

Kids enjoy carnival

COUNTING THE SPOTS to see if he won, Collin Mumm (above) was having fun and learning a little math during the Oberlin Elementary School carnival last Monday night. In other parts of the gymnasium, Jenna Fortin (right) dug for prizes in a sand box with help from Mardi Lohofener. Supporting Our Schools sponsored the event.

— Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes



Voters pick newcomer, return two

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Voters decided to return two incumbents to the Oberlin City Council and put one new person in place of a third in the general-election voting Tuesday.

Voters on the east and west sides of Oberlin cast their ballots at The Gateway, choosing incumbents Rob McFee, with 296 votes, and Marcia Lohofener, with 216 votes to retain their seats.

The third incumbent, Councilman Jay Anderson, received 146 votes, which wasn't enough to win.

Instead voters elected Bill Riedel with 283 votes.

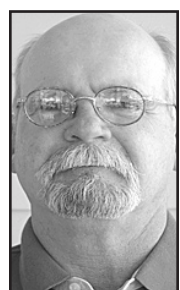
Steve Horn, who ran a write-in campaign, got 97 votes. All totals are unofficial until the Decatur County commissioners canvass the ballots on Friday.

Mr. Horn, reached at work Tuesday, said he got a late start with the election and knew it would be an uphill battle. There are enough people who are dissatisfied, he said, that maybe the council will look at some of the things he talked about and change them.

Although Mr. McFee has served four years on the council, this was his first time on the ballot. Four years ago, voters wrote his name on the ballot even though he wasn't actually running. No one had filed



Rob McFee



Bill Riedel

for the third seat in that election.

Mr. McFee couldn't be reached for comment.

The No. 2 vote getter, Mr. Riedel, was found at the Oberlin Golf Course on election night.

He said he is excited about joining the council and appreciated everyone who showed confidence in him. He added that he will do his best.

Mr. Riedel and his wife Connie have lived in Oberlin for the past three years, but have split their time between here and Golden, Colo., for the past 14 years while they restored their 1906 home here.

Mrs. Lohofener, who has served (See VOTERS on Page 8A)



Lohofener

Few bother to cast ballot in spring vote

Only 28 percent of Decatur County voters turned out for city council and school board elections on Tuesday.

Despite a beautiful sunny day, only 490 people voted Tuesday, while 90 voted in advance. There are 2,080 registered voters in the county, said, county clerk Colleen Geihlsler who is the election officer.

Two years ago, she added, 38 percent of voters turned out, but there were more races and a ballot question on whether to allow chickens in Oberlin. Six years ago, only 17 percent of voters turned out for the spring election.

There were lots of open spaces on the ballots in the smaller towns, but also lots of write-in votes.

Von Johnson will be Norcatour's new mayor. Running unopposed, he got 50 votes. Doug Dempewolf received one write-in vote.

Winning the two open council seats were Carl Lyon with 45 votes and Mr. Dempewolf with 27. Others receiving votes were Larry James, 21; Jerry Wescott, 2; and Gerald Jackson and John New, one each.

In Jennings, no one filed for mayor while Louise Cressler was

on the ballot for one of the two open council seats.

However, it seemed that everyone in Jennings had a different idea of who should be mayor and who should be on the council.

Marge Hartzog won the mayor's job with four write-in votes. Nine other people also had their names written in — Stan Shaw, Dave Carter, Paul Nauer, Bob Jones, three each; Stan Hartzog and Larry Johnson, two each; and Leonard Harris, T.J. Larue and Eugene Mrstik, one each.

It was even wilder in the race for city council. While Ms. Cressler won her seat with 21 votes and Dave Carter took the second seat with 3 write-in votes, voters wrote in 13 other names. Receiving votes were Mr. Jones, Helen Rhodes, Dave New, Ms. Hartzog, 2 each, and Paul Nauer, Larry Johnson, Clint Krizek, Donna Mrstik, Don Bolt, Ramona Shaw, Kenneth Krizek, Ruth Chance and Stan Shaw, 1 each.

In Dresden, Donald Ritter and Jacqueline Douglas each got 21 write-in votes and Keith Muirhead got 19 to take the three open seats on the council.

