



Kids mail letters to Santa

ON HIS TIPTOES, Gavon Uehlin (above) stretched to open Santa's giant mailbox on Main Street last Tuesday so he could mail a letter to the North Pole. Diana Steinmetz' first-grade class walked to Stanley Hardware to mail their letters and drop off items for the food drive. Each student, including Gracie Vontz (right), carried an item from the school to the store.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



Council continues with loan

The Oberlin City Council voted to continue with the paperwork to borrow almost \$4.5 million for a water treatment plant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development at the meeting Thursday.

Although the council voted to continue to move forward with the loan paperwork, it was mentioned more than once that this doesn't actually mean the city has to borrow the money. There is still time to vote not to borrow the money for the plant.

The council also asked Dave Barber, with the agency, to start paperwork to borrow \$1 million to help with a distribution project for the water department.

Mr. Barber went over the letter of conditions with the council members which included the fact that the city will need to get bond counsel, adopt a rate schedule for repayment of the loan and other items.

If the council agrees to move forward, said Councilman Rob McFee, and then in a few days decides they don't want to do the project, then what? This doesn't obligate

Council Roundup

At the meeting Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Voted to continue with the paperwork to borrow almost \$4.5 million for a water treatment plant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development. Story on left.
- Talked with the foreman about The Gateway roof and siding that leaks. Story on Page 5A.
- Met in two closed sessions, each for 30 minutes, to discuss the candidates for city administrator, but didn't take any action. Story on Page 3A.
- Approved the purchase of a snow plow blade that can be attached to the front of a city truck. Story to come.

the city to do the project, said Mr. Barber, this is just to get the money (See COUNCIL on Page 5A)

Board split on accepting resignation

The Oberlin school superintendent resigned Monday night in front of a packed room, with three board members voting to approve the resignation and three abstaining in apparent protest.

Around 30 people, a mix of teachers, administrators, staff and parents, sat in the audience during the meeting.

Superintendent Pat Cullen was hired in May 2007, with his contract starting in June of that year. At the November board meeting, the board got three letters suggesting his removal. The next week, Dr. Cullen e-mailed a letter to teachers and staff saying that he planned to resign, but said at that time he hadn't sent the letter to the board.

Monday night, Dewayne Jackson, board president, read a letter addressed to the board, which was similar to the one to the staff.

Dr. Cullen wrote that he wants to be as positive and productive as possible as he finishes his contract. He said his last day would be June 30.

He wrote that he doesn't have any

recommendations for changes to the district, but to "build and rely on the strength, efforts and experience of the staff and the administration ... These people are the backbone of this district."

There was no discussion after Mr. Jackson read the letter.

Member Dan Grafel made a motion to accept the resignation, which member Dan Nedland seconded. Mr. Jackson called for a vote and member Monte Moore voted in favor. Members Barbara Olson and Chris Bailey abstained from voting, as did Mr. Jackson.

Member Jerry Chambers wasn't at the meeting.

Dr. Cullen said the 3-3 vote was an approval.

Later in the meeting, the members agreed to have someone from the Kansas Association of School Boards come to a special meeting at 7 p.m. next Wednesday to discuss what the district will do to find a new superintendent. Mr. Jackson said he had talked to the association already and the cost would be \$3,500 to help with the search.

Electronic waste soon to be recycled

Do you have old computer monitors piling up in your garage?

Ever wonder what to do with them?

Now there's an answer with the electronic waste operation at the Northwest Kansas Regional Recycling Center in Colby partnering with the state to provide a place for those old items to be taken.

In 2005 Decatur County became a member of the regional recycling

center. Since then people have been able to recycle paper, plastic, cardboard, junk mail, glass and other items by taking them to the trailer in Oberlin and now to the recycling building in Oberlin south of town. The trailer which used to sit south of town by the noxious weed department now goes to Jennings and Norcat for people to use.

For years, people also would drop (See CENTER on Page 5A)

Food items needed

With just two weeks left until the new year, Stanley Hardware's annual food drive still needs 1,498 items to hit the goal of 2,000 donations.

Every year since 2000, the store has held a community food drive between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. The donated items are then taken to the De-

catour County Food Pantry in the basement of the United Church, stocking the shelves for much of the year.

On Monday, the drive had 502 items displayed in the front window of the store on the west side of Main Street, said owner Joe Stanley.

Doctor is hired

The Doctor Procurement Committee has a signed contract from an Olathe doctor, who will start working in Oberlin on Jan. 1.

