

Group asks county to help pay loan

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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Members of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. board asked the Decatur County commissioners for money last Tuesday to help show how the group can repay a guaranteed loan for a new recreation center.

Commissioners said they weren't sure what they could do this year, unless they gave the group money set aside for the airport runway project, but should be able to give \$25,000 next year.

The board members were joined by representatives from the Oberlin Meal Site and the Golden Age Center, since the building would house the senior center, a movie theater and a bowling alley in Oberlin.

Greg Lohofener, a former board member who has been working on the project, said the corporation has a lender willing to do a loan, which would be guaranteed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but the bank wants some information first.

Mr. Lohofener handed out a list of some things the development group is asking the

county to do. Those included paying the insurance for the new building, which he said will be \$8,500 or less, and a commitment to demolish the old buildings on the site.

He said the county would take title to all of the buildings and land, demolish the buildings, then deed the land back to the corporation. The group is asking the county for a continuing budget of \$25,000 a year to show the lender how the center can repay the loan.

On a \$400,000 loan with interest at 5.25 percent, he added, payments will be around

\$29,100 a year.

Mr. Lohofener said they will ask the City of Oberlin to contribute electricity and water for the center, at an estimated cost of \$6,000. The city also covers the salary of the corporation's director, he said.

Mr. Lohofener said he took Rex Olson, an architect from Colorado, to the center. Mr. Olson, a Decatur Community High graduate, said he thought they would be able to salvage the air conditioner at the Golden Age Center, some of the ceiling tiles and bathroom fixtures. The group will

have to find volunteers to help take those things out, he said.

The county's senior-center tax levy is \$12,000 a year today, Mr. Lohofener said, and Dewaine Stapp, with the center, told him there's \$30,000 in that fund.

That money could be used to help pay the debt, said Mr. Lohofener. Also, he said, the corporation will need donations to pay for property taxes.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said he thought the only part of the project that (See MONEY on Page 8A)



Kids make bread

AT THE 4-H BUILDING at the Decatur County Fairground on Monday, David Noren (above) helped Anna Carter and Jillian Peters build a box covered in aluminum foil that the kids put in the sun to bake "monkey bread" during a 4-H day camp. Madison Macfee (left) held the foil out while she helped cover the inside of the box.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

West Nile case confirmed in the county

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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With the mosquitos bad this year and one confirmed case of the West Nile Virus already, the Decatur County health administrator says people need to be careful when they are outside.

Administrator Marilyn Gamblin said she hasn't received the paperwork from the state reporting the virus here, but one of the doctors at the clinic had confirmed the case to her.

The virus is passed by mosquitoes from birds to humans and horses, said Ms. Gamblin. People who are going outside need to take precautions. First, she said, they should use an insect repellent with the chemical DEET in it, but not more than 33 percent. If the spray has more than 33 percent, she said, it could be too strong for kids, especially those

under 10.

Wearing long sleeves and pants is also a good idea, she said, as is limiting outdoor activities at dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active.

Another tip, she said, is to make sure screens are secure so bugs can't get into your house. Change standing water in children's swimming pools and water dishes for pets regularly, said Ms. Gamblin.

Only a small percentage of people infected with West Nile ever show any symptoms, she said. These include fever, headache, tiredness, body aches, a skin rash on the trunk of the body or occasionally, swollen lymph nodes.

The virus is more dangerous for people over 50 and those who are already sick, she said.

If anyone has any questions, they can call Ms. Gamblin at 475-8118.

Board requests official energy plan for school district

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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The Oberlin School Board decided last Monday to request the official plan from an energy audit, including a \$1.5 million project to put heat pumps at the high school, lighting in all district buildings, and wind turbines to produce power.

The board will have to pay \$10,000 for Johnson Controls for the final part of the report, said Matt Leaper, with the company, but still can say no to all or part of the \$1.5 million. Mr. Leaper went through four options for the board; the second includes a cost of \$1,471,866 for a large wind turbine and other energy-saving changes.

Mr. Leaper said the district now spends \$151,017 a year on energy. Under the proposal, it would see an "energy penalty" of \$58,000, he said, and savings of \$44,840, paying around \$13,000 more for energy a year. With interest, recommended improvements will cost \$77,479, he said, the district will wind up spending \$242,056 a year. That's an annual increase of \$91,039.

Mr. Leaper presented two ideas for wind turbines to help the district save money. The first, with a 200 kilowatt turbine, would increase annual spending by \$101,637, but would save the district \$116,840.

