

## Century-old water lines might go

The Oberlin City Council looked at plans for a little more than \$2 million in improvements for the city's water distribution system at a meeting last Thursday.

Council members had asked engineers with Miller and Associates of McCook to pull the plans for improvements to the distribution system out from the \$4 million water treatment plant project. From that came \$778,000 in water-line work.

The engineers also sat down with City Administrator Gary Shike, Foreman Dan Castle and water department supervisor Willard Perrin to talk about other lines that need to be repaired or replaced.

Some of the water lines, said Mr.

### Council roundup

At a meeting Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Held a 20-minute closed session to discuss personnel with the council members, city attorney and mayor. Story to come.
- Put off a decision on an incentive package for prospective motel

builders prepared by the marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. Story below right.

• Looked at plans for a little more than \$2 million in improvements to the city's water distribution system. Story at left.

Perrin, are over 100 years old. He said some experts say water lines shouldn't be jetted out to clear them of iron, magnese and other gunk that collects in the pipes, because it could cause leaks.

Some of the four-inch water mains, he said, have only a two-inch or smaller opening because of the deposits.

In 2001, said engineer Chris Miller, some of the distribution

system was replaced and lines were installed to blend the water from several wells. This project included a new line down Cass Avenue.

The revised plan for the distribution system includes a loop around the hospital, a pipe around the corner of Elm and Mill, eight blocks of the line on Rodehaver and one near Reeve's Seedhouse that crosses a manhole for the sewer system, among other items.

The plan, said Mr. Miller, includes a 12-inch line to the proposed area for the water treatment plant. Without that, he said, the city would save \$170,000. Then if the plan to put the plant in moves forward, the council can decide to put that line in.

Mr. Miller said he wasn't sure

how big a project the council wanted to look at.

Could the city get money to help pay for a distribution project without the water treatment plant? asked Councilwoman Rhonda May. There is money available, said Mr. Miller. There's the state revolving loan fund. He said not doing the water treatment plant could be a red flag, but the city should be able to get money.

There is also the state's Community Development Block Grant program for next year, he said, with the maximum amount at \$400,000.

The city can't start laying new pipe soon enough, said Mr. Perrin.

If this plan was done, asked Ms. May, would people see a differ-

ence?

The pressure would be the same, said Mr. Miller, but if the flow is currently 10 gallons per minute because the pipe is coated and the new pipe lets more water through, people should be able to tell in quantity.

Another part of this, said Mr. Perrin, is that many of the system's valves are old and so the city doesn't have a lot of control over the system. For example, when a pipe broke across the street from the post office, the entire town had to be shut off.

What would the water rates need to be to pay for the project? asked Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener.

Mayor Joe Stanley said he would think the rates are where they need

(See WATER on Page 8A)

## City will wait to do anything on motel ideas

By KIMBERLY DAVIS  
k.davis@nwkanssas.com

The Oberlin City Council decided Thursday to take a little time to look at an incentive package for prospective motel builders prepared by the marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp.

Members said they'd just received the package that afternoon.

The council suggested the corporation draw up a proposal to send out to people interested in building a motel or hotel here at the meeting on Thursday, Aug. 28. Marketing Director Connie Grafel got right to work, preparing a two-page package.

The council decided to discuss the proposal at its second meeting of the month on Thursday, Sept. 18.

The proposal includes the land on the southeast corner of The Gateway. The property, about 1.5 acres owned by the city, would be sold to the developer for \$1. The land once had been mentioned as a

site for a new swimming pool, but recent proposals have focuses on a pool in City Park.

Dave Winfield, who talked to the council months ago, requested two acres for a motel site. The city would also have to provide utilities to the site, dirt and pavement work as well as securing the land.

The council did look at the possibility of purchasing some land from C&H Power across the street from The Gateway. The land, where the old Oberlin Inn is, joins the old port of entry. The company would sell a portion of it for \$49,000 with the agreement that the city would then purchase the rest of it. There wasn't a stated amount for the rest of the property when C&H Power is ready to sell.