Dr. Obed Saint Louis will work at both the Oberlin Clinic and Decatur County Hospital.

Dr. Saint Louis did a stint with the University of Kansas Medical Center's rural practice program and is familiar with rural medicine.

The committee has been searching for a doctor since Dr. Richard May left last December.

Wreaths to decorate graves

Jennings area groups plan to place Christmas wreaths on the graves of all veterans at the Jennings and Big Timber cemeteries on Friday and Saturday.

Bob and Neoma Tacha of Jennings, who are heading up the "Arlington Wreath Project," said they saw a story in the *American Profile* magazine a year ago about one man's mission to honor America's heroes.

"This article immediately caught my attention since my brother, Lt. Col. Willis R. Kusy from Decatur County, was buried in Arlington National Cemetery in 2004," Mrs. Tacha said. "I was not aware of such a project and was very moved after reading the details. I thought, 'Why couldn't we do something similar to honor our veterans in the Jen-

nings and Big Timber cemeteries in December, as well as in May on Memorial Day.'"

After talking with members of the board of the Jennings Czech Museum, as well as the Jennings American Legion and Auxiliary, they decided to go ahead with the wreath project.

Purchase of the wreaths for 97 veterans buried at Jennings and 38 in the Big Timber Cemetery began the day after Christmas last year.

Volunteers are assembling the wreaths and ribbons on metal staffs, which were donated, as was the work of cutting it into proper lengths, Mrs. Tacha said.

Saturday, Dec. 13, is designated as National Wreath Day in national and state veterans cemeteries, she said.

Due to the uncertainty of the weather, however, the American Legion and volunteers will place the wreaths on Friday. Anyone interested in helping may call Mrs. Tacha at (785) 678-2470, or just be at the Jennings Cemetery at 1 p.m. and at 2 p.m. at Big Timber on Friday.

Services are scheduled for 10 a.m. Saturday at the Jennings Cemetery conducted by the Jennings American Legion, which will present the colors and place a wreath at the Veterans Memorial, with "Taps" to conclude the service. A similar service will follow at the Big Timber Cemetery. Everyone is welcome.

Up on the roof top



PUTTING CHRISTMAS LIGHTS on the roofline over their garage, (from left) Emily, Kaitlyn and Sarah Howland were hard at work Sunday afternoon while the weather was nice. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

*Council OKs second step for water loan

(Continued from Page 1A)

What if in four months the Kansas Department of Health and Environment comes in and says the project has to be done, said Mr. McFee. The process can be started over, said Mr. Barber.

Until the loan is closed, said Mr. Barber, the city isn't obligated to the agency for anything.

Councilwoman Marcia Lohoe-fener said she talked with Kansas Rural Water recently and they didn't really know anything about a group of small communities getting together with them about water issues. She said she was disappointed that nothing had happened with it.

The water treatment plant would address uranium and arsenic, which the city is over the allowed limit on its water. It doesn't address nitrates, of which the city is under the limit.

The council approved moving forward with the process.

Does the agency require bidding on bond counsel? asked City Attorney Steve Hirsch. The bond counsel selected has to be on the approved list, said Mr. Barber, but isn't subject to a bidding process.

Mr. Barber said he would get the application to borrow an additional \$1 million for distribution started and come back.

Chris Miller, with Miller and Associates, asked if the council wants

them to start designing the plant. Some people, said Councilman Jay Anderson, think Miller and Associates are here so much they are on retainer for the city.

Mr. Miller said the company hasn't sent an invoice to the city in months. They signed a contract with them for this in 2006.

Mayor Joe Stanley said he thought they would have a special meeting in January to discuss the designs.

Gaylord Shields, who was in the audience, said he is concerned about water and Oberlin's future. The number of people is decreasing and \$4.5 million is a pretty big loan.

With the way the economy is, he said, this sort of debt will leave the other economic plans for Oberlin dead on the table. Mr. Shields said he realizes that the project has been on the books for some time, but this is the worst possible timing. There is almost zero economic return. This sort of debt could cause problems, he said.

The discussion from the council over the last year is that they don't want to do this, said Mayor Stanley.

The economy is in a recession, said Mr. Shields, and that isn't going to stop. There will be lots of changes to come in the next few years.

*Center open in Colby for e-waste

(Continued from Page 1A)

off monitors, old computers and televisions. In November a trailer from the recycling center came from Colby and workers loaded up the electronic waste, referred to as e-waste by those in the field.

