

Consultant cautious about wind

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
kdavis@nwkansas.com

The Oberlin City Council received a report from the energy consultant it hired to advise it on the Sunflower Wind proposals at a meeting Thursday night which noted several reservations about the city signing an agreement with the wind company.

At a meeting on Thursday, Dec. 20, the council decided to stop negotiations with Sunflower, saying there were too many unanswered questions on the proposal, and noting that Joe Herz, the consultant from Burr Oak, had said he would not advise the city to sign an agree-

Council Countdown

At a meeting last Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Held a public hearing to close a \$400,000 state Community Development Block Grant through Northwest Kansas Planning and Development to build the new sewage treatment

lagoons. Story on Page 8A.

- Received the written report from an energy consultant the city hired to evaluate proposals from Sunflower Wind, which said the city would not benefit by entering into an agreement with the company. Story at left.

ment with Sunflower Wind right now.

The company approached the city in August about selling power from a wind farm it planned to build near town. The initial proposal would

have required the city to cancel its current electric contracts with Sunflower Electric Power Co. and the Western Area Power Administration. Since then, the firm has come back with several proposals,

including one with a first right of refusal for Sunflower Wind and the final one to sell power at 9.1 cents per kilowatt hour.

After the council decided to give up on negotiations with Sunflower Wind, the members said that Mr. Herz didn't have to come to the meeting, but he did come last week. City Administrator Gary Shike said Mr. Herz felt like he owed it to the council to be here.

Mr. Herz wrote that he came to four conclusions after researching the proposals for the city:

- Sunflower Wind's proposed pricing is higher than the city's current power supply costs.

- If the city replaces low-cost electric capacity from the Western Area Power Administration, which sells power made at federal dams, with higher-cost energy from Sunflower Wind, electric rates to the city's customers will have to go up.

- Little is known regarding Sunflower Wind's experience and capability, credit-worthiness and ability to be able to reliably perform the electric services and functions relied on by the city and its customers. The firm, founded by several Kansas investors, has no track record.

- Entering into an agreement with Sunflower Wind could risk the city's ability to achieve the lowest reason-

able electric power supply costs for its customers.

In the four-page report, Mr. Herz wrote that it looked like Sunflower Wind used a version of an agreement from another electric utility that has owned and operated generation and transmission facilities for years.

"Some of the provisions of the electric sales agreement conflict with one another, more concerning is that we have not spoken with any Sunflower Wind representative that appears to have a utility understanding of what the agreement is, or an offering of information from Sunflower Wind." (See REPORT on Page 8A)

Nurse starts new position at the clinic

After working as a nurse at the Oberlin medical clinic on and off for 15 years, Barb Whitney now sits at the helm of the office.

Mrs. Whitney started as administrator at Oberlin Medical Arts Clinic on Monday, Dec. 17, after the former administrator, Larry Ganje, retired.

She said she got to work with Mr. Ganje for two weeks before he left, learning the ropes.

Although she lives in Norton, she said she actually "doctored" in Oberlin way back when. She said she knew the clinic here had a good reputation and one of the doctors needed a nurse, so she applied for the job.

Mrs. Whitney said she always knew she wanted to be a nurse because she likes to work with people.

Although she is from Missouri, her husband Evan, who she married 1990, was from Norton, so the couple moved to northwest Kansas.

She received her nursing degree from Barton County Community College.