School Roundup

At a meeting last Monday, the Oberlin School Board:

- Read through the first two sections of the district's policy book, part of a full review of the 800-page policy book. Story to come.
- Started the new year by electing officers and adoption annual resolutions. Story to come.
- Received a request from the Decatur County emergency management director to use the schools as storm shelters, both for severe storms and blizzards. Story to come.
- Requested the official plan for an energy audit, including heat pumps in 40 percent of the high school and new lights. Story at left.
- Asked for bids for a new entrance to the high school with and without heated walkways. Story to come.

The other option, with a wind turbine of 100 kilowatts, would increase annual spending by \$101,637, but would save the district \$116,840. (See BOARD on Page 8A)

Water users go over trigger mark once

With a week of water restrictions down, the City of Oberlin pumped more than the 750,000 gallon trigger only once last week.

Under water restrictions, people with odd-numbered addresses can water on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, and those with even addresses on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. No outdoor use is allowed on Mondays.

Outdoor water can be used only from midnight to 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. to midnight on the specified days. That includes watering lawns

and gardens, washing cars, filling swimming pools and any other kind of outdoor use.

- The city pumped:
- 607,000 gallons on Monday, July 14.
 - 900,000 gallons on Tuesday, July 15.
 - 640,000 gallons last Wednesday.
 - 543,000 gallons on Thursday.
 - 493,000 gallons on Friday.
 - 716,000 gallons on Saturday.
 - 565,000 gallons on Monday.

Minimum wage to increase 70 cents this week

The federal minimum wage will jump to \$6.55 per hour effective Thursday, and in Kansas, officials say, that covers nearly all workers except about 19,000 in service or agriculture jobs not under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act.

The increase is the second part of a law increasing the minimum wage from \$5.35 to \$5.85 per hour last year, to \$6.55 this year and \$7.25 next July 24.

Many states have separate mini-

mum wage laws, with Kansas at \$2.65 per hour, the lowest in the nation, the U.S. Department of Labor says. In cases where an employee is subject to both state and federal minimum-wage laws, the department says, the employee is entitled to the higher wage based on the federal law.

The Kansas Legislature rejected an attempt this year to increase the state minimum wage. Another attempt to remove any state minimum

wage also went down.

Twenty-eight states have state minimum wage rates higher than the federal minimum, the Labor Department says. Sixteen states have set their state rate at the federal wage and five have no minimum — Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Of those with a state minimum, only Kansas is lower than the federal wage. Kansas hasn't increased its minimum wage since 1988, the

government says.

The act establishes minimum wage and rules for overtime pay, record keeping and child labor standards affecting employees in the private sector and in federal, state, and local governments.

Employers must display a poster outlining the requirements of the law, including the minimum wage

*Board asks questions about heating

(Continued from Page 1A) crease annual spending by \$10,683, but save the district \$68,400.

None of the options would present a savings to the district right away, only after the debt is paid off. Then the district could face having to replace equipment.

Mr. Leaper said the district could look at 20-year financing with an interest rate of 3.8 percent, which is what the numbers are figured on.

Mr. Leaper said Johnson would recommend a particular wind turbine, but that is another study and the board has to decide if that's the direction it wants to go. Although it keeps the spending around the same each year, he said, it just changes where the district spends the money.

What is the district supposed to do with the boiler it bought last year if they change to using heat pumps, said Ryan Freed, from the state Energy Office, who was at the meeting to answer questions.

Johnson has always said they will help the district figure out what to do with the boiler, said Mr. Leaper.

There aren't any scenarios where the company wants to use gas, said Mr. Freed. The electric heat pumps seem to be the best option, said Mr. Leaper.

Can the project be ready by cold weather? asked board President Dewayne Jackson. If the contract had been signed by July 1, said Mr. Leaper, it could have been done by Oct. 15.

If wildcatters find more oil and gas in the county, said board member Monte Moore, the district might be financially better to run things off of natural gas than electricity. Mr. Leaper said the company is suggesting the wind turbine to produce electricity because Oberlin is a Class 4 wind area.

How comparable are these heat pumps to the ones at the grade school? asked Mr. Moore. These are newer and more efficient, said Mr. Leaper.

The idea is to put the heat pumps on the roof, said Mr. Moore, but what if the board doesn't feel comfortable doing that since the roofs were just replaced? The heat pumps can go on the ground, said Mr. Leaper.