With the help of the state which give \$150,000 for each of the two pilot years, an e-waste center has opened in Colby allowing people to recycle electronic waste. The center is located at 1190 South Country Club Drive in Colby. It will be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on

Wednesday. If people are planning a trip to Colby, said Marilyn Horn, county clerk, they can take their e-waste there or they can wait until after January and take their e-waste to the recycling building in Oberlin. It will then be picked up here and save local people a trip. A trailer will be brought over from Colby to pick up e-waste in counties that are members. Those include Cheyenne, Rawlins, Decatur, Thomas, Sheridan, Logan, Gove and Scott Counties.

In those counties people, government offices and schools will be able to take items in for free.

Businesses, people living outside those eight counties and other groups will have to pay to recycle their e-waste. The prices are \$5 for each computer monitor, \$10 for a television, \$2 for a microwave and 10 cents a pound, with the maximum allowed at \$20 an item for other acceptable items.

The prices could change if the money from the state runs out. Acceptable items include desk-

top and laptop computers, computer parts and accessories, printers, scanners, fax machines, copy machines, telephones, cellular phones, answering machines, pagers, personal data assistants, televisions, DVD/VCR players, stereos, radios, tape recorders, speakers, satellite receivers, microwave ovens, calculators/adding machines, toner/ink-jet cartridges, handheld/console game systems, game cartridges and rechargeable batteries.

Roof and siding at Gateway leak

After walking around on the roof of The Gateway, the Oberlin city foreman told the council Thursday night that it's a mess and both the roof and the siding on the building leak.

Foreman Dan Castle said he spent the morning with men from Roofmasters out of Colby and Hays and someone from Glassman Air Conditioning of Hays looking at the roof also.

It isn't just the roof causing the problems, he added, the siding leaks, too. The only way to stop the leaks is to replace the roof and the siding at the same time, he said.

The duct work on the roof is uninsulated, said Mr. Castle, and two of the heating units are running full blast, but there isn't any heat coming out.

Councilwoman Marcia Lohoe-fener said people have complained to her about it being cold in the theater for the last two Oberlin Arts and Humanities events.

Mr. Castle said the representatives from the two businesses will be back probably in January and give a presentation to the council. He said he told Kathy Brainard, Gateway manager, everything he learned about the building.

Another suggestion was to change the color of the outside if the siding is replaced, said Mr. Castle. It would make it look a little more modern.

The windows also leak, he said. Another suggestion he made is to do away with the big windows in the arena, since people constantly cover them with curtains because of glare anyway.

Maybe now that the city has some money from the Bremer estate, The Gateway could get a facelift, he said. It's been 14 years, said Mr. Castle, and no one has ever spent money on the maintenance for the building, inside or out.

The council didn't make any decisions.

Microphone downtown may be fixed

Members of the Oberlin Business Alliance discussed fixing the speaker system on the canopies downtown to allow someone to stand on the sidewalk with a microphone and be heard over the system.

It's important to have it working, said Kurt Vollertsen, owner of Ward Drug Store. The problem with the wireless microphone, said Jack Benton, is that with so much metal around, it cuts down the signal. He said he could wire a microphone to the outside. Another option would be putting a receiver outside.

Joe Stanley, owner of Stanley Hardware, said a receiver could be

mounted on top of the canopies. Bryan Loker, with KFNF Radio, said you wouldn't want a receiver outside in the weather all the time.

The group didn't make any decision, but the consensus was that it would be nice to have the system working so a microphone could be used outside.

The business alliance plans to sponsor a soup lunch from 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Business Enhancement Entrepreneurial Center on Saturday, Dec. 20. At the meeting last Wednesday, the members decided to give the money they raise to help build the new senior center, theater and recreation

center.

The luncheon will be held between *The Oberlin Herald's* "Christmas on Us" drawing at 11 a.m. at the gazebo and the 2 p.m. alliance drawing.

Besides the \$1,000 in scrip money the business alliance will give away, the group also will give tickets to children for movies at Sunflower Cinema.

Kids will have a chance to sign up when Santa is at the courthouse at 12:30 p.m.

The business alliance will use the tickets Christmas on Us sponsors are giving out for its drawing, so be sure to save those.

