with First National Bank, said the bus company won't be the only one using the airport. The bank has a jet that can't land here, she said, so that means she has to drive to Goodland to get on it.

"I can't say what other businesses will do," said Mr. Brennan. "I can only say what we will do, but I guarantee that it won't happen without doing anything."

"Think back about 50 to 60 years ago," said Councilman Joe Stanley, "I wonder if there was this same kind of meeting about paving the highways. Some people probably said it didn't need to happen because it would increase taxes. Some people thought past tomorrow and built a gas station or a Frontier Motel."

Someone might give us 90 to 95 percent of the funding; that is a pretty good deal, he said.

Making pizzas



NORCATUR FIREMEN Luke Bailey (above left) and Mark Bailey made pizzas at the former Norcatour High School this weekend. The volunteer firemen use the event as a fundraiser to help buy new equipment for the fire department. — Herald staff photo by Carolyn Plotts

*Teams tell about goals met and set

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trying to promote leadership in the youth and others. Included in that is promoting community ownership.

She said they are developing a letter to be sent to youths to help them become better leaders and are putting up posters.

One of the goals is to start a Kansas Agriculture Leadership Program for the community kids. The group is also trying to get students to leadership conferences.

One of the ideas is to have a community work day in April so the kids can get out and get involved.

Sappa Park
Co-convener Carolyn Burtis

said the group made a seven-minute DVD of things going on in the park. She said she noticed that the group has surpassed their two-year goal of putting in walking trails, identifying those with signs, putting in trash receptacles and a Frisbee golf course.

Mrs. Burtis said volunteers have cleaned out two dump spots, put in the trails, fire pits, a roof on the shelter house and benches.

Thanks to Pheasants Forever, food plots have been put out at the park for wildlife. The group has also helped build and maintain walking trails.

A group of high school students put in a Frisbee golf course. She said she would like to see a tournament at the park.

Goals for the future include painting the shelter house, repairing the bathrooms, maintenance of the trails, getting equipment and a storage place for that equipment, a wetlands, signs for the park and developing a better camping area.

Mrs. Burtis said she encourages everyone to get out to the park.

Marketing and Economic Development

Rhonda May, co-convener, said their group believes that Decatur County should be and can be the cornerstone of Northwest Kansas.

One of the goals is to enhance marketing efforts of existing business here. The group is in the process of starting a 501C3 foundation with the goal of

\$500,000 in mind. The group hasn't started fundraising yet.

Ms. May said they are also working on starting a mentoring program and gathering economic data. In the future, the team would also like to develop a logo for the community.

Volunteer Network

Co-convener Doug Mason said the team's goal is to develop a network of volunteers to fulfill the needs of the community.

The team identified six projects, including the Sappa Lake, the county fair, movie theater, the Seeds of Hope Telethon, swimming pool and mission at home, which would include having a group of 40 teenagers spend five days here doing projects together.

* Agency will help pay for storm damage

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time, forms for assistance have to be filled out. He encouraged those at the meeting to fill the forms out and hand them in before the end of the meeting.

There are two types of projects, said Mr. Arnold. There is a large project, which is anything over \$59,700. Anything below that is a small project.

For small projects, said Mr. Arnold, the agency pays on the inspector estimates.

Now counties and townships know about the roads better than the agency does, said Mr. Arnold. He

said someone with the state, the federal agency and a local person will get together to look at the roads and discuss the damage. The three will then agree on a money figure.

On large projects the agency pays on demand, or when the bill is sent to the agency. The work has to be reasonable and stay within the scope of the project.

With the road damage, said Mr. Arnold, some are going to have to obviously melt some to see the actual damage. There will be some roads that the agency won't see until spring. He said that they shouldn't wait to fix them. Go ahead and fix

them and if the cost goes over the estimate, said Mr. Arnold, he can do a small project cost overrun.

He did suggest taking pictures of the damaged roads.

One of the Decatur County township officials asked if all of the townships should file their own paperwork or if the county should be filed together. Mr. Arnold said if a few townships wanted to get together and file together that would be fine, or they can file individually. All of the townships can file together too, he said.

On emergency work during the storm at the end of the year, the

agency pays overtime, but not regular pay, unless it is contracted out.

The regular hours for the worker must be kept track of, otherwise the agency won't know how to figure out the overtime.

The federal share is 75 percent, said Mr. Arnold. In the past the state has picked up 10 percent of the damage and then the local entity pays the other 15 percent. He said he doesn't know if the state will pay for the 10 percent or not.

The only damage that counts is that caused by the storm between Christmas and New Year's. The ice storm before that doesn't count

* Telethon set to raise money for groups

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to bid on the items may call either 475-3753 or 475-2639.

Anyone who still wants to donate an auction item can call Mrs. Davis at 475-3510 or Susan May at 475-3369.

Every hour different people will show off their talents.

There are gymnasts, bell ringers, piano players, gospel groups, bands and singers on the schedule, said Mrs. Davis.

Lunch and supper will be sold at

the concession stand with barbecue beef sandwiches, chili, vegetable beef soup and ham and cheese sandwiches.

There will also be chips, pie, brownies, cookies and drinks. The stand will be open all day.

"The telethon is a great community event," said Mrs. Davis. "It really takes the whole county to make the event possible with volunteers putting in many hours, talent performing and people donating to the auction and buying items from it."

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