

* Water ideas viewed

(Continued from Page 1A) the firm looked at five systems. Water treatment is needed to remove uranium and arsenic, he said, heavy metals covered by the new standards.

Mr. Miller said his recommendation is for the council to choose the standard coagulation filtration plant, which basically removes both the arsenic and uranium. This method is tried and true, he said; it's been tested and it really works.

The plant will cost about \$4.3 million, around \$700,000 more than the first treatment plant proposed. This idea, said Mr. Miller, has become the most feasible option for Oberlin.

The standard coagulation filtration will cost around \$448,000 a year to operate and pay back loans, he said. The plan doesn't just include a water treatment plant, but also a new well and replacement of some water mains.

The other options, said Mr. Miller, include two kinds of ion exchange, the first one costing \$517,000 and the second \$696,000 a year to operate. The last option is lime softening which Mr. Miller said is the most expensive to operate. It would cost \$861,000 a year.

Lime softening would blend water from three city wells, while water from one well wouldn't be blended. When those waters meet in the distribution system, said Mr. Miller, it could cause a problem.

Mr. Miller said he doesn't have a schedule for the project. Once the council makes a decision on what kind of treatment plant they want, he said, then the city can apply for grant and loan money. While that's going on, said Mr. Miller, the engineers will work up the design. After that, construction will start, he said, but that probably won't be until next year.

* U.S. 36 to get update

(Continued from Page 1A) If the city wants to fix the road as a geometric improvement project, said City Administrator Gary Shike, this is the way to do it. If the council doesn't want to do the project, he said, then he won't sign the notice to proceed.

The project doesn't come south through the intersection, said Mr. DeBoer, but the first few panels on U.S. 83 need to be replaced. The project, he said, probably won't be completed until November.

The council approved the project, including a potential cost to the city of \$22,000 to \$70,000. The council didn't say where the extra money will come from.

County to fix door on van

The Decatur County commissioners gave the OK Tuesday, April 10, to fix the old blue van so the passenger-side door doesn't fall off.

Noxious Weed Director Gaylen Huntley said the door needs to be fixed or replaced.

The commissioners approved fixing the door or replacing it at Reliance Body Shop.

Commissioner Stan McEvoy said he talked with Mr. Huntley and Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman last week and they thought the county crews could move the flag poles on the west side of the courthouse to the front on the south side. He said former Commissioner Pat Glenn had asked for the project.

Mr. Unger said if the crews can do it, then they should. The commissioners approved moving the flag poles.



Children learn to recycle

WITH HELP from her mother, Jenny Kassen, Dru Kassen put a piece of paper (above) into the newspaper recycle bin at the old county shop on Friday morning, just in time for Earth Day on Sunday. Becky Ayers (right) and some of her preschool kids checked out the recycling bins that the county provides southeast of town.

— Herald staff photos by Dave Bergling



Mental health group reports to county

The Decatur County commissioners and representatives from High Plains Mental Health discussed possible changes in the budget after legislators in Topeka set the state budget, which could change how much the agency gets.

Karen Shuler, manager, consultation and education with High Plains, said a vote which was to take place that week could cut the amount of Medicaid money the group gets by up to \$400,000 a year.

Mrs. Shuler and Ken Loos, therapist, Dan Strugill, manager, Vi Krizek, board member and Dorothy Vacura, board member, attended the commissioner's meeting last Tuesday. She said part of the reason they were there was to report on the how many people used High Plains last year. The group requested the same financial support from Decatur County, \$24,000. The commissioners said they would deal with the request this summer when they work on the county budget for next year.

Mrs. Shuler said if the vote in Topeka goes as predicted, it could mean some serious changes to the revenue at the agency. At High

County Roundup

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Talked with a representative from Court Appointed Special Advocates, which works with children in the courts, who asked for \$1,000 for next year's budget and any volunteers interested in working with kids. Story to come.
- Heard a little about the recent Fair Board meeting and asked that the at the board post the dates of the 2008

fair before the event this summer. Story on Page 2A.

• Discussed possible changes to the budget for High Plains Mental Health, depending on how lawmakers vote in Topeka. Story at left.

• Heard that the county has raised \$3,000 in sales of county history books and is accepting requests from organizations for part of the money. Story at right.

Plains, she said, they have put money in reserve to pay salaries for up to three months if they lose some of the Medicaid. That way, she said, they can make the changes they need to.

All government, said Commissioner Doyle Brown, needs to be held accountable. Each entity fits a piece of the pie. He said we need more people willing to go to Topeka and fight for this part of the state.

Surely, the fact that the vote could leave people high and dry and hurt several agencies will affect the way

the lawmakers vote, said Mrs. Vacura.

Mrs. Shuler said they know that the counties can't pick up the difference especially if it is \$400,000, but it would be nice if they could maintain the same budget.

In Decatur County, Mrs. Shuler said, workers at High Plains Mental Health helped 104 people last year, down five from the previous year.

Mrs. Vacura said she still doesn't think the agency is reaching the elderly, but she isn't sure how to change

that. It is a myth, said Mr. Sturgill, that depression is just part of getting older. Depression doesn't have to be a factor in aging, she said, but it's a nationwide problem.

Sometimes their families refer elderly patients to the agency, said Mr. Sturgill.

Mainly what happens is the younger generation, the caregivers, get the help, said Mrs. Krizek, but their parents don't.

One thing that has been positive, said Mrs. Shuler, is that she hasn't had to go to the high school in several years. Whatever program the school has in place is working, she said.

Teachers laid off by board

The Oberlin School Board took final action on Monday, April 9, on four layoffs forced by the closing of the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch, voting not to renew two teacher contracts, cutting one to half time and rehiring one.

That left one teacher who is appealing her dismissal.

At the March meeting, the board read reduction-in-force statements saying the board would not renew contracts for teachers Aureila Jackson, Elaine Marcuson, Kimberly Witt and Susan May. They also read a resolution to cut veteran teacher Keith Grafel's position to part-time.

The teachers had 15 days to request a hearing, and Mrs. May decided to do so. That means a hearing officer will decide her case. The board skipped her at the meeting.

The board did read and approve final orders to release Mrs. Marcuson and Mrs. Jackson and reduce Mr. Grafel's position to part-time.

Mrs. Witt was hired back as a teacher at the Oberlin Elementary School. There wasn't any explanation as to why or what she will be doing.

All the teachers worked at the school at the ranch, which closed at the end of September. Except for one hired on a month-to-month contract, the teachers assigned to the ranch continued to work at schools in town. The district made no secret that the board planned to use its reduction-in-force policy after the ranch closed.

Board President Dewayne Jackson apologized for not thanking the teachers at the March meeting for their service. These people have done an outstanding job, said Mr. Jackson, whose wife is one of those being released. This decision isn't because of the work the teachers have done or didn't do, he said. They did an excellent job and the board appreciates them. They often had to work with kids who really needed the extra help, he said.

The board didn't talk about rehiring any of the other teachers.

Book money ready to go

Decatur County has raised \$3,000 from the sale of history books donated by the publisher, and now the commissioners plan to give some of that money away.

At their meeting last Tuesday, the commissioners heard that the history book account has \$3,029. In 2005 a company found the books and called the courthouse to see if the county wanted them, if not the books would be thrown out. County Clerk Marilyn Horn said the company sent the books, around 800 to the county.

Since then the county has been selling the books for \$50 each.

County Clerk Marilyn Horn reminded the commissioners that they agreed once they had \$3,000 in the account they would give some of the money away to civic organizations.

They decided that any organization interested in the money can send a letter to the commissioners describing how it would be used.

The commissioners didn't decide how much they would give away.

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