

School Board

Man wants to serve as leader

With a desire to get into a leadership role, Dan Grafel said he decided to run for a seat on the Oberlin School Board.

Mr. Grafel said he thought about running for office for a long time. He said being part of the Kansas Agricultural and Rural Leadership program, a year-long training course in state and local government, was the final motivation he needed to decide to run. Mr. Grafel said he has kids in the schools and so does his brother Greg.

"It's so important that parents take an active role," he said.

Several years ago, said Mr. Grafel, he served on the school district's facilities committee, working on getting a bond issue passed to help improve the school buildings.

Some of the work in that plan has already been done, he said, even

though the bond issue idea didn't go anywhere.

Mr. Grafel said he was born in Manhattan and in 1970 his parents, Connie Grafel and the late Rich Grafel, moved back to Decatur County. After graduation from Decatur Community High School, he went to Kansas State University and got a degree in agricultural journalism. He worked for the *Drovers Journal* for two years and then returned home to help run the family grain elevator and farming operation at Traer.

The school system here is a good one, said Mr. Grafel. Kids get a good education and they don't fall through the cracks.

One of the good things the school board's done recently is to put air conditioning in the hottest classrooms. It means the district no longer has to lose class time for a



Dan Grafel

heat schedule in August.

There might be more opportunities to make structural changes down the road, he said. Some of that will depend on what farm prices do and what people want.

It's important in the coming years to keep up with economic development in the area, he added. With coming economic development in the area, he said, he hopes the school district can level out with the number of students.

Mr. Grafel said he's familiar with budgets, as he works with a budget on the farm and financial statements with the commercial elevator at the family operation, D&S Grain and Cattle.

"I care about Decatur County and about the schools," he said. "I have a lot invested in the community and would hopefully make good decisions."

Mr. Grafel and his wife Melinda have two children Kade, 9, and Isabel, 6.

Father wants to take active role

Decatur County native Brad Long says he would like to serve the community on the Oberlin School Board, and that is why he threw his hat into the ring.

Mr. Long said he wants to see what's going on at the school partly because he and his wife Shanna have a daughter, Miranda, who attends Oberlin Elementary School.

He said he was born here and graduated from Decatur Community High School. He went to Pratt Community College for a semester of college and then on to Colby Community College, where he received an associate's degree in agriculture.

He then returned home to farm and now lives nine miles east of Oberlin on the south side of U.S. 36.

Mr. Long said he's never served

in public office, but wants the opportunity to get involved.

If elected to the school board, he said, he would use common sense to make decisions.

Mr. Long said personally he thinks the all-day kindergarten the board's looked at is too long for kids, but it's a Catch 22, because kids have to learn a lot now in a short amount of time. One plus to all-day kindergarten, he said, is that it would be good for working parents.

In looking for a new superintendent, said Mr. Long, he would like to hire a person who knows what small communities such as Oberlin are like. He said it would also be good if they knew about agriculture and towns centered around agriculture.

Mr. Long said he's familiar with working with a budget, as he has

one on the farm.

"I've lived here all my life," said Mr. Long, "so I understand what this community wants and needs. It can be trusted, and that's important."

Declining enrollment is another issue the board needs to look at, Mr. Long said. He said we need to get more industry here and get people with families to move in, which would mean more kids in the schools. That's hard to do, though, he admitted.

Mr. Long said he would appreciate everyone's vote.



Brad Long

Incumbent wants to finish the job

With the desire to get the job done, Monte Moore said, he decided to run for another term on the Oberlin School Board.

Mr. Moore has served one term on the board, which is four years. He said he's concerned that he hasn't gotten everything accomplished that he's wanted to and he was asked to run for another term.

Mr. Moore said he wants to continue to work on facility upgrades, which the district has been doing a bit at a time.

If elected, he said, he also wants to look at ways the board can streamline administration and facility management. He said he wants to continue to support teachers in every way he can so students continue to get even a better education. That is top priority, he said.

Mr. Moore said he likes to think that he's receptive to both advice and criticism. He's available and knows quite a few people in the community.

When Mr. Moore was first elected, he noted, he was the only new board member, but he had a high-quality board to learn from.

One of the things the board will have to work on is hiring a new superintendent. Mr. Moore said the board decided to hire the company that helped them find Superintendent Kelly Glodt and Principal Charlie Haag for that job.

Mr. Moore said he thinks the board needs to find a superintendent who will communicate with the public and the staff, is fiscally responsible and stays on top of district operations.

Another issue the board's looking at is all-day kindergarten. Everything he's told from an educational standpoint, he said, is that all-day kindergarten is positive. The cost is secondary to the educational

value, he said.

Mr. Moore said even though he and his wife Kelly's two children, Allie and Gabe, have graduated and are off at college, he tries to stay connected with the schools and activities.

In the future, he said, it's important for more parents to get involved with their kids and their education. Having parents involved is better for the kids, the schools and for teachers, he said.

At the grade school, he said, some good activities have started to help parents more involved, including Donuts for Dads and Muffins for Moms, which is when parents come to the school for breakfast and visit with the kids. It's a good start, said Mr. Moore.

He said he's a little concerned over the Yearly Progress Report required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act and how small school districts like Oberlin comply. It's important for lawmakers to understand the challenges for districts the size of Oberlin, he said. The most important thing should be the students and their learning ability.