Is there a secondary heat source? he asked, noting that when it gets down to zero and lower, it seems the heat pumps aren't as efficient. Mr. Leaper said he thought so, but would need to check. Kenny Black, district facilities supervisor, said he thought the ones at the grade school are electric, but when it gets cold they kick over to gas.

Mr. Leaper said the company recommends putting the turbine on district property near the football field and then running a line underground to the high school. Before doing that, he said, a wind study would need to be done.

Every other wind farm idea is on a hill crest, said board member

Dan Nedland. The wind can be blowing on the hill near Ampride, he said, and it can be still by the high school.

Sunflower Wind has already been here to do a wind study, asked Superintendent Pat Cullen, so why can't the company just get a copy of that? That plan was to put a wind farm on the hill, not by the school, said Mr. Nedland.

If Johnson does the wind study and finds it can't be done, said Mr. Leaper, the district would not have to pay. If the company finds it can be done, the district would owe \$15,000.

What does the board want to do? asked Mr. Jackson, noting that it's going to get cold soon.

The district could put \$400,000 down and then pay around \$100,000 a year, said Dr. Cullen. The board could agree to put all of the capital outlay money it has on the project, a little over \$800,000, he said, and then hope that nothing else is needed out of that fund until it can build it back up.

Mr. Nedland said he didn't like that idea. If the number of students keeps going down, there'd be concern over whether the district could afford \$100,000 a year.

Mr. Moore said he didn't feel comfortable voting to encumber \$1 million.

"No way, no how," he said. "We can't afford to pay outright for this, but we can't afford to encumber this for the community."

Will the boilers run another year? asked Mr. Jackson. Mr. Black said he wasn't sure, but he thought they could possibly limp along another year.

Mr. Jackson asked if the project would need to be financed with a bond issue. Mr. Leaper said the company usually works with a bank for a construction loan, then it becomes a permanent note. There's no way for the district to come up with \$250,000 a year, said Mr. Moore.

The district would need to come up with the \$100,000 difference, said Mr. Leaper, since it is already paying \$151,000 a year.

If the population drops and the district can't make a payment, what happens? asked Mr. Jackson. Does the school get repossessed?

At one point, said Mr. Leaper, there was talk about consolidating the two existing schools, which would cut back on energy costs by possibly \$50,000 a year.

Part of the lights are for the grade school, said Mr. Jackson, so if the district is going to abandon the building, why do the project?

It could help with the resale value, said Mr. Leaper, if that's needed.

The board decided to ask for the full report, but didn't decide whether to do the project. Mr. Leaper said the board could make a decision on the wind study later.

*Money needed to repay loan

(Continued from Page 1A) would be tax exempt would be the senior center. That's up to the state tax board, said County Attorney Steve Hirsch. It's not the county's decision.

Mr. Lohofener said he and Director Connie Grafel plan to go to Hutchinson to learn more about the state tax credit program, which approved the center for \$125,000.

Commissioner Doyle Brown said there's no way to promise money every year for the project, because if the commissioners change, the current group would have no say over how money would be spent.

He suggested a bond issue instead of a loan. The corporation went for a guaranteed loan to save the county \$40,000 to \$50,000, said Ms. Grafel, but the work for a bond issue for the hospital was only around \$5,000. Mr. Hirsch said it really was \$11,000, adding that each issue has a different cost.

Mr. Lohofener said he understood that the commissioners can't commit money for future boards,

but he thinks this project has a lot of community backing and people will speak out if future commissioners decide to change that promise.

Maybe the commissioners could do it for this year and next, he suggested.

Would it be possible for the county to do a \$300,000 general obligation bond issue? asked Ms. Grafel. Then the corporation could do a smaller guaranteed loan. There are a lot of people, from senior citizens to youths, who want this to happen, she said, and she isn't sure why the county isn't coming up with a plan quickly.

It's wishful thinking, said Commissioner Ralph Unger, that the county can just come up with \$25,000 this year. The county has to replace the courthouse roof and there isn't a lot of money left. The commissioners could maybe budget that amount for 2009, he said.

This project needs to move forward soon, Mr. Lohofener said. It has to be completed by Dec. 31, 2009. Already the job will have to

Chamber manager resigns after nine months

The manager of the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce has resigned after nine months on the job.

Kem Bryan, chair of the Chamber board, said Jo Henderson had resigned effective immediately. She didn't say why or whether the board would be looking for a

replacement.