Less than 10 years ago, the city sold the land to the northeast of The Gateway for around \$60,000 so that Crossroads could be built.

Years ago the council did discuss selling the property to a developer

(See MOTEL on Page 8A)

## Lower tax levy will still help raise more county money

By KIMBERLY DAVIS  
k.davis@nwkanssas.com

With an increase of almost \$5 million in Decatur County's tax valuation for the year, commissioners decided last Tuesday to lower the property tax levy by 1.867 mills.

Even with the lower levy, commissioners said, the county will bring in nearly a quarter million dollars more with the proposed budget for 2009.

The budget isn't set in stone yet, however. County Clerk Marilyn Horn said the budget has been published and a public hearing is set for 10 a.m. next Tuesday. At that time, the commissioners will decide whether to approve the proposed budget or not.

The county's valuation went from \$33,529,587 this year to \$38,372,761 for 2009, a jump of \$4,843,174. Mrs. Horn said that's mainly due to new oil production in Prairie Dog and Bassettville townships.

The commissioners said they wanted to lower the levy to around 62 mills, but the budget for next year has the levy at 63.948 mills. That will bring in \$2,453,842, which is actually \$225,000 more than last

year, said Mrs. Horn.

Last year, the levy was set at 65.815 mills.

Mrs. Horn said there are no big changes in the budget from last year.

The property tax levy for the ambulance budget went down although the department will get \$752 more. Same with the rural fire department, which decreased its tax but will get \$3,110 more.

The budget includes \$50,000 to be set aside for the project to lengthen Oberlin's airport runway.

According to the worksheet Mrs. Horn fills out to do the budget, the county is only allowed under state law to bring in \$2,225,461. She said the commissioners will have to pass a resolution to allow the county to bring in more money.

At this point, the commissioners could still agree to cut the tax levy even more, she said, but if it's increased, they would have to republish the budget.

What this means for a homeowner, said Mrs. Horn, is that for every \$1,000 of appraised value, taxes will drop 21.5 cents.

For a business, the savings would be about twice that much.

## Money must be ready before center destroyed

By KIMBERLY DAVIS  
k.davis@nwkanssas.com

The salvage process and demolition of the Golden Age Center and Sunflower Cinema will not start until all of the money needed for a new building is in place, backers say.

Greg Lohofener, who has been working on the project for the

Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., said demolition can't start until all of the money is raised. He said he wants to have the money to complete phases 1 and 2 of the project in hand, which is the new Golden Age Center and Sunflower Cinema, before any

(See CASH on Page 8A)



AT CITY PARK on Sunday, Joe Hirsch and Dalton Dolan (above right) helped other high school students build an ice cream sundae for the opening night of Teens for Christ. Luke Koerperich (below) was wrapped in toilet paper to

become a mummy by his teammates, who later carried him over the finish line while they tried to keep him away from an opposing team member throwing water balloons.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

## Food turns into fun

By KIMBERLY DAVIS  
k.davis@nwkanssas.com

The spoon rose, and chocolate ice cream went flying, landing securely on a guy's T-shirt, then dripped down.

After eating their fill of ice cream sundaes made by and for the members of Teens for Christ on Sunday, a bunch of high school girls started a food fight with the simple flick of a plastic spoon.

The 19 teenagers ran around City Park, tossing ice cream, cherries and whipped cream, laughing the entire time.

The teens made the ice cream sundaes as part of the kick-off to Teens for Christ for the year. The sundaes were judged by the adults, with the junior high group winning the contest.

After the unplanned food fight, Pastor Doug Mason, who heads up the organization with his wife Johanna, led the water wars.

Pastor Mason said any teen from seventh through 12th grade can join the group, which meets from 6 to 8 p.m. Sundays at the Teens for Christ building on Rodehaver.

