

Election '08

Long-time deputy to run for clerk job

No stranger to the county clerk's office, Colleen Geishler seeks the seat in the primary election in August, running unopposed as a Republican.

Mrs. Geishler has worked in the clerk's office since February 1992 and in 1996 became the deputy clerk.

She said she's lived in the county since 1984. She would replace her boss, Marilyn Horn, the long-time clerk, who is retiring this year.

Ms. Geishler said she really enjoys the work in the clerk's office. It seems like with the different jobs, she said, there's something new every day, but it's really the same.

If elected, she said, she will be in charge of county elections, all the bills, the payrolls, helping employees with things they need, ordering office supplies for the courthouse and taking the minutes of the commissioners, to name a few things. As deputy clerk, she said, she isn't

new to any of this, but she wants to continue learning.

Ms. Geishler said she's gone to meetings for clerks about the budget and election process already.

She said she looks forward to serving the community. Ms. Geishler said she is open minded and willing to take suggestions.

At this time, she said, she doesn't know of anything that needs to change if she is elected. She said she should have a better idea about things that might need to be done differently once she's in office.

Ms. Geishler has three children, Shelley, who lives in McCook, Ed Geishler in Colby and Jim Geishler in Oberlin, and 10 grandchildren.

In her spare time, she said, she follows the grandkids' activities and has volunteered at the Good Samaritan Center since 1995.



C. Geishler

Sheriff hopes for four more years

With just about 24 years under his belt as Decatur County sheriff, Ken Badsky is seeking the job for another four.

Mr. Badsky, a Republican, is running unopposed.

The sheriff said he was born and raised in Decatur County. After high school, he got a scholarship to play football at the junior college in Garden City. His coach, said Mr. Badsky, was an instructor for criminal justice, so he went to those classes and decided that's what he wanted to do.

After graduating from junior college, Mr. Badsky returned home and worked for contractor Jim Gaumer building terraces until 1981. In 1982, he said, he went to work for the Oberlin Police Department and then he ran for sheriff in 1985.

As the sheriff, he said, he tries to focus on meeting the demands of state law, serving civil process, running the jail and cases in court. Once all of that is done, said Mr. Badsky, then they can head out to the road and patrol the county.

All of that has to be incorporated

together with the prices of fuel and other things going up, he said.

With two full-time officers besides himself, said Mr. Badsky, they try to get out on the weekends as much as possible.

Since he was first elected, he said, technology has really changed the job, but there are more restrictions on what officers can and can't do.

One of the problems, he said, is that there isn't any real teeth in juvenile process. The juvenile code is lax, said Mr. Badsky.

Mr. Badsky said he is dedicated to the job, which means more than 40 hours of work in each week.

He said he has always stressed family and being involved with the community. Both are important, he said.

He and his wife Jan have five children, Tim Badsky, North Platte; Paula Gnad, a nurse in Hays; Lacey Smith, a nurse in Temple, Texas; Kenyon Badsky, Denver; and Regan Badsky, a student at Fort Hays State University. They also have five grandkids and one on the way.



Ken Badsky

Treasurer asks for another term

Since 1988 Jean Hale has worked in the Decatur County treasurer's office, serving as the treasurer since 2001, and she's running for another term.

Mrs. Hale, Republican, has no opposition. She said she started working in the courthouse 22 years ago in the appraiser's office and later moved to the treasurer's office.

In 2001, she said, she was appointed to finish Pat Fringer's term as treasurer. Since then, she's been elected to the position twice.

As the treasurer, she said, she issues motor vehicle tags and registrations, does drivers license renewals, takes tax payments and distributes the money to the taxing districts, prints and sends tax statements, invests the county money and collects sales taxes. Mrs. Hale said her job also includes daily book work for the office.

Mrs. Hale said she was born

in Decatur County, then went to vocational-technical school in Goodland, where she received a credential in secretarial science, then moved back home.

"I like my job," she said, "and want to serve the people another four years."

Being the treasurer is a challenge, said Mrs. Hale. There's no two transactions in a day that are alike.

There's been a lot of changes, she said, since she started in the office. Things have become more computerized.

Changes are coming up again, she said. In 2010, the state is scheduled to start a new system for motor vehicle licenses and titles.

She and her husband Byron, the county extension agent, have a daughter, Chyanna, who is almost three.



Jean Hale

Commissioner runs for 10th

With almost 36 years of service under his belt, Ralph D. Unger is seeking another four-year term as the district No. 2 member of the Decatur County Commission.

Mr. Unger said he was first elected in 1972.

"Service like this just gets in your blood," he said. "It seems there's always some kind of project going that you want to see come to fruition."

Mr. Unger said he enjoys representing the county and building relationships with state officials and other county representatives throughout Kansas.

Over the past 35 years, he said, he's served in leadership positions in organizations based on his elected seat. For example, he is a past president of the Kansas Association of Counties.

As a commissioner, he said, his main job is trying to keep the interests of Decatur County as a whole

in his thoughts. One of the biggest challenges, said Mr. Unger, is protecting the county's interests on the state and federal levels.

