

Kindergartners to go all day next year

After years of discussing and weighing the advantages of all-day kindergarten, the Oberlin School Board decided at its meeting last Monday night to offer the program this fall.

The board and principals have talked about the idea of all-day kindergarten, with some discussion that 20 years ago it was an emotional decision for parents who didn't want their 5 and 6-year-olds in school that long. But from 1998 to 2005, state figures show, the number of students in all-day kindergarten in Kansas went from 25 percent to 51

School Roundup

At the monthly meeting last Monday, the Oberlin School Board:

- Decided to purchase new math and technology textbooks for the grade school and high school for \$35,000. Story on Page 3A.
- Took final action on teacher layoffs, not renewing two contracts, cutting one to half time and rehiring

one. Story to come.

- Decided to deny early retirement to three teachers at Decatur Community High School. Story on Page 5A.
- Approved all-day kindergarten for the coming school year. Story at left.
- Approved the contracts for teachers both at the grade school and high school. Story to come.

full-day class. No one knows for sure if the state will require schools to offer the all-day program some day, said Principal Duane Dorshorst.

Oberlin Elementary School Principal Duane Dorshorst told the school board he asked parents to fill out a questionnaire about all-day kindergarten during enrollment this year. He said he got 21 of the questionnaires back and all but three were in favor of all-day kindergarten. Of the three that weren't positive, he added, on two, the mother was for it and the father against it.

Parents questioned whether the teacher would cram more information in or whether children could handle being in school all day, he said. The concerns are valid, said Mr. Dorshorst, but what people need to understand is that in all-day kindergarten, the teacher won't be giving kids more information, but spending more time on each item so the students can better grasp the material.

One of the big issues is whether the district can afford the all-day class, he said. If there's only one section of kindergarten this fall, as

appears likely, the district will actually save around \$10,000 by not having to run buses at noon.

With only one class of all-day kindergarten, he said, the district still will have only one teacher. Board members said they'd have to look at two classes in the future if they get more kids in kindergarten.

The district has offered kindergarten for over 24 years, said Mr. Dorshorst.

If there needs to be more than one section in the future, he said, then an extra class might be paid for with (See SCHOOL on Page 5A)

Superintendent interviews set for early May

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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The Oberlin School Board held a special meeting last Wednesday to discuss the search for a new superintendent and the upcoming interviews.

Charles Mansfield, with McPherson and Jacobson, the Nebraska consulting firm hired to help with the superintendent search, talked to the board about the process so far.

He said the board members need to decide how they want to handle the interviews. Each board member, said Mr. Mansfield, can ask each candidate a certain question or just one board member can ask all of the questions. The board decided they would each ask a question, which is what they did when they hired Kelly Glodt as superintendent five years ago.

Mr. Mansfield said sometimes a candidate will answer two questions in one answer. The board, he said,

needs to then be able to go with the flow.

Does the candidate get a list of the questions? asked Board President Dwayne Jackson. Mr. Mansfield said the candidates won't get a copy prior to the interview, but he suggested giving them one when they arrive.

He said the board should set up a desk for the candidates in front of the board. The candidate, he said, should have a glass of water and the questions in front of them then.

With 25 questions, asked Mr. Jackson, will the interviews take about an hour to an hour and a half? Mr. Mansfield said it will depend on the person.

Mr. Mansfield said he had good meetings with the staff, teachers and the public about the search. He said some themes developed in each of the groups under the titles include strengths of the school, strengths of the community, skills, values and (See SEARCH on Page 5A)

Money needed for electrical work at livestock building

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Fund raisers to build a new livestock building at the Decatur County Fairground brought in nearly \$60,000, nearly \$7,000 more than needed, but the building still needs electrical work and panels to keep the livestock in.

After some rough spots in the process of getting the building done, county commissioners asked to have the Fair Foundation, which handles gifts to the fairground, reorganized. They had County Attorney Steve Hirsch rewrite the bylaws for the group.

That means the foundation will go back to the way it was set, with the Decatur County commission chair, the county treasurer and the president of the fair board as members.

