

After the holidays



FRIDAY AFTERNOON, city crew member Melvin Martin was taking down the stars and garland that decorated Main Street for Christmas. Most decorations around town were gone by the weekend, with only a few lighted wreaths to brighten the night.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Transport van ready to retire as it falls apart

The weed control director told Decatur County commissioners last Tuesday that the county's transit van, Bus 22, which is used to drive people around town, is on its last legs.

Gaylen Huntley said the sliding door on the 2000 Chevrolet minivan, which allows the wheelchair ramp to be used, doesn't always latch on the back side. That is causing problems with the front door on the passenger side, he said.

The van was purchased with a state grant, said Clerk Marilyn Horn. Before the state will help replace it, she said, it has to have 100,000 miles on it. It has just over 60,000 miles on it now, she added.

The van never has been a good one, said Mrs. Horn, though it cost the state \$36,000.

For a warm-weather place, where it doesn't snow and there isn't ice on the streets, said Mr. Huntley, the van would work. Used here, he said, the

van just isn't holding up.

He added that he didn't know if they needed to look for something else, or if there is a way to beef up the frame of the van so it will work better.

For safety reasons, said Mr. Huntley, they will probably have to stop taking wheelchairs at some point.

The van will run for quite a few more years, he said. It just doesn't have a good structure.

Gene Gallentine, commissioner-elect, suggested taking the van to CW's Welding in Norcat to see if they can beef up the frame. At least the owner, Carl Lyon, would be able to say if there's anything that could be done, Mr. Gallentine said.

The county has had the van since 2000. People can get the van to go to stores and appointments around town by calling dispatch. People who use the bus are asked to make a \$1 donation for each ride.

Expenses down, finances up in 2007, county auditor says

The Decatur County commissioners approved the 2007 audit, which showed no cash or budget violations and some improvements in the county's financial picture and overall expenditures.

Steve Zodrow, an auditor with Mapes and Miller, said there weren't any budget violations. There was a big improvement in the county general fund, he said, with a little more money left to be transferred forward.

Overall, said Mr. Zodrow, the county really held the line on expenditures in 2007.

Something that he did notice was that in 2008, there needs to be a separate audit just on the hospital project to build the new speciality clinic. It probably should have been

done that way in 2007, too, since it was put in with money from a federal program and was pre-spent money, said Mr. Zodrow.

In the ambulance department, he said, the numbers are showing some positive trends and the program seems to be financially stable.

In the footnotes section of the audit, said Mr. Zodrow, there really isn't anything to report.

He said he should have had the 2007 audit to the commissioners sooner, but had been sick during the year, and that pushed the work back.

The commissioners approved and accepted the 2007 audit as reported, noting that Mapes and Miller should file the needed copies with the state.

Hospital still waiting for first baby

Almost a week into 2009, Decatur County doesn't have a New Year's Baby and may not for a while.

Hospital Administrator Lynn Doeden said the only deliveries they are doing at the hospital are scheduled surgical deliveries or if someone happens to be coming through town and goes into labor. The hospital, she said, doesn't have a surgeon on staff 24 hours a day. In an emergency, they have to be able

to provide a cesarean section within 30 minutes, she said, and without a surgeon it's hard to do that during a "normal" delivery.

She said when they schedule c-sections, the surgeon will come to the hospital.

Mrs. Doeden said it's hard to say when the first baby will be born. In past years, it's been common for that to be in late January and once it wasn't until March.

For the first miss or mister born in 2009 at the Decatur County Hospital, the parents will receive gifts from local merchants. To receive the gifts, the parents must contact the newspaper and agree to be interviewed. All must be claimed within 60 days of the birth.

Gifts this year include a \$10 gift certificate from the Dresser, a case of baby food from Raye's Grocery, a \$10 gift card from Stanley Hard-

ware, a \$20 gift certificate from Carol Morford with Mary Kay, a \$25 gift certificate from Addleman Drug Store, dinner for two from Pizza Hut, a gift from Fredrickson Insurance Agency, a \$10 gift certificate from Ward Drug Store, and a year's subscription to *The Oberlin Herald*.

Winners spend money in Oberlin

Money given out during the annual Oberlin Merchants' Christmas on Us giveaway has been spent at sponsoring businesses on items ranging from tools to food.