A typical meeting, he said, starts with a snack, a little play time, an organized game, music, prayer and then a lesson, which lasts around 30 minutes. Last year, he said, the group averaged about 17 kids a week. They had 19 during the kick-off Sunday.

Once a month, the teens go to

(See TEENS on Page 8A)



# \*Cash before crash

(Continued from Page 1A)

work starts. That way, he said, everyone will know that part of the project will be completed and the group can continue raising money for phase 3, which is the bowling alley, including refurbishing the equipment. Since last week, Mr. Lohofener and Connie Grafel, marketing director for the agency, have been talking with people who pledged money for the project under a state tax credit program. Mr. Lohofener said they have not talked with all of those people yet. Those who haven't been contacted should call Mr. Lohofener at 475-3459 or Ms. Grafel at 475-2901.

"We really appreciate the support," he added. Once the final plans are finished by the architect, he said, they'll go to contractor Kevin Brown, owner of Sappa Valley Construction. At that point, he said, the group will have the final numbers, too.

Mr. Lohofener said the cost for phases 1 and 2 was estimated at a little over \$700,000, but that was before steel prices went up. With a general obligation bond issue, pledges, fund raisers and a guaranteed loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, he said, he thinks they will need to raise another \$30,000 to \$40,000 to pay for the increase.

The corporation still hasn't heard anything on the guaranteed loan, however.

Once all of the money is in place, Mr. Lohofener said, things will move quickly. Anyone who still wants to make a donation can do so by bringing a check to Ms. Grafel. That money will be kept with the county and used for the building. Those donations may be claimed as a tax deduction, he said.

Anyone interested in helping salvage things like ceiling tiles, toilets and other items out of the building can call Mr. Lohofener to be put on the list. Once the money is in place, he said, volunteers will be needed to get the equipment out quickly and efficiently.

# Health grant to help

The Decatur County commissioners signed the paperwork for the bioterrorism grant for the county Health Department at their meeting at the end of August.

Administrator Marilyn Gambelin said the grant is for just under \$10,000, a little less than last year, because it doesn't include money for a pandemic flu plan. Last year's grant was for \$10,800.

Commissioner Ralph Unger asked what the money can be used for. Ms. Gambelin said she can use some of the money to pay salaries, supplies for training, mileage to meetings, pay for the pager she carries 24 hours a day and for Internet service.

The director said she has a program planned for the Modern Woodmen camp on high blood pressure that week, and she planned to attend an immunization conference coming up in Wichita.

She said she plans to attend a meeting Wednesday and Thursday, Sept. 24 and 25, about regionalization of county health departments. She said Commissioner Stan McEvoy will get an invitation to the meeting, but all the commissioners are welcome.

Mr. Unger said for her to be listening, because there is a move to consolidate counties, not just health departments. Ms. Gambelin said the idea of consolidation has already been brought up.

The commissioners presented Ms. Gambelin with a certificate for her 15 years of service.



WITH THE SUNDAE TRAY in hand, Matt Glading ran through City Park during a Teens for Christ food fight Sunday night. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

# \*Teens have fun time in park

(Continued from Page 1A) an Edge rally at the Shepherd's Staff in Rexford with Teens for Christ members from other towns.

Over the summer, the teens had a chance to take part in two to three mission trips and camp the last two weeks of July in Alma, Neb., he said.

The idea of the organization, said Pastor Mason, is to meet the spiritual needs of teenagers with the theme of connecting teens with the truth of Jesus Christ.

He said they can always use volunteers. Currently, Kendal Carman and Marc Berg help on Sunday nights, but sometimes their schedules don't allow

them to be there. Other adults help on special occasions.

The organization, said Pastor Mason, operates completely from donations. The group isn't associated with any specific church, but draws kids from many denominations and some who don't have a church.

The group needs a good, solid ping pong table, he said. Anyone who wants to make a donation can send a check to 410 E. Commercial Ave. Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Anyone who wants to help with snacks for a night should call Mrs. Mason at 475-2599.