Last Tuesday, commissioners met with the members of the new foundation board, Commissioner Ralph Unger, Fair Board President Greg Long and Treasurer Jean Hale. Commissioner Stan McEvoy asked if at the last meeting of the foundation there were enough of the previous members to have a quorum and take a vote to put the group back

County Roundup

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Discussed particulars of naming the roads in the county as part of the new enhanced 911 system. Story on 9A.
- Heard that fund raisers to put in a new livestock building at the Decatur County Fairground made over \$59,000, with \$6,000 left after the purchase of the building. Story at left.
- Gave the OK to fix the passenger-side door on the county's blue van. Story to come.

to the original setup. Mr. Unger, who was at the meeting, said they had enough members for a quorum.

The new bylaws, said Mr. Unger, should be kept in the county attorney's office. Mr. Hirsch said he would file them. County Clerk (See FOUNDATION on Page 5A)



CREW MEMBERS worked to lay the black liner inside the first lagoon (above) of Oberlin's new waste water treatment plant on Thursday. One of the members used a small

machine that sealed the sections of the plastic liner so it won't leak.

— Photos by Gary Shike

Liners going in at plant

Workers started putting the liner in the three lagoons at the city's new waste water treatment plant last week.

With good weather, said City Administrator Gary Shike, it should take the crew about two weeks to get the three liners in. The project was supposed to be done by the end of 2006, but the contractor asked for an extension because of the weather. Basically, after the weather got bad, Mr. Shike said, it was too wet and muddy to install the plastic liner.

Under an extension granted by the state Department of Health and Environment, the project now has to be done by the end of May, said Mr. Shike.

On Thursday, the crew worked in warm weather, getting the black liner in the first lagoon down. By late morning, Mr. Shike said, the crew was 70 percent done with that lagoon and the workers thought they would finish by the end of the day.

At the Oberlin City Council meeting last Monday, Chris Miller, an engineer and owner of Miller and Associates, the engineering firm the city hired for the waste water treatment plant and upcoming water treatment plant, talked about the two projects.

He said he received a letter from Water Remediation Technology LLC, a Colorado firm they've been talking to which offered to help get rid of uranium and arsenic in the city's water. The letter says that the water would pass through treatment columns where the metals would be removed. Then the company would load the uranium



and arsenic into its circuit to be removed by the company. Mr. Shike said Mr. Miller expressed concern about the company because the city

wouldn't own the equipment that water moved through to get rid of the contaminants.

Mr. Miller asked the council to

have a meeting just to talk about water, which they agreed to do at the second meeting of the month on Thursday.

Congressman's staff hears about airport

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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Members of the city airport committee, county and city officials and others talked with a representative from Congressman Jerry Moran's office and Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer last week about the plan to extend the Oberlin Airport's runway to 7,000 feet.

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the city and the Economic

Development Corp., said the engineering firm Bucher, Willis and Ratliff was supposed to have someone at the meeting to talk about the expansion plan. Alex Richard, legislative director with Congressman Moran's office, planned to come at the same time.

The engineers didn't make it, but Mr. Richard and Sen. Ostmeyer both wanted to find out what the plans are for the airport.

Representatives from Bus and Coach International in Jennings asked the city to consider extending the runway so they could fly business jets in and out of Oberlin, and so could other companies.

Mr. Richard, from Congressman Moran's Washington office, told the group that some cities employ people who just write grant applications. To apply for money through the Federal Aviation Administra-

tion, he said, he thinks the deadline is in October.

With competitive grants, he said, the city is more apt to get money more quickly. Some cities, said Mr. Richard, are matching grants with money raised in the community.

Gene Gallentine, with the airport committee, asked if the city is going to wait to get money before they purchase any needed land. City Ad- (See OFFICIALS on Page 5A)

Art show starts Friday

The Gateway arena should look its best this weekend with over 200 pieces of art displayed for the annual ArtFest and gala.

The pieces, by adults, college students and high school students, will be hung on large boards and easels for people to get a look at.

Connie Grafel, Gateway marketing director, said the ArtFest will boast over 200 pieces from

over 100 artists.

The Friday gala costs is \$100 for two people. Patrons get to view the art first, and listen to music by Cheryl Metcalf on the piano and the Twice as Nice jazz duo from Norton. There will be food and wine, and the \$100 can be credited on a purchase from the show. Artfest will open on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.