The sponsoring businesses and *The Oberlin Herald* gave out \$2,000 during the Christmas promotion with the big drawing on Saturday, Dec. 20. Since then at least \$1,375 of it has been spent, leaving \$625

unaccounted for.

Calculations show that winners spent \$50 at the LandMark Inn, \$25 at Addleman Drug Store, \$600 at Raye's Grocery, \$250 at Stanley Hardware, \$125 at Ultimate Fertilizer, \$150 at R&M Service Center, \$100 at Prairie Petals, \$25 at Ampride and \$33 at *The Herald*.

Sponsors also included the Southwest Implement, Stellar Sales, Golt

Home Planning Center, Dale's Fish 'N' Fun, Ward Drug Store, Rocking R, the Bank, A&W Drive In and D&M Sinclair Service, the Dresser and the NWKansasonline.com business directory.

Some of the scrip money, said Managing Editor Kimberly Davis, could still be at businesses where winners chose to spend it and it's not yet turned in.

Winners for this year's promotion included Sharon Gamblin, who won the grand prize of \$1,200, and Ed Dean, who won the first prize of \$300 and two "instant winner" prizes of \$50 each. Other instant winners included Reva Marshall, Arian Arnold, Cindy Fowler, Kristine Stragey, who won twice, Larry Mack, Maxine Sauvage and Lois Wentz.

Two county offices hope to share one copier

The Decatur County commissioners talked briefly with two department heads about buying a copier to share last week, but decided to wait until the first meeting in January.

Judy Gaumer, register of deeds, said she and Tim Stallman, road and bridge supervisor, planned to share the copier, but want it on the

2009 budget.

The two departments would split the cost and use the old one as a trade-in. County Clerk Marilyn Horn said the departments couldn't get the copier out of the 2009 budget until the beginning of the year, however.

Mrs. Gaumer said she would be back this week. The commissioners

asked her to look into a warranty on the copier.

Chief Dispatcher Jeanne Pachner asked the commissioners to increase the pay for Fred Anderson by \$2.50 an hour for January since he will help with some of the management items while she is out of the office.

The increase from \$10 an hour to \$12.50 would be in effect only for this month.

Ambulance Director Linda Manning handed out a piece of paper showing that the service had answered 336 calls so far in 2008, two more than the previous record.

The record year for ambulance calls was 2005, when 334 calls came in.

She said she'd collected 85 percent of what's been billed out. The county could receive more of what's been billed, noted Commissioner Ralph Unger.

In other business, the commis-

sioners:

- Held a five-minute closed session for non-elected personnel with Ms. Manning. There was no action taken.

- Approved end-of-the-year transfers of \$30,000 from the general fund to special equipment reserve, \$14,000 from courts to special equipment reserve, \$170,000 for road and bridge to special machine, \$100,000 from ambulance to ambulance special equipment reserve, \$7,500 from noxious weed to special equipment and \$25,000 for rural fire department special equipment reserve.

- Held a five-minute closed session for attorney-client privilege, with no action taken.

- Gave the OK for the extension agent to paint his office area on the first floor of the courthouse, along with a conference room.

Gateway roof on city agenda

The Oberlin City Council will discuss replacing the roof on The Gateway at its meeting Thursday.

At the end of last year, city foreman Dan Castle told the council that the roof leaks and needs to be replaced. City Clerk Karen Larson said representatives from Roofmasters out of Hays will have informa-

tion about replacing the roof.

Mrs. Larson said the council will welcome the new city administrator, who started work on Monday.

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

Cold weather nips tips but doesn't hurt wheat

Cold surface temperatures have frozen leaf tips on some area wheat fields, but not the growing point of the plants, and the surface damage shouldn't affect the crop too much.

Brian Olson, area agronomist with Kansas State University Research and Extension, said there's been some really cold weather this winter, but fortunately the soil temperatures were good. So far, he added, there's good soil moisture which has acted as kind of a buffer, not allowing the cold to damage the plants themselves.

Farmers may need to worry about some of the terrace tops,

he added. Some of the exposed plants on the tops were frozen back, but the actual growing point for the wheat looks good so far.

For those driving around in the country, he said, there is less green to see, but the plants are OK.

During the winter, he said, the wheat isn't really growing much, as it's in dormancy, he said. Basically the plant is tucked in for the winter, but come spring, said Mr. Olson, the wheat will need some more moisture.

For now, though, he said, the area crop is in pretty good condition.

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