



SEN. RALPH OSTMEYER talked with Jerry Lohofener (above) during a "town hall" meeting Saturday. Rep. John Faber (below) stopped for pizza before the two legislators headed to the next stop. — Herald staff photos by Carolyn Plotts

Road maps still missing for county

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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Decatur County started using new addresses for people who live in the country and the smaller unincorporated cities about a year ago, yet there is still confusion about how the roads are named.

The county has no maps available for people to see the road designations, no signs have been posted and address-number plates promised as part of the process haven't been made.

In fact, signs showing the old road designations — such as Road 1E or Road 8S — are the only ones up at intersections.

Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman said the roads were renamed to develop an Enhanced 911 addressing system. County emergency personnel are now doing their best to use the new addresses.

Around the same time the new addresses were introduced, equipment was installed at county dispatch to identify phone calls by the location the call comes from.

So far, said Mr. Stallman, there aren't any road signs up with the

new names. Money for signs is subject to commissioner approval, he said. The commissioners have discussed the signs numerous times, but haven't made a decision.

Mr. Stallman said the county crew might be able to start this summer, putting signs up on the highways first, and then work their way into rural areas. He said he would like to put up address signs in front of homes at the same time.

The number of signs that go up each year will depend on cost, he said, but the costs are unknown.

Since the addressing went into effect, Mr. Stallman said, he has compiled a description of how the system works so that people can find things.

In incorporated cities, which include Oberlin, Jennings, Dresden and Norcat, he said, people will keep their old addresses unless the home or business has a rural-route postal delivery.

The unincorporated cities, he said, Traer, Cedar Bluffs and Leoville, were addressed using county grid lines. Old street addresses are no longer valid.

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Reps visits Oberlin

By CAROLYN KELLEY-PLotts

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After keeping the audience waiting more than 30 minutes, Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer and Rep. John Faber rushed into the third floor courtroom of the Decatur County Courthouse for a "town hall" meeting Saturday.

Rep. Faber explained that a flat tire in Atwood started the pair's troubles. He said when a mechanic began to repair the tire, the car was put on a lift and something in the suspension or steering was broken. The two hitched a ride to Oberlin, apologizing to the waiting crowd for their tardiness.

"I always like traveling with Ralph," Rep. Faber said, laughing. "He's never more than 30 minutes away from a close relative."

Rep. Faber said this year in Topeka will be a big change for him because he is not serving on any policy-making committees. He said work has begun on the 2010 budget.

"We still don't know how the stimulus money is going," he added.

Those attending the meeting were given handouts, highlighting how the more than \$1.7 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, as the stimulus is known, might be allocated.

One of the first questions posed to the legislators concerned a Senate bill to exempt home-owned carnivals from state inspection



and training requirements. Sen. Ostmeyer said that small county carnivals would be exempt. He said policymakers are concerned

about insurance, but he has tried to reassure them. Both men agreed they didn't think there would be a problem getting the bill passed.

When asked about how the stimulus package would affect education, Rep. Faber said he

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Bowling alley causes problem for building OK

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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While the Oberlin City council wanted to expedite the building of a new senior citizen center, theater and bowling alley, it found Thursday that it was stymied by its own ordinances.

The council received a request from the Economic Development Corp. and Decatur County to waive a requirement for a certified survey for the building permit. Since the requirement for the survey wasn't part of the city ordinances, City Administrator Austin Gilley said he didn't have a problem with the request. Especially, he said, when the new building will be situated similarly to the old one.

Council member Rhonda May said that she thought it was a bad idea to do a large project without a survey, but added that she wouldn't hold up the project because of her reservations.

So the council unanimously agreed to allow the permit.

A short time later, though, the council had to rescind that decision after City Attorney Steve Hirsch pointed out that a bowling alley is not a permitted use for a building in the downtown area. If the permit only said senior center and theater, he added, there would be no problem.

The council tried to find a way around the problem.

It was suggested that the words

Council roundup

At its meeting on Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Learned about another possible water source and a way to pay for it. Story to come.
- Tried to expedite a building permit for the senior center, theater and bowling alley but came up with a roadblock. See at left.
- Decided to use a local contractor to work on the swimming pool and to keep the rates for swimming the same as last year. See below.
- Decided to rescind a deal to buy computer software from a Phillipsburg company when city employees said they didn't like it. See Page 2A.

"bowling alley" just be scratched from the request, but both Mr. Hirsch and Mr. Gilley said that wouldn't be a good idea.

"These people have had enough hassle," Councilman Rob Mcfee said, referring to a shutdown in demolition over the lack of a state clearance on asbestos. "Dave Bose has had his machine there for two weeks and he has other, better uses for his machines."

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Pool prices to stay the same

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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It will cost more to prepare the Oberlin swimming pool for the summer season this year, but admission prices will remain the same.

At its meeting Thursday night, the Oberlin City Council accepted a bid from a local man to sandblast, seal cracks and repaint the pool before the season begins.