Mrs. Henderson couldn't be reached for a statement.

For now, she said, board members will take care of Chamber business, keeping everything moving to the best of their ability. Mrs. Bryan didn't say what the hours would be.



ON MAIN STREET on Thursday, Jackie Burks and her husband Joe backed out of a parking spot in front of Coffee, Tea and Me in the Terrace Garden RV Park's Gem cart. The couple used the cart to look around downtown Oberlin, instead of unhitching their truck from their trailer, which they left at the park. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Guests use new cart to drive downtown

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Although it looks a little like a golf cart in size, it's actually a Gem cart, has a 17-digit vehicle inspection number, a license plate and is completely legal to drive on all streets.

The Gem, belonging to Charlie and Phyllis Godwin, owners of the RV park, has been seen all over town in the last week.

Mr. Godwin said he and his wife purchased the cart so guests don't have to disconnect their vehicle from their trailer or recreational vehicle to come into town. He said it entices them more to go into town and shop.

The Godwins have been pushing the city to allow golf carts on streets, but council members were never able to get a clear reading on whether they could do that. With the Gem cart, Mr. Godwin said, the city doesn't have to deal with those issues. The cart is fully legal, just like a car or small truck. The cart looks like a golf cart with a rounded top and steering wheel.

Since Oberlin isn't a destination resort, just an overnight stop, the cart makes it more convenient for people to go check out downtown and bring some revenue into the city, he said.

On Thursday, Joe and Jackie Burks of Visalia, Calif., were the

first guests to use the cart.

They said they pulled into the park around 8:30 p.m. last Wednesday. They were tired and didn't want to unhook the pickup. Mrs. Burks said they had driven 500 miles from Chanute, and it had been a long day.

The couple started out in California, went to Texas for Mr. Burks' brother's 80th birthday, to Oklahoma, to Iowa and to Chanute. On the way home, the couple plans to go through Yellowstone, Washington state, Oregon and home, she said.

Mrs. Burks said the couple has a book with a list of RV parks and found the one in Oberlin.

It was great to leave the Hitchhiker trailer hooked up to the truck, said Mr. Burks.

This cart makes it so much nicer, said Mrs. Burks, because they didn't have to unhook the truck. This way, she said, they can run to the grocery and downtown and don't have to drive the truck or worry about where to park a big trailer.

That morning, the couple took advantage of the cart to visit Coffee, Tea and Me for a quick drink.

Mrs. Burks said this is the only park they have stayed that has had one of these carts. It's a great idea, she said, which she will pass on to other park owners.

Ballots are ready for election

Advance ballots for the Aug. 5 primary election are ready at the county clerk's office at the courthouse.

Anyone who wants to vote before the actual primary date on Tuesday, Aug. 5, and is registered can get a ballot.

First-time voters need to bring their driver's license, said County Clerk Marilyn Horn. All others can just show up at the clerk's office on the second floor and sign the book.

Mail ballots can be requested, by mail, by phone, or in person, and must be back in the clerk's office by election day.

be rebid because steel prices have gone up, he said.

Helen Gee, manager of the meal site, asked what the seniors who eat lunch at the center are supposed to do during demolition. She said she hasn't found anywhere for them to continue having meals.

That is one of the issues that will have to be faced when the project moves forward, said Mr. Lohofener. Hopefully there is somewhere in town for a temporary meal site.

If the county can't do \$25,000 this year, maybe it could double up in 2009, he suggested. The commissioners don't even know what the demolition is going to cost, said Mr. Unger.

"We want to support this," said Mr. Unger, "but we need to see what we can legally do."

The commissioners plan to talk with bond lawyer Sarah Steele of the Wichita firm Gillmore and Bell at their next meeting Tuesday about the idea.

The next board meeting will be Thursday, Aug. 14, at the Chamber office, Mrs. Bryan said, although she wasn't sure of the time.

The board hired Ms. Henderson in October after Glenva Nichols resigned from the manager's position.

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 10 <input type="checkbox"/> GATEWAY CIVIC CENTER	 11 <input type="checkbox"/> LANDMARK INN	 12 <input type="checkbox"/> LAST INDIAN RAID MUSEUM
 13 <input type="checkbox"/> PIONEER FAMILY	 14 <input type="checkbox"/> CZECH MEMORIAL MUSEUM IN JENNINGS	 15 <input type="checkbox"/> ELDEN AUKER PARK

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