# Two to join hospital board

By CYNTHIA HAYNES  
c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Decatur County commissioners replaced two of five hospital board members after holding interviews with people who had said they would like to serve.

Kathy Nauer, a nurse from Jennings, and Gary Walter, president of The Bank, were selected from four candidates at the meeting Tuesday, Aug. 12.

The board, which comprises five people from various parts of the county, suddenly found itself down by two when Butch Rittmann and Marilyn Noone moved. Mrs. Noone, who lived in the Jennings area and works for First National Bank, moved to Sharon Springs, while Mr. Rittmann, a manager for Wal-Mart, went to the Kansas City area.

Board members serve three-year terms; Mrs. Noone's expires at the end of 2009 and Mr. Rittmann's at the end of 2010. Also on the board are county commission candidate Gene Gallentine, county Economic Development Director Connie Grafel and Oberlin school district technology coordinator Ron Jansson.

The two new board members will fill the unexpired terms, so Mr. Walter will serve through 2010 and Mrs. Nauer through 2009.

Besides Mr. Walter and Mrs.

Nauer, Diane Barrett, county executive director for the U.S. Farm Service Agency, and veterinarian Mark Olson applied for the posts.

Mrs. Nauer wasn't available for an interview, as she was in Omaha. Commissioner Doyle Brown said that she is a registered nurse and works for Valley Hope in Norton, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center.

Mr. Walter, a former mayor of Oberlin, told the commissioners that he has no medical experience and no axes to grind.

"I think the hospital is important and it's one of the entities that keeps our community viable," he said. "The hospital and school are probably two of our biggest employers in the community."

Mrs. Barrett said that she felt her business experience and knowledge of the community and hospital could be of benefit to the board.

"I think that it's an important position because I want the community to have a functioning hospital," she said. "I want it to be a stand-alone business. I want it to run and I want quality health care."

Dr. Olson said that he had been approached to be on the board previously but had other commitments at that time. Now, he said, he feels he can commit the time needed to serve.

"I'm involved in health and I

think we have a very strong health system," he said. "We're in rural America and it's very difficult to get professionals out here."

"Health care is near and dear to my family."

He said that looking at the future, not every town will be able to afford a hospital and he wants to make sure that Oberlin and Decatur County will be among the lucky ones.

"Health care determines where people retire," he said. "We have a lot of people who want to retire here, and they want to have quality health care."

After the interviews, the commissioners noted that they were lucky to have four good candidates but would have to choose two.

Mr. Brown, who is from Jennings, said that he would like to see Mrs. Nauer on the board, since she's from the Jennings area and, with Mrs. Noone gone, that area needs representation.

Mr. Walter was chosen for the other seat due to his financial expertise.

Mr. Brown said that he hoped the other two candidates would allow their names to stay on file, since there may be more openings in the near future.

If Mr. Gallentine is elected to the county commission, he noted, he will have to give up his hospital board seat.

# Graduate to teach English in China

A 1999 graduate of Decatur Community High School heads to China on Monday to teach English for a year at a university.

Matt Taylor, the son of Charlie and Vickie Taylor, earned a degree in elementary education from Fort Hays State University in 2004.

When he started college, he said, he didn't know what he wanted to do, but he decided to become a teacher.

"I want to make an impact on others," said Mr. Taylor. Since graduating, he has taught at the Plainville Middle School, for the St. Francis Academy and worked as a teacher aide at an elementary school in Victoria.

While in college, he said, he got to know a student from China. Since then, he said, he's always wanted to go there. His friend, said Mr. Taylor, asked him about coming to China to teach.

He said he has another friend who has taught at the university and he got the contact information

from him. Mr. Taylor said he came home for the summer and lived with his parents, working at the LandMark Inn and waiting for the paperwork to be finished. He said he had to get a work visa as well as a passport. He said he leaves Monday for the

city of Xizheng in the province of Henan, where he will teach at the Sias University. The college has a partnership with Fort Hays.