Barb Whitney

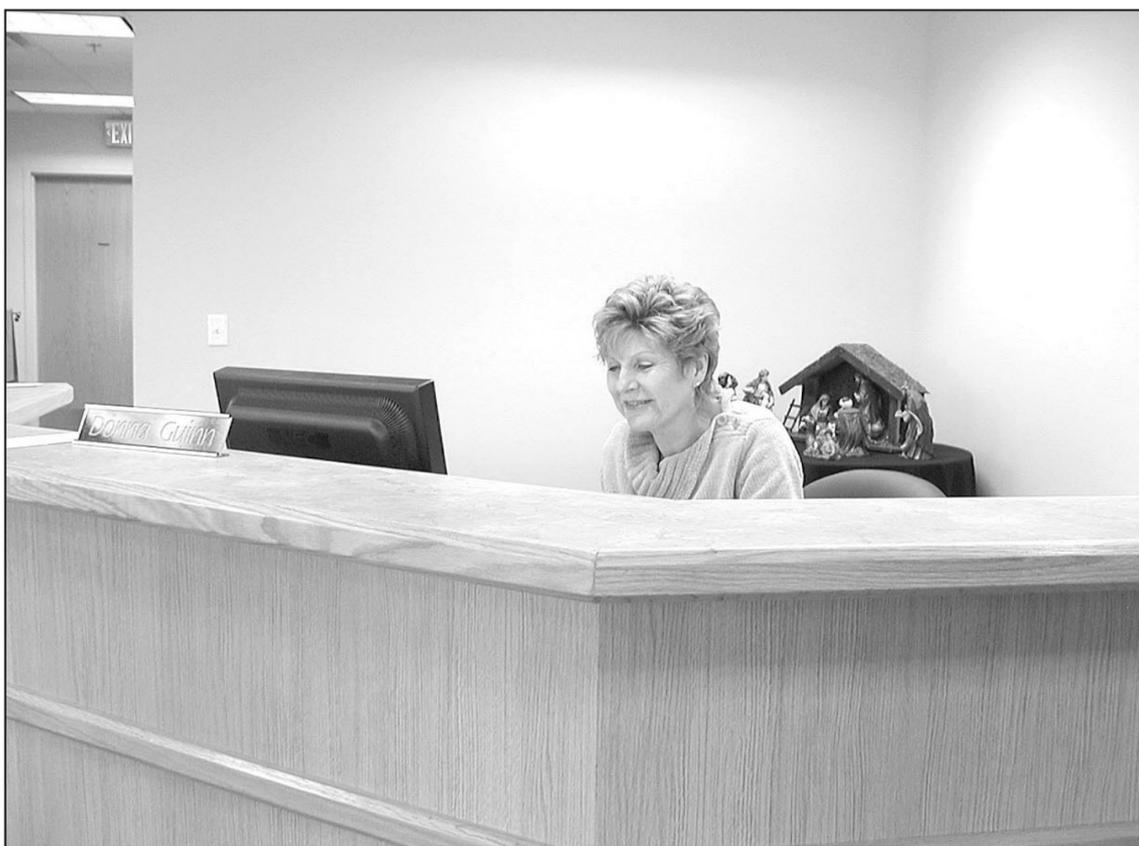
After 15 years on and off nursing at the clinic and working with different doctors, she said, she decided to make a career decision. Moving into the administrator's position, she said, seemed like the last stop in her career. She said she knows the clinic, knows the staff and doctors and how everything runs.

Mrs. Whitney said with the new job, she is learning something new, because she hadn't worked with the financial part of the business before.

The clinic employees are a family, she said. Their goal is to continue with their teamwork and make 2008 a great year, despite the departures of Mr. Ganje and long-time physician Richard May.

Mrs. Whitney and her husband have five grown children and two grandkids.

In her spare time, she said, she likes to travel.



IN THE NEW SPECIALTY CLINIC at the Decatur County Hospital on Monday, Donna Guinn (above) waited for patients at the receptionist's desk. Deb Klima, a respiratory therapist (below right), worked with Brooke

Ford, Dr. Daniel McGowan's nurse from Kearney, Neb., and Jean Ann Leitner in one of the new offices in the clinic.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Telethon needs talent, volunteers

With just a month to go, the Oberlin Seeds of Hope Telethon committee still needs some help for the big event on Saturday, Feb. 2.

With volunteer emcees, auction announcers, people to run the cameras, kitchen staff and talent penciled in on this year's schedule, said spokesman Kimberly Davis, the committee still needs some help.

Opening includes one to three people who would want to work on air as an emcee or auction announcer. The committee still needs two to three people to work in the kitchen and lots of talent, she said.

"There are so many ways to help with the Seeds of Hope Telethon," Davis said. "Besides volunteering on that Saturday or performing, people can donate items for the auction or make a cash donation."

Anyone who wants to donate an auction item can contact a committee member, she said. All of the money raised will be given to civic groups and agencies in Decatur County which applied for a share, including Oberlin Teens for Christ, the Decatur County Last Indian Raid Museum, the City of Jennings,

City of Norcatour, Kansans for Life, the Oberlin Area Concert Band, Oberlin Lions Club, Salvation Army, Relay for Life, the Decatur County Ministerial Association, Tripple Creek Riders, Decatur Professional Women, Oberlin Girl Scouts, Creative Movements Gymnastics, Awana Club, the Golden Age Center and the Decatur County Fair Board.

The Decatur County Summer Recreation Program and FROGS summer day camp will split one share, with each receiving half of what the other groups get.

Anyone who wants to perform or volunteer as an emcee or auction announcer can contact Mrs. Davis at 475-2006 during the day or she or Kristi Smith at 475-3510 in the evening. People wanting to run a camera should call Bill Duncan at 475-3259.