Burn ban issued for entire county

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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After receiving no moisture from a storm last week, the Decatur County fire chief asked county commissioners to issue a ban on open burning, which they did effective last Tuesday.

Chief Bill Cathcart said he isn't sure what the procedure is to put on a countywide burn ban, but it's probably time. He said he's had several landowners say they are concerned because they have to burn off the land in the Conservation Reserve Program, but it's been too dry.

It's so dry, said Chief Cathcart, that fire normally burns faster up hill and in a recent pasture fire it burned just as fast going down as

up the hill.

The commissioners said they needed to check with County Attorney Steve Hirsch, who was not at the meeting. After getting in touch with Mr. Hirsch, they approved a resolution establishing a burn ban until the commissioners rescind the action.

The resolution also bans carelessly using or discarding smoking materials, which would be a Class A misdemeanor.

So are burning of fence rows, fields, wildlands, ravines, trash and debris. It also includes rules about building and maintaining an open or camp fire.

The resolution is printed on Page 5B in today's paper.

Grave digging to be done under contract

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Oberlin City Council agreed Thursday to have a renewable contract for grave digging, with a meeting with the contractor, the sexton and the city administrator at the end of the year before it's renewed.

The question of who will be the primary digger, however, was left undecided, and apparently, the city will seek bids. Plumber Marvin Hansen has had the contract for 32 years, but there have been unspecified complaints from the city crew.

Administrator Austin Gilley said there is no contract with Mr. Hansen. There's basically a handshake agreement between him and the former city administrator.

There needs to be someone available at a moment's notice to dig a grave, said Mr. Gilley. It's a precise form of digging, where someone uses heavy duty equipment on sensitive grounds.

Council roundup

At its meeting Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Approved a \$119,485 bid from Murray Roofing to replace the roof on The Gateway. Story on Page 3A.
- Received a consent order, without any deadlines, from the state, which could cost the city \$5,000 a day if something isn't done to eliminate arsenic and uranium from the city's drinking water. Story on Page 3A.
- Talked about the idea of increasing the local sales tax by half a cent

This has come up, he said, because there have been complaints from the staff at the cemetery. When pressed, he said he didn't think he should go into them at an open meeting.

One question is why the city has a contract with just one person when there are others who can dig graves,

to pay for economic development. Story to come.

• Asked the administrator to look into putting in a circle drive in front of The Gateway. Story on Page 3A.

• Agreed to a renewable contract with a grave digger, including a yearly meeting with that contractor, the city administrator and sexton. Story at left.

• Heard the administrator briefly review provisions of the Kansas Open Meetings Act. Story on Page 8A.

said Mr. Gilley.

A city ordinance states that the sexton has immediate control and supervision of all digging and excavating of graves, he said. It's up to the council whether they want to do a new contract with Mr. Hansen, leave it up to the sexton's

discretion or open the contract up for bidding.

There are three or four people in the area who can dig graves, said Mr. Gilley. He suggested the city go through the process to end the contract with Mr. Hansen and let the staff make the arrangements for digging in the future. That doesn't mean Mr. Hansen won't dig graves, but it would be left up to the staff.

Mr. Hansen said he's been digging graves at the Oberlin Cemetery and the others in the area, 14 in all, for 31 years. He took over from Bill Goodnight.

There has to be a backup grave digger, said Mr. Hansen. He said he has Mick Barth as the backup, and he's done a great job.

When he gives up the digging, said Mr. Hansen, he would like to pass the business to Mr. Barth. It's been a rough year, he said, with his health and his wife's and Mr. Barth (See COUNCIL on Page 8A)

Newest doctor emails in his resignation

After a little over two months of working at the Oberlin clinic, the town's newest doctor sent in his resignation in an e-mail last week.

An ad placed in today's *Oberlin Herald* says that the Medical Arts Clinic received an e-mail from Dr.

Obed Saint-Louis on Friday saying that he was resigning immediately as he had found a job elsewhere.

Dr. Saint-Louis was hired after a year long search by the Decatur County Doctor Procurement Committee. He replaced Dr. Richard

May, who resigned in December 2007 to move to Lawrence.

Dr. Saint-Louis started at the clinic at the beginning of February. Before that, he had been doing contract work at various hospitals.