The job of being a commissioner has changed a lot, he said, since he was first elected. Mr. Unger said he never would have suspected that the commissioners would address some of the issues people want them to solve today.

"We as a society, are expecting the government to do more and more," he said, "and provide more answers."

Back in 1973, he said, the main concern was the road department. That's still high on the list, but it's not the same. The Good Samaritan Center was the second most-popular thing the county had public contact on back in 1973.

Medical facilities, he said, have always been a priority for him. He said compared with other counties this size, Decatur County has well

equipped health-care facilities.

Mr. Unger said he's most proud of the fact that during his tenure, the county has gone from having long-term debt to being pretty much debt free. The county, he said, runs pretty much on a cash basis. It's important, he said, not to stick the future generations with debt.

Mr. Unger said he was born in rural Decatur County and still lives and farms the same place where he was born and reared.

He attended Kansas State University, where he received a bachelor's degree in secondary education and political science, then taught for a while.

Mr. Unger said he has taken that college education and put it to work for Decatur County.

He and his wife Norma have three children, Colleen Rittmann and Dr. Ryan Unger of Oberlin, and Rachelle Gorrell of Wichita. They have four grandchildren and four step-grandchildren.

Mr. Unger, a Republican, is running unopposed.



Ralph Unger

Lawyer wants to keep helping

With almost 20 years of service as Decatur County attorney, Steve Hirsch of Oberlin is seeking re-election.

Mr. Hirsch said his office has two main functions, handling criminal cases in court and being the county counselor. As the counselor, he said, he gives advice to county officials and represents the county in any lawsuits.

Last year, he said, filings included 103 criminal cases, 12 juvenile cases, three "child in need of care" cases, five commitments for alcohol, mental or drug evaluation, 178 traffic tickets and two fish and game violations.

The county has an average of about 100 bad checks a year, he said, which is a big share of the workload. In the 20 years as a prosecutor, said Mr. Hirsch, he can count on two hands the number of bad checks that his office hasn't been able to collect.

On the civil side, he said, the county files about 10 collection cases a year on ambulance bills. Mr. Hirsch said he's proud that he's done 20 tax foreclosure sales. Doing them every year has kept people reminded that they need to pay their taxes, he said.

Probably the most important part of his job, said Mr. Hirsch, is to keep meetings and records open to the public. Part of that is educating officials about the law.

People have to know what their government is doing, said Mr. Hirsch. He said he's been blessed with eight commissioners who have bent over backwards to make sure they follow the state open meetings and open records laws.

The most difficult part of the job, he said, is handling juvenile cases. It's tough to know what to do with kids who get into trouble.

Decatur County, said Mr. Hirsch,

is probably one of the few counties in Kansas that has a county code book compiling all laws or resolutions passed by the commissioners. Very few counties this size have one.

He said, his office is scanning in all of the cases so all will be on the computer and kept on CD.

Mr. Hirsch said he enjoys the job and is fortunate to have Preston Pratt as an assistant county attorney to help. That may change if Mr. Pratt is elected county attorney in Thomas and Logan counties this fall, but the firm plans to hire another lawyer if that happens.

Mr. Hirsch, a Republican, graduated from Washburn University in Topeka and has practiced law here since 1987.

He and his wife Anita have two children, Jennifer, 19, a student at Kansas State University who plans to be married this summer, and Joseph, 15, a student at Decatur Community High School.

Mr. Hirsch is running unopposed.



Steve Hirsch

Road resurface planned

Two major projects, which were contracted together, will resurface about 21 miles of highways in Decatur County this summer.

Kristen Brands, district spokeswoman in Norton for the Kansas Department of Transportation, said the bid went to Venture Corp. out of Great Bend.

One project on U.S. 36 starts at the Rawlins County line and goes east 10.8 miles to town. That job includes a two-inch surface recycle, where pavement is heated and rolled to smooth bumps, followed by a 1 1/2-inch overlay.

During the process, traffic will follow a pilot car through the work area, she said.