Mayor Joe Stanley told the council that the pool would probably have to be painted again next year but that the sandblasting, which is the expensive part, only has to be done every few years.

"After you've painted it six or seven times," he said, "you have to take it off."

Dallas Johnson of Johnson Custom Construction Oberlin bid \$44,588 for the job. The other

bidder M&M Tank Coating Co. of Greeley, Colo., was \$54,189.

"I think we ought to take the local guy," Councilwoman Rhonda May said.

City Administrator Austin Gilley suggested that the council should raise the daily rates at the pool from \$1 for children and \$2 for adults to \$2 for children and \$5 for adults. The change, he said, would make the pool passes, the prices of which wouldn't change, more attractive.

As it stands now, he said, a single pass is \$25 and a family pass is \$60. That's a lot of swimming days to pay for a pass.

Mr. Gilley gave the council a breakout of what the pool made in 2008 and what it could be expected to make with the change in rates in 2009. Last summer, admissions brought in \$6,159, and he projected

that would go to \$8,395.

Since 2003, revenue from admissions and concessions has run around \$10,000 a year, Mr. Gilley said. The cost of running the pool has been about \$50,000 a year, although it will be \$100,000 this year due to the extra work.

Ms. May opposed the change. "I know some kids that their parents don't have \$25 at the beginning of the year, and they just give them a dollar (when they want to go swimming)," she said. That's not how she would do it, she said, but that's just the way it is for some people.

"It costs us about \$40,000 net a year to run the pool in round figures," she said, adding that she felt the city should just leave the price as it is.

The council agreed to keep the same rates as last year.

Students read Seuss

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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Students, staff and teachers at Oberlin Elementary School celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday with theme days and different books all week.

On Monday, the book was "The Cat in the Hat," and participants wore their favorite hat to school. On Tuesday, the book was "Oh, the Places You'll Go," with people dressing up for the career they hope to have some day.

Last Wednesday, the book was "Wacky Wednesday," with wacky sunglasses worn to school. On Thursday, kids wore crazy

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DURING READ ACROSS AMERICA last week, Bethany Mason (left) wore sunglasses that lit up while Judith Isbell wore ones with a snake for "Wacky Wednesday."

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Deejay for a day



GETTING READY TO START his shift for Rotary Radio Day, Judge John Bremer was set to go on Sunday. He and Oberlin Superintendent Pat Cullen had the 4-to-5 p.m. shift for the fund raiser. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

*Road names still causing confusion

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Homes that face a highway will have the highway as their road, he said. For example, if a driveway goes directly to U.S. 83 and is outside the limits of an incorporated city, the address would be on the highway, such as 1245 U.S. 83.

In the county's new grid system, Mr. Stallman said, roads run north and south while lanes run east and west. If an address is on a road, he said, that means that it runs north and south.

The roads running north and south are numbered from west to east and the lanes running east to west have a letter progression from south to north.

For example, he said, take the address 2154 1400th Road. The road part means it runs north and south, 1400th means 14 miles east of the Rawlins County line. The address 2154 means 21.54 miles north of the south border, and the even house number means it's on the west side of the road.

To understand the addresses, he said, it's a good idea to read them backward.

Only a few roads have names.

The west border for Decatur County is Rawlins Road and the east border is Norton Road. Roads that run north and south increase in increments of 100 each mile.

The south border for the county, said Mr. Stallman is A Lane and the north border is EE Lane.

"There are times when a road falls between two section lines," he said, "such as on a half mile line. Examples of this could be 950th Road or D5 Lane."

Homes on the west and north sides get even numbers and those on the east and south sides are odd.

All of the addresses for homes are for the entrance, not for where the mailbox sits, Mr. Stallman said. The idea is for better emergency response, he said, not necessarily for mail delivery.

There have been problems, he noted. Emergency personnel may need more training on the system.

People can buy a county map with the new road names for \$60. Mr. Stallman said anyone who wants a map can call him at 475-8111. Rural directories are available for \$25 at Decatur County Title and Abstract.

*State senator, representative visit town

(Continued from Page 1A) would be working on that this week. He added that he didn't see the stimulus package adding any new programs.

Sen. Ostmeyer issued the school administrators in the audience a word of advice.

"If you can make any cuts without hurting education," he said, "you probably ought to do it. It's not going to get any better."

Both men agreed that declining enrollment is a major problem for rural areas and that the formula for distributing money to schools needs

to be revamped.

Sen. Ostmeyer was asked to comment about how Medicaid is eating up the budget to the tune of \$450 million a year. He conceded the fact but said, "We cannot balance the budget with stimulus money."

A bill to consolidate county governments proposed by a senator from Wyandotte County came up.

"I'd like to invite him out here for a town meeting," said newly-elected Decatur County Commissioner Gene Gallentine, "and then see if he can get out of town."

Both Sen. Ostmeyer and Rep.