Clinic Administrator Barb Whit-

ney said she had to ask the doctors at the clinic if they were willing to release any information. She later said that the only statement they wanted to make at this time is in the ad.

Pharmacist Kurt Vollertsen, chairman of the Doctor Procurement Committee, said Monday he hadn't been notified of the resignation yet.

Lynn Doeden, administrator of the Decatur County Hospital, said she couldn't comment, as Dr. Saint-Louis wasn't her employee. He worked for the clinic, though he practiced at the hospital also.

Congressman to visit on Monday

Anyone with concerns or questions about the government or who just wants to hear about what's happening in Washington can talk with U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran at The Gateway on Monday.

The congressman will talk with

constituents for about an hour, from 3 to 4 p.m., Monday at the civic center.

Before coming to Oberlin, he plans to talk to people from 1:15 to 2:15 p.m. at the library in Norton. That evening from 7 to 7:30 p.m.,

he will be at the Church of Christ in St. Francis

The stops in Oberlin, Norton and St. Francis are part of his annual 1st District "Listening Tour," Moran said.



AT THE COURTHOUSE on Tuesday night, Colleen Geihlsler, county clerk and election officer, took a minute to talk with Vi Krizek, supervising election judge for Jennings. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

*Council wants to hear issues about digger

(Continued from Page 1A) has been there each time. Over the years, said Mr. Hansen, he has left tracks in the cemetery, adding that no grave digger can control the rain or snow. If there's a solid week of weather and someone dies, the machines leave tracks. In the past 31 years, he said, the price has only increased from \$50 to \$100. "I've been mighty proud of that cemetery for a number of years," said Mr. Hansen, "and have tried to keep it looking nice."

Both Willard Perrin and David Sporn, with the city water department, can dig graves, said Mr. Gilley, but graves have to be dug immediately and if there's a water leak, that won't work. This was discussed a while ago, said Councilman Ray Ward, and at the time, the crew said they didn't want to do the job. He added that he hasn't heard any complaints about Mr. Hansen's service. The three employees who work in that area, said Mr. Gilley, are unanimous that there have been problems. Those should have been brought to the council to discuss, said Mr. Ward. If there's going to be a contract, said Foreman Dan Castle, the council should go by the sexton's wishes. The council should talk with her before anyone is hired. Based on what the employees want, said Mr. Gilley, at this time the job would be offered to Mr. Barth. Mr. Gilley asked Mr. Hansen if it would be OK to move Mr. Barth into the first digger spot and Mr. Hansen into the second spot. Mr. Hansen said he would like to keep the digging job a little longer. He added that he can't understand what he did so wrong that he would get this kind of low blow. "We need jobs here," said Councilwoman Marcia Lohoefer. "I think we should leave it with Marvin." She added that she thinks there needs to be a contract. There's no question that Sexton Nan Stanley does a good job, she said, but a contract will help things run smoother. Mrs. Lohoefer, Mr. Ward and Mr. McFee said they would all like to know what happened, too. Mr. Gilley said he didn't want to embarrass anyone at a public meeting. The council approved having a contract with a digger, and that the contract be renewable with a yearly meeting. The council didn't name a digger, but will be seeking bids. Until a contract is agreed on, the council decided, the digging work will stay the way it is now.

*Voters choose three to serve the city

(Continued from Page 1A) on the council for two years after being appointed to take Joe Stanley's place when he moved up to mayor, received the third most votes. Called at home Tuesday, she said she thinks the council and citizens need to work together. There are lots of issues, like the water treatment plant, that could mean raising taxes and fees. She added that she's learned a lot the last two years and likes to be part of things going on in town. The council members will be

sworn into office at the next meeting on Thursday, April 16. For the Oberlin School Board, voters put candidates Doug Brown, Abby Hissong and Dan Wasson into office. Vote totals were unofficial and did not include those cast in Sheridan County south of Jennings, which had not been reported yet. Mrs. Hissong received the most votes with 398. She said she appreciated everyone who voted for her and will try to live up to their hopes and goals for her. Mrs. Hissong added that she is looking forward to learning more about the district and helping it continue to succeed. Mr. Brown received 395 votes, three less than Mrs. Hissong. He said he was happy that the people voted for him and appreciated your support. He added that in his township, the school board election was the only thing on the ballot, so he was thankful that people took the time to vote. Mr. Brown said he will try to do a good job. Mr. Wasson, a former board member returning to the board, received