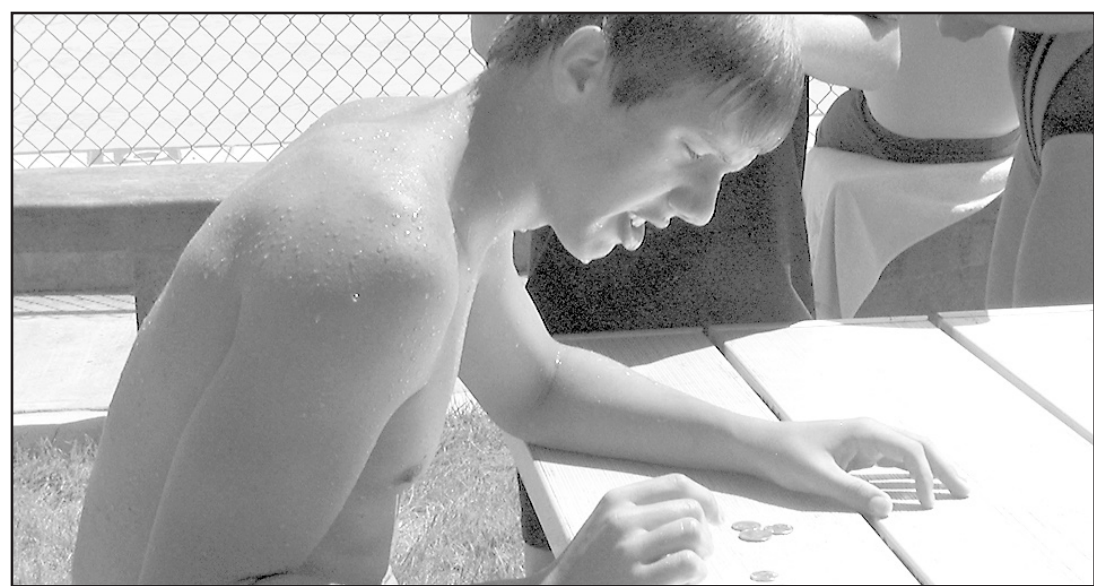
The other part of the project is on U.S. 83 starting at the Sheridan County line and moving north 8.7 miles. Crews will mill off two inches of old pavement and apply a two inch overlay.

The project will start in mid-August and cost \$2,703,166, Ms. Brands said.

On U.S. 36 in town, she said, the maintenance crew started doing a patch job last week, spreading asphalt over the surface with a grader. That job should be done this week, she said.

The idea in that is to eliminate some of the rough spots until the stretch east of Penn Avenue can be repaved. The city has asked for money to do part of that road, but was told it wasn't in the budget this year.

Cool, pool cash



COUNTING OUT HIS MONEY from a Fourth of July swimming pool game on Friday, Collin Hendrickson had enough for a hot dog. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

City decides to seal fewer streets

The Oberlin City Council decided to save \$25,000 of the \$75,000 budgeted for street sealing this year to try to start repaving streets in the city next year.

At a meeting Thursday, June 19, the council talked about a sealing bid from B&H Paving out of Scott City. The bid, said City Administrator Gary Shike, said was for just under \$72,000.

During budget meetings last summer, the council put aside \$75,000 for street sealing, said Mr. Shike. Thursday, the council decided to cap the sealing at \$50,000 for this year, saving the \$25,000.

Mr. Shike said they plan to take the \$25,000 and add it to the half-cent-per-kilowatt increase in the electric rate imposed last year,

which also is set aside for street paving.

By next year, said Mr. Shike, hopefully the city will be able to start doing some paving. Mr. Shike said he and Foreman Dan Castle will figure out which east-west streets need to be sealed this summer because the city can't seal them all.

Normally, the project is done in July or August, he said.

The council also talked with Charles Godwin, who owns the RV park in town, about using golf carts on city streets. Mr. Shike said Mr. Godwin had brought in a sample ordinance to allow the golf carts on city streets.

Mr. Shike said the council didn't approve the ordinance, since according to the Kansas League of

Municipalities and the state's attorney general's office, it isn't legal to use the carts on city or state roads.

There are cities that have passed charter ordinances to allow the golf carts, but the way it was explained to officials here, they didn't have the authority to pass those ordinances because it's against state law.

Once the state makes it legal, said Mr. Shike, the council could revisit the issue.

In other business, the council: • Decided to send Eagle Communication of Hays, which owns the cable system here, a letter about the recent poor quality of the cable service.

• Decided to hold the next regular meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Gateway.

City to hear about water plant loan

A representative from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Administration will talk with the Oberlin City Council about a loan to build a new water treatment plant at a meeting Thursday.

City Administrator Gary Shike said Dave Barber from Hays will talk with the council about the loan bid from the city applied for almost a year ago. However, the council has never agreed to actually build a water treatment plant, which engineers say is needed to cut the amount of arsenic and uranium in the city's water.

Mr. Shike said accountant Warren Bainter should be at the meeting to give a report on the Fred Bremer estate, including seven quarters of land, which was left to the city-owned Gateway Civic Center and the Decatur County Hospital.

The council will decide on an ordinance to increase city court costs. Currently, the court fee is set at \$55 per case. The judge, said Chief Wade Lockhart, has asked that be increased to \$65 to match new fees passed down by the state.

The meeting, which will start at 7 p.m. upstairs at The Gateway, is open to the public.

Commemorative Service

Bert Cool

On Saturday the 12th ~ this next Saturday at 9:30 a.m. ~ there will be a special Commemorative Service

on the Third Floor of the Courthouse in the Courtroom for anyone wishing to help the county recognize the service of Sheriff Deputy/Dispatcher/Past EPA Director

Bert Cool

who passed away Saturday, June 28. His funeral was in Kearney, NE.

There is a special Scholarship being set up in Bert's name through the Decatur County Health Foundation for anyone wishing to donate in his memory.