Mr. Moore represents the Oberlin district on the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center board and is on the district negotiations and policy committees. He is a member of the United Methodist Church and a full-time farmer.

Mr. Moore said he is a Decatur County native, although he left for four years when he attended Colby Community College for two years and then Fort Hays State University for two to earn an agribusiness degree.

He said he is ready to take on the challenge of serving on the school board for another four years.



M. Moore

Man interested in quality education

Dan Nedland says he decided to run for a seat on the Oberlin School Board because he believes in the importance of quality education.

The board has good people, he said, but it's important to have people with kids in the school. Once this class graduates, he said, there'll be only one board member with kids still in school.

The planned expansion of the Oberlin airport could be good for the school district, he said. It's likely it could mean more jobs, more people moving here and more kids for the school system.

Mr. Nedland said he thinks all public officials should push for the airport 150 percent.

All-day kindergarten, he said, would be wonderful for the district. Wherever it's been used, he said, kids love it. They don't actually jam more stuff at the youngest students, but give them more time to learn it.

Based on the enrollment for next year, he said, all-day kindergarten would take only one section of kindergarten, with one teacher. Keeping the students all day could save the district \$10,000, he said, because it wouldn't have to run the two to three noon buses.

Mr. Nedland said he would like to see a change in the state truancy law. Currently, he said kids 7 and older have to be in school. He said he would like that lowered to 5. It's a tremendous disadvantage to kids if they don't go to kindergarten and first grade, he said, and as a board member, he would lobby for this.

Lobbying the Legislature is important, said Mr. Nedland. It's important that all elected officials lobby and get to know state officials.

In hiring a superintendent, said

Mr. Nedland, he would like to find someone who is enthusiastic, believes in small schools and has the energy to carry out the people's desires.

Although not a native, Mr. Nedland said, he's been part of the community for a long time, as he married Rhonda May in 1983.

The couple has three children in school here, Cameron, a senior; Hunter, a freshman; and Elizabeth, a sixth grader.

Mr. Nedland grew up in rural Wisconsin. He attended college there, then went on to Rice University in Houston and the University of Oslo in Norway to study geology.

Mr. Nedland said he has worked in the oil industry as a research scientist, an exploration geologist and a manager for both domestic and international exploration teams.

Mr. Nedland said he is financially conservative and has a lifelong interest in academic excellence.

Mr. Nedland is a member of the Oberlin Rotary Club and St. John's Lutheran Church, where he serves on the finance committee, and co-convenor of the Maximizing Use of Existing Facilities group for Decatur Tomorrow.

He said he would tell people to make sure they vote in this election, as there are many important issues. If people agree with him, he said, then he would like them to vote for him. An election, he said, shouldn't be about where a person comes from or where they have lived, but over the issues the board is facing and the best people to serve the community.



D. Nedland

Woman wants to use her expertise

With 12 years experience — three full terms — Barbara Olson wants to serve another four on the Oberlin School Board.

Mrs. Olson said she gave it a lot of thought before she filed to run for office again. She said she values public education, it is her interest. She said she thought about other ways she could serve the community, but nothing is as important to her as the schools.

The board's most immediate job, said Mrs. Olson, is hiring a new superintendent. Kelly Glodt, she said, was honest with the board and they knew he might be leaving to return to South Dakota. The board's already taken the first step by hiring a search firm to help look for candidates.

No matter what happens in the election, said Mrs. Olson, the board will have at least two new members. She said her experience will help them.

The board, she said, needs to look at all-day kindergarten. She said she was at a meeting recently in Topeka and parents seem to support all-day kindergarten. It can help identify any problems a child has early, she said.

Mrs. Olson said she plans to continue looking at the possibility, but the board has to be sure the district can afford it.

If elected to another four years, she said, some things will stay the same, including providing good policies, supporting the staff and keeping the facilities in good shape.

Things have changed a lot in the last 12 years, she said. The board doesn't have as much flexibility on how to spend the district's money.

There are many more policies and requirements school districts have to follow, she said. She said, as a board member, she tries to make good choices.

Mrs. Olson said she tries to stay in tune with what the state legislators are doing as well as the lobbyists. It's important, she said, to stay informed.

The enrollment has leveled off some, she said, but the district's population may continue to drop. The board has talked about the declining numbers and tried to plan for it, but will need to continue to stay on top of things.

Mrs. Olson said one of her personal goals is to go to lots of activities and stay more informed in the happenings at the junior high and elementary school now that she no longer has children in those grades.

Mrs. Olson and her husband Dr. Mark Olson have three children, Sarah, who will graduate in May from Kansas State University with a degree in accounting; Kurt, who is a senior who plans to go to Kansas State University next fall; and Mary, a high school freshman.

On the board, Mrs. Olson serves on the policy committee, as government relations network chair and has been both vice president and president.

She's also a member of Decatur Professional Women, Alif Be Khe, PEO and the Herndon Covenant Church, where she plays piano.

Mrs. Olson said she hopes people will thank both Kurt Vollertsen and Jeannie Martin, who decided not to run for re-election.

People should vote for her, said Mrs. Olson, because she has the experience and values public education. She said she is willing to spend the time it takes to do the job well.



Barb Olson

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