In other business, the members:

- Mentioned that dues are due for the alliance and Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce. Any business or individual who pays before the end of the year gets 10 percent off. Dues for the alliance are \$75 for a business and \$25 for an individual. For the Chamber, dues are \$125 for a business, \$50 for an individual and \$25 for clubs.
- Talked about calling the school to see if one of the classes could do some welding on Christmas decorations.
- Heard that the Parade of Lights had gone well, as had the Aquarius Club's soup supper that evening.

Director's position under discussion

The Decatur County commissioners briefly discussed the emergency management director position at their meeting last Tuesday, hearing that three people have been in to find out about the job.

The vacant spot has been filled for the interim with a part-time director, Jacque Boultinghouse of Selden, who is also the director in Sheridan County.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said he thought they should talk with Ms. Boultinghouse to see what she has to say about the job before any decision is made about it being full or part-time.

Patti Skubal, the former director, worked full-time in the position, but then still filled in at the sheriff's

County countdown

At the meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Pulled two names from a bowl to break two ties from the general election for officers in Center and Dresden townships. Story below.

- Briefly discussed the emergency management director position, hearing that three people have been in to find out about the spot. Story at left.

department. What's the sheriff going to do? asked Clerk Marilyn Horn. Will the new director work with the sheriff's department again?

At meetings that he's gone to, said Mr. Unger, the experts don't suggest sharing an emergency

director with another agency because they have to wear two hats, and that's difficult when there's an incident.

If it is a shared job, he said, then there needs to be an agreement that says the emergency director position takes precedence.

Commissioner Stan McEvoy said he thinks the county needs to have its own director instead of sharing with other counties.

If the job is joint with other counties, said Mrs. Horn, if there is an incident, where is he or she going to respond? Probably to the county they live in first, Mrs. Horn said.

There are lots of counties that share a director, noted Mr. Unger.

Mr. McEvoy said he thought the county needs to start advertising the job now. It doesn't have to say if it's a full-time or part-time job.

Different people will probably apply depending on if it's a part- or full-time spot, said Mr. McEvoy.

The commissioners didn't make any decisions.

Commissioners draw winning names

The Decatur County commissioners pulled two names out of a bowl to break election ties in Center and Dresden townships.

In Center Township, George Ruzicka and Ron McDougal, the incumbent, tied for the trustee position with 17 votes. Mr. McDougal's name was drawn. Both men are Democrats and Mr. McDougal was the write-in.

In Dresden Township, Greg Ritter and Linda Schroer tied for the

treasurer position with five votes. Both were write-ins and both are Republicans. Mr. Ritter's name was drawn.

The only person to attend the tie breaker drawing was Mrs. Schroer.

The commissioners handed out certificates from the Kansas Association of Counties to Colleen Geishler, deputy clerk, and Commissioner Doyle Brown for 16 years of service, and to County

Clerk Marilyn Horn for 24.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Named Mrs. Horn to serve as transportation bus coordinator after her retirement in January.
- Heard that Commissioner Stan McEvoy had been elected to serve on the Kansas Association of Counties board as a northwest Kansas representative while he was at the state meeting in Wichita.

Fire keeps volunteers busy for a few hours

A fire Tuesday night kept the Decatur County Fire Department busy for a couple of hours.

Chief Bill Cathcart said a call came in around 9:30 p.m. that a fire had started in some hay at the

Decatur County Feed Lot. Chief Cathcart said they had been grinding hay at the lot that day.

He said the firemen found small spot fires, about the size of a half dollar. He wasn't sure what started

them, but thought it was a spark from outside the hay shed.

Chief Cathcart said they spent about an hour to an hour and a half watching for the spot fires and got them out.

Shoppers still needed

Anyone still wanting to shop for a child on the Oberlin Jaycees' Angel Tree has a little bit of time left.

Abby Hissong, who organizes the tree project, said as of Monday she had 10 kids who were still on the tree. There were both boys and girls to shop for with ages ranging from 7 to 13 years old.

There isn't much time left to

shop since Mrs. Hissong would like the presents back at Fredrickson Insurance by this Friday. That way parents can pick up the gifts on Wednesday, Dec. 17 and Thursday, Dec. 18.

People or organizations that still want to shop for someone can pick up a wish list by stopping by Fredrickson Insurance Agency to pick one off the tree.

Over breakfast, say to your man,
"Oh, honey, I just realized something really important!"

"What is it?" he'll say with alarm!
 You then say, "You haven't bought me new jewelry in years! I would love some for Christmas!" (Men love the direct approach ...)

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