"I plan to stay in China for a year teaching," said Mr. Taylor, "but that could be extended."

Mr. Taylor said he's excited.

# \*Motel ideas needs study, city decides

(Continued from Page 1A)

The proposal also includes a statement that construction would have to begin within eight months. The city would not be liable for paying any debt for industrial revenue bonds if the developer chooses to go that way.

Also in the proposal is a statement that the city "strongly urges any developer to buy and use local products and materials and to bid any subcontracting work locally before accepting offers from any contractors outside of the immediate area."

The developer or contractor would have to get a city building permit, which includes a \$25 filing fee.

The proposal, which hasn't been approved, also includes information about dirt work that would need to be done, drainage, utilities and an allowance for concrete or pavement work up to \$16,000.

The city would pledge not to allow another lodging facility to be built with tax-exempt industrial revenue bonds for three years.

Ms. Grafel said she realized there was no disclaimer in the proposal saying the city has the right turn down or accept any and all offers. That probably needs to be added, she said.

The council just received the proposal that afternoon, said Mayor Joe Stanley, so there hasn't been a lot of time to read through it. He asked if it would be difficult to get an entrance off of U.S. 83.

The developer would probably

want two, said City Administrator Gary Shike, but that could be handled in the design. He said he wasn't sure what would have to be done or how difficult it would be to get permits from the state Department of Transportation.

A packet on the area from the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce will be sent out with the proposal along with a report of activities at The Gateway and maps of the area.

Councilwoman Rhonda May asked how close the motel property would come to the culvert under the highway. Not close, said Ms. Grafel, noting that the measurements start at the slope.

So there isn't a plan to fill that area in where the skate park thing is? Ms. May asked. No, said Ms. Grafel.

After some research, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch, he found that the land isn't zoned for a motel. The area is zoned for commercial general, so either the zoning would have to be changed or the acceptable uses would have to be changed.

There was also some talk about how far the building would have to be set back from the road.

Ms. Grafel suggested they get together and figure out the measurements with the setback from the road. It may be a good idea to set up some flags, said Councilman Rob McFee, to show the corners of the land.

What kind of acreage did Nebraska developer Dave Winfield want? asked Ms. May. Two to three acres, said Ms. Grafel.

# \*Water lines here could be redone

(Continued from Page 1A)

to be because the city raised them when it was planning on putting in the water treatment plant.

Mr. Miller said he wasn't sure. The city did go up on rates some, he said, and should have some money coming in to help pay for the project.

Ms. May said she thinks the city needs to move forward with at least part of the project, especially the water line crossing the sewer line.

Are there no valves in the system

that work so the crew can isolate parts of the town? asked Ms. May. No, said Mr. Perrin, the corner of the city by the hospital can be isolated, but that's it.

What is the standard practice for valves now? she asked. Operational valves on every block, said Mr. Miller. The valves are there now, but many don't work properly, said Mr. Perrin. Valves will be put in with new lines, said Mr. Miller.

The council didn't make any decisions.

# Council decides to sell land given in estate

The Oberlin City Council voted unanimously to sell the land left to the city and the Decatur County Hospital by Fred and Henrietta Bremer.

The hospital board had previously voted to sell the land, appraised at just under \$1 million.

After the council went out and drove around the land, said Mayor Joe Stanley, the consensus was to sell it, but the council still needed to take a vote to make it official. The council made the motion and voted during the meeting Thursday, Aug. 28.

The council approved a motion to direct the executor of the estate to sell the land at auction.

Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener said she had talked to Councilman Jay Anderson, who was ill, and he had expressed some concern about investing the money. He said he had looked into what would happen if the city retained the land and leased it for farming.

City Attorney Steve Hirsch said he had looked into how the city can invest the money. It sounds like the city can basically invest the money in a certificate of deposit or a bank account.

The council approved the latest versions of the standard traffic ordi-

nances and uniform public offense codes for Kansas cities.

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