

* Senator holds town meeting

(Continued from Page 1A) there was none in the Senate. "I'm a great supporter of the farm credit system," he added, "but I was there in the '80s and there were problems."

He noted that northwest Kansas is lucky this year because the area has a crop.

"One out of seven isn't bad," the senator noted wryly on the area's long drought.

Decatur County Commissioner Doyle Brown asked the senator about the new farm bill.

"It's a lousy bill in the House," Mr. Roberts replied.

The current farm bill doesn't help farmers if they don't have a crop, he said, and northwest Kansas hasn't had a crop in six years.

What the farmers need is better crop insurance, he said, but the House bill cut that out to put in aid for specialty crops produced in California, the area Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi represents.

"There's nothing in there for the High Plains," he said.

"Will the Senate have a better bill?" someone asked.

"I sure hope so," Sen. Roberts said.

Someone has to stand up for the farmers, Mr. Roberts said. Family farming today is big business, and the world needs people farming thousands of acres to feed it, he said.

"A small family farmer is 5-foot, 3-inches tall and from Vermont," he joked, noting that 88 percent of the money in the farm bill goes to programs other than farm aid. Much of that goes for Food Stamps, social programs and environmental work.

Oberlin Mayor Joe Stanley asked what small towns can do when the federal and state governments require new water treatment plants for things that have been in the water forever — like arsenic and uranium.

The senator said that a town could call the government's bluff, but he wouldn't recommend it.

"It all goes back to sound science and common sense," he said. "Now we have parts per trillion and you have a little something in everything."

The senator noted that last year some members of Congress tried to get an amendment to loosen the regulations but *The Washington Post* and environmentalists wrote that they were trying to kill babies. That pretty much did in any changes in standards, he said.

* County discusses helping with airport

(Continued from Page 1A) Lohofener said he didn't know.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch said revenue bonds issued by a government can't be sold to a single buyer. Revenue bonds, he said, also don't count against an entities debt.

Is it OK to have a city/county airport? asked Commissioner Stan McEvoy. Mr. Hirsch said he thought so.

What is the county's limit on general obligation bonds before it has to be taken to a vote? asked Mr. McEvoy. Mr. Hirsch said the amount is \$300,000. Revenue bonds, he said, don't have a limit.

It would be good to pre-sell the bonds, said Mr. Lohofener.

Maybe the commissioners could sign something saying that the county would help support the match for the runway, said Mr. Lohofener. He said he would come back next week when all of the com-

County Appraiser Alan Hale asked about the state of the nation's infrastructure in the aftermath of the collapse of a major bridge in Minneapolis earlier this year.

Mr. Roberts said that he has talked to Kansas Secretary of Transportation Deb Miller and she says that for the most part, Kansas bridges are in good shape.

There will probably be no new federal highway bill in the near future, he said, just supplemental appropriations to fix emergencies.

Warren Weibert, who owns the Decatur County Feed Yard, asked about possible federal legislation on limiting marketing options for cattle and pigs.

"We want to have as many marketing options as we can get our hands on," he said.

Mr. Roberts said he agreed and that any such legislation would hurt agriculture. He also said that he can't see any value to farmers to having meat stamped with a country of origin because sometimes people will pick the imported over the domestic and, except for Chinese products, it's not really a food-safety issue anyway.

"You'll have to have a U-Haul trailer to haul the paperwork," the senator said.

On the subject of genetically modified food, the senator said that it's essential to convince the public that the food is enhanced, not modified, and to ensure its safety.

Oberlin pharmacists Kurt Vollertsen and Rusty Addleman asked about the problems they and other small, independent pharmacists have been having with the new Medicare Part D program, which covers prescriptions.

The senator said that the program has been more popular than was expected and that it has an 80 percent approval rating from the American Association of Retired Persons.

"I think we are out to keep it and improve it," he said.

Mr. Roberts said that he is aware of the independent pharmacists' problems with the program and recognizes their frustrations with not getting paid or getting paid enough.

The senator introduced state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, who was traveling with him. Sen. Ostmeyer said that the gathering in Oberlin was the largest they had seen except for Sharon Springs, where the high school government class attended the meeting.

missioners were present since Ralph Under wasn't there.

Maybe the city could do half the bonds and the county half, said Ms. Grafel.

Mr. Hirsch said for a joint operation, the bond issuance tops out at \$50,000 without an election.

The commissioners asked Mr. Hirsch to put a memo together on what the county can do with bonds.



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR Patti Skubal talked with Kirk Ulery with the road and bridge department at a road she had closed Monday afternoon to keep people off of it because of a fire northwest of town.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

* Fire destroys 640 acres of land

(Continued from Page 1A) fire, including the Kansas Department of Transportation, which brought out a tanker full of salt water.

Dispatch was kept busy throughout the day, she said. A lot of people saw the smoke and reported the fire, which was good.

A lot of individuals came in to help, bringing their own equipment. The county road crew sent out road graders to help.

Part of her job was to get roads closed. The Urban place is about five miles north of town and a mile or two to the west.

Mrs. Skubal, who also is a deputy sheriff, said she sat on one road about five miles north and Deputy Jay Tate was on another road. There

were a lot of people driving around checking to see if their property was on fire or just to just watching, she said.

In emergencies, said Mrs. Skubal, a lot of people have scanners and know what is going on. It helps to have volunteers when needed and to have people call things in, she said, but it makes things difficult with spectators.