Faber agreed that Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson, who will replace Gov. Kathleen Sebelius if she moves to Washington, will be just as liberal, despite his Republican roots.

When asked about a resolution on individual and state freedoms, Rep. Faber did not have a favorable opinion of the idea, despite the sentiment.

"Resolutions are worthless," he said. "They ought to be printed on toilet paper. That way, the senators would be sure to see them."

One of the hot topics of the day was the possibility of closing the state prison in Norton. Rep. Faber said the prison is not even close to being closed. He did, however, warn the audience that cuts in the neighborhood of 10 percent would be required in the state budget.

"Norton will not lose their prison," he said.

Rep. Faber suggested that one way to help the prison system's budget would be to eliminate the death penalty.

"We aren't executing anyone anyway," he said, "and the lawyers' bills for indigent inmates on death row are over \$1 million a year."

Asked if there was any chance of northwest Kansas receiving any stimulus money for construction projects, Sen. Ostmeyer said, "If an environmental impact study has already been done, there is still some '09 money left."

Pizza was provided for the meeting by Decatur County Farm Bureau, which sponsored the session.

*Permit held up by bowling alley

(Continued from Page 1A) The mayor and the other council members agreed.

"Any reason they can't continue?" Mayor Joe Stanley asked.

"They can build but not finish the interior," Mr. Mcfee offered.

"Just let 'em do it," Councilman Jay Anderson suggested.

The mayor finally said that the project needed to be done right. He said the city needs to get the board

of zoning appeals together to approve an exceptional use for the bowling alley.

Until then, he said, the council could pass on the request if the words "bowling alley" were removed from it. The council unanimously agreed to do so.

On Monday, Mr. Gilley reported that he had the amended request in hand and was going to work on getting the zoning board together.

Dry wind pushes fire through dry corn stalks

A fire ate through about eight acres of corn stalks on Friday as the wind and dry weather helped the flames race along.

Fire Chief Bill Cathcart said the blaze started eight miles south and four miles east of town, just north of Jim Gaumer's place, around 12:49 p.m.

Chief Cathcart said Mr. Gaumer reported the fire. He took a tractor to the field, which he owns, and bladed the ground, which helped slow down the flames. The Vahlings also showed up with a tractor and disc,

the chief said, and the county had road graders in the area and the crew pitched in, too. Chief Cathcart said all of those people helped keep the fire from getting out of control.

He said the fire probably started when someone pulled off the road to turn around about the same time the wind came up.

The fire then jumped the road, he said, eating through eight acres on some of Mr. Gaumer's land and some owned by V&R Inc.

Firefighters from Jennings and Oberlin fought the flames.

Test shows driver over legal alcohol limit

A Decatur County man could be looking at drunk-driving charges after test results show that his blood alcohol level was over the limit the evening of Thursday, Jan 29, when the car he was driving rolled on the Bohemian Hall Road.

Undersheriff Allen Marcum said Michael New, 40 at the time of the accident, was over the legal limit for alcohol, which is .08. Mr. Marcum said he couldn't release the exact results of the test since Mr. New hasn't been charged with anything.

The undersheriff said he plans to recommend charges of driving under the influence and having an open container to the county attorney some time this week.

Mr. New was driving a 2004 Chevy west on the Hall Road, now known as K Lane, about two miles

west of the Jennings Road, or 2400 Road, when he lost control on the gravel and went into the north ditch. The truck came out of the ditch and rolled onto its side.

Neither he nor a passenger, Melissa Hadley, 37 at the time of the accident, was wearing a seatbelt. Ms. Hadley was flown to the Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney.

Ms. Hadley's sister, Erin Hadley, said this week that things are going better. Melissa has been in the hospital for more than 36 days, she said, but is recovering. She is starting to talk and remember a little.

The victim had numerous injuries including a fractured skull, brain bleeding, contusions around her heart, a punctured lung, the other lung bleeding, a lacerated liver, three breaks in her pelvis and several cuts.

*Books, reading highlight week

(Continued from Page 1A) socks for "Fox in Sox." On Friday, students, staff and teachers wore pajamas to school and the book was, "I am Not Going to Get Up Today."

Dr. Seuss' birthday falls in Read Across America Week, sponsored by the National Education Association, said Principal Duane Dorshorst. During the week, teachers like to emphasize the importance of reading and the students read more and are read to more during the day.

On Thursday, members of the Kayettes from Decatur Community High School read to kids in kindergarten through third grade.

Each class set goals on how much they planned to read during the week. Since the classes met their goals, on Friday they had a party with ice cream sundaes.

As a project, the school buys books in French for children at the House of Hope, an orphanage and school in Haiti. For the past two years, the students have collected school supplies for the kids there at Christmas time.

Last year, the school purchased picture books for the kids in the House of Hope, said Mr. Dorshorst. This year they plan to buy books for the older kids.

The books will be purchased with money raised through Box Tops for Education.

Pelton Clockwork
oh/adv
4x10
Full Color
ad in Goodland