Anyone who wants to make a donation can contact any of the committee members, including Mr. Duncan, Jack Benton, Tim Davis, Brenda Ulery, Regina Stanley and Peg Smith.

Specialty clinic opens up

A new specialty clinic at the Decatur County Hospital is up and running, hosting four clinics with doctors who travel in from Denver, Kearney and Hays.

Administrator Lynn Doeden said the clinic addition, on the east side of the hospital near the entrance to the emergency room, has been in use since last month. Each month, she said, the hospital brings in specialists in cardiology, urology, oncology and ophthalmology to see patients.

Monday morning, the specialty clinic was in cardiology. A handful of patients were in the waiting room while both of the exam rooms were already full.

The new clinic has a waiting room with a check-in desk, a stress-test room with a bed and treadmill, a procedure room with a bed, a restroom and a storage area, two exam rooms with tables, storage areas and two offices.

For each of the specialty clinics, nurses from the hospital are scheduled to work with the doctor and patients. Mrs. Doeden said the nurses volunteer to work in the clinics and they try to have the same nurse work with the



same doctors each time.

The addition cost \$800,000, said Mrs. Doeden. The hospital got a \$650,000 loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Administration, but although it received a big cardboard check back in July, none of the money has actually made its way to the hospital. The other \$150,000 is being covered by the hospital board.

Although the clinic is in full use, there are still some things to be done, Mrs. Doeden said, including

putting signs on all of the doors. Now there is a blue piece of tape on each door with the name of the room handwritten on it. Mrs. Doeden said some decorating also needs to be finished.

The specialty clinics are important, she said. They save elderly patients and others from having to travel and help the hospital offer more services. Before the addition was built, she said, the patients had to wait in the main waiting room of the hospital, which everyone enters through. The doctors had to

use whatever room was available, but now there is a spot set aside for the clinics.

The patients, said Mrs. Doeden, really seem to like the new area and have said it is "a massive improvement." People seem comfortable in the new area and the doctors seem to love it, she said.

The hospital would like to expand the services provided in specialty clinics. Mrs. Doeden said the hospital is looking for a podiatrist, neurologist and plastic surgeon to come here.

First baby to win prizes

A week and half into 2008, there still hasn't been a New Year's baby born at the Decatur County Hospital.

The first baby will receive prizes through *The Oberlin Herald* and area merchants' First Baby giveaway. The baby must be born at or taken to the hospital. The parents have 60 days to pick up the gifts.

This year's first miss or mister will receive a \$10 gift certificate

from the Dresser, a case of baby food from Raye's Grocery, a \$10 gift card from Stanley Hardware, a \$20 gift certificate from Carol Morford with Mary Kay, a \$25 gift certificate to Addleman Drug Store, a \$10 gift certificate to Ward Drug Store, a pizza for two from Pizza Hut, a \$25 gift certificate from Rocking R, a gift from Fredrickson Insurance Agency and a year subscription to *The Oberlin Herald*.

Chamber plans banquet, vote for Jan. 24

The Oberlin-Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce plans to hold its annual banquet on Thursday, Jan. 24, at The Gateway.

The dinner, from 6:30 to 8 p.m., will feature prime rib, baked potatoes, green beans, a roll and dessert. The banquet costs \$20 per person with reservations needed at the Chamber office in the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center by Friday, Jan. 18. Call (785) 475-3441.

Entertainment for the evening will be Paul Siebert of McCook playing his hammer dulcimer.

At the banquet, people will elect new Chamber board members to take the place of Bryan Loker of KFNF Radio, Marilyn Horn, county clerk, and Pam Wilson. They will also elect six board members for the Decatur County Amusement Authority to replace Ward Votapka, president, Kristi Gallentine, secretary/treasurer, Lynn Groneweg, Jason Fortin, Ray Ward, Peggy Ream and Kelsey Gallentine, who resigned last August after the county fair. The group, founded by the Chamber, runs the home-owned carnival at the

fair. The resignation left only three members on the board. Those on the ballot for Chamber board seats include Amanda Grafel, Jim Merriott, Dr. Shannon Addleman and Megan Ketterl.

Names for candidates for the Amusement Authority are still being sought.

Mrs. Horn serves as the president, Jo Henderson as manager and Kari Ketterl, Kem Bryan, Tami Shaw, Kelly Wasson, Pam Wilson, Mr. Loker, Beth Harmon and Sid Metcalf as board members.