Drivers need to remember to pull off the road and stop for any emergency vehicles, whichever way they are going, she said. It is the law, and they can get a ticket if they don't pull over.

It can make a fire fighting or rescue effort a lot harder when people are out just there to look, said Mrs. Skubal.

Teens for Christ starts Sunday

The Oberlin Teens for Christ chapter kicks off its year Sunday night with the "Amazing Race in Oberlin."

The group, open to students grades 7-12, will meet at 6 p.m. at the Teens for Christ building at 118

S. Rodehaver.

The event is like a scavenger hunt, said Pastor Doug Mason, who heads up the group. They need lots of adult volunteers to help. Anyone who is interested should call him at 475-2599.

* City schedules work session for wind power

(Continued from Page 1A) the city now pays 5.6 cents per kilowatt hour. Mr. Rasure said his figures show the average as 5.9 cents that the city pays.

The Goodland firm had offered a contract at 6 cents per kilowatt hour if the city would cancel its other contracts. Today, the city buys power from the federal agency for an average of 3.5 cents and from Sunflower Electric for an average of 8.7 cents per kilowatt hour.

He said Sunflower Wind wants a commitment from the city. If the company is going to put in a wind farm in the county, he said, they want to at least have the first option to match any contract presented to the city.

Sunflower Wind's long-term goal, said Mr. Rasure, still is to provide 100 percent of the city's power.

Basically, said Councilwoman Rhonda May, if the city goes to renegotiate a contract, Sunflower Wind wants the chance to match it or do better? If the city doesn't agree to this, she asked, will the company still build a wind farm near Oberlin.

"If we can't get the simplest amount of commitment from the city," said Mr. Rasure, "we have to ask if this a community we want to be in?"

Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener compared the idea of the city switching to wind power to the way the city's idea of a 7,000-foot runway in Oberlin struck Federal Aviation Administration officials in Kansas City.

What would it cost the city to hook up to the wind power? asked Mayor Joe Stanley. Mr. Rasure said they aren't asking the city to pay for anything. If the connecting line is a double loop, the company might provide the transmission line and the city do the hook up, but that can be negotiated down the road.

The council, said Councilman Jay Anderson, really wants to stick a toe in, instead of just jump into the future.

This is what the first right of refusal allows, said Mr. Rasure. Sunflower Wind will still have to match the other companies or do better. The company is just asking for a chance.

Mrs. Lohofener said she has talked to a lot of people about wind power and there are a lot who are interested in it. If she is doing business with someone, she said, she wants to know about the financial stability and who is behind the money. Mr. Rasure said he will have to ask his board about how much he can say on that.

If the council accepts this proposal and the city has four years until it is looking for a new contract, asked Councilman Ray Ward, will the wind farm still be built? If the city accepts the new proposal, said

Mr. Rasure, he feels that the company is going to move forward.

What if Sunflower Wind can't match the cost, said Mr. Shike, but the city isn't convinced that it meets its needs? The proposal will match the cost, quality, terms and guarantees, said Mr. Rasure.

What made Sunflower Wind go from a firm agreement to this? asked Ms. May. Mr. Rasure said they didn't feel that the first offer would be accepted in such a tight time frame.

The situation in St. Francis and Sharon Springs, the other two proposed sites for wind farms, is different, said Mr. Rasure. This agreement is similar to the one sent to St. Francis, he said.

Dr. Anderson asked what it would cost the city to break the current contracts. Jim Widener, with Kansas Municipal Energy Agency, said the contract with Sunflower Electric can be broken by mutual agreement. It is up in four years, he said, adding that he isn't agreeing to let the city out of the contract. The contract is through the agency.

To get out of the federal contract, he said, the city would need to go to the government.

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the city and the Economic Development Corp., said she showed the contract to a lawyer she knows and he didn't see any penalty for breaking it. City Attorney Steve Hirsch said Mr. Widener is talking about the energy agency and they aren't going to mutually agree for the city to get out of the contract.

With all the talk about getting green power in the government, said Ms. Grafel, it seems that there would be someone at the state which the city could talk to help make an agreement mutual.

With the federal contract, said Mr. Widener, the city is already getting 75 percent of green power from projects which make electricity at federal dams.

Basically, said Mr. Rasure, the question is, does the city want the wind farm here or not?

So if the city agrees to the proposal, said Ms. May, then the wind farm will be built here and if not, it won't be even though Sunflower Wind has already leased some land? Mr. Rasure said the company will keep its options open.

Mr. Shike said he got a proposal from a third party consultant to analyze the situation for \$15,000. He said the consultant probably has proposed doing more than the city needs.

The council didn't make any decisions, but did set up a work session to discuss the offer on Wednesday, Sept. 5.

"I want to do this thing," said Dr. Anderson. "I want to do this bad enough that I want to be twice as careful."

Advertisement for Early Head Start Home Visitor

The Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center is accepting applications for Early Head Start Home Visitors for the areas of Goodland, Colby and Norton.

Qualifications: High School diploma or equivalent. Experience in early childhood preferred.

Contact Person: Keva Scheib, Head Start Director, 785-672-3125 ext. 144. To receive an application, contact Leslie Herl, Head Start Administrative Assistant, 785-672-3125 ext. 145.

Application Deadline: Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

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