New fire trucks needed

The Decatur County commissioners talked with the fire chief about looking into grants and other ways to replace the rural trucks at the Oberlin, Norcatatur and Jennings stations. Chief Bill Cathcart said Oberlin Assistant Chief Matt Farr is looking for medium duty trucks and then outfit with the tanks and equipment needed. Regular trucks, said Chief Cathcart, just aren't built to fight pasture fires. Commissioner Ralph Unger said the department needs to apply for grants for the trucks. He said it looks like other counties in the area are getting grants to pay for the new trucks. Commissioner Gene Gallentine said he's heard the truck in Norcatatur has been having problems, so it needs to be on the replacement list. Chief Cathcart said it is on the list. Norcatatur's truck has been using a lot of oil of several years, he said. The Jennings Fire Department wants to replace their tanker truck with the money they have saved from Firemen's Fundays and other money. It looks like there are around seven trucks that need to be replaced, said Chief Cathcart, with each costing around \$80,000. That doesn't include the tanker truck in Oberlin, he added.

Council reminded to follow the law

The Oberlin city administrator briefly reviewed the Kansas Open Meetings Act at a council meeting Thursday. It doesn't matter if a council member goes to a closed or unannounced meeting in a different role, said Administrator Austin Gilley. If a person is an elected official, then they are an elected official. Living in a small town, he said, doesn't mean that people can be lazy about the open meeting act. Being afraid that another town will steal an idea isn't a good reason to violate the act, either, he said. "Our city is doing the same thing as others," said Mr. Gilley. "The problem isn't the idea; it's the execution." He added that it puts him a difficult situation when an official is violating the law and he is at the meeting. When the council hired him, said Mr. Gilley, it was with the expectation that he would follow the rules and laws. That is going to happen, he said. Obviously there is nothing subversive that has gone on, he said,

but it is just good to remind people about the rules of government. Mr. Gilley said he knew a lot of information had been put out at meetings, which lasted almost until 11 p.m. The council could go to once a month meetings if some of the things were done with committees, he said. Committees can work if they are done correctly. There's money in the special highway account, he said, so it might be time to do something with some of the streets in town. The city crew is making a list of the streets that need to be done first, he said. Connie Riedel asked the council about the restrooms at Sappa Park again. Mrs. Riedel told the council at the last meeting in March that they need to be repaired. Mr. Gilley said the outhouses may not be legal and someone from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment needs to inspect them. With the activities coming up in May and June, with the hospital's community walk, a wedding and vintage camping, said Mrs. Riedel, park enthusiast, it would be nice to have restrooms. Mayor Joe Stanley said they will look into the outhouses. Mr. Gilley added they could get the price for renting portable facilities. In other business, the council:

- Heard that the city crew will be dumping liquid oxygen into the lagoons at the waste water treatment plant to help with the smell.
- Heard that the employee benefits increased 10 percent this year. That includes an increase of \$17,000 in health insurance for the Blue Cross/Blue Shield.
- Learned that transformers at Sappa Valley Manor may need to be replaced. The transformers are old, said Mr. Gilley, and it could be an environmental issue to get rid of them.
- Heard that a skunk killed at the Oberlin Cemetery tested positive for rabies.
- Heard that the city has a growing list of unpaid utility bills. Mr. Gilley said they need to set a policy on this.
- Heard that the city is using the

County looks to borrow, buy forklift

The Decatur County commissioners called around last Tuesday, looking for a forklift for the county to borrow or rent next week to load recycling materials on the truck from Colby. Although the weed control director had several bids and pictures on used forklifts, which were handed out at the meeting, no decision was made. The commissioners agreed that it would be smart to look at any forklift before buying it. Director Gaylen Huntley was unable to make it to the meeting, but Curtis Richards, a weed department employee, handed out of the packets with the price information. Prices ranged from \$5,000 to \$9,500 on used items from either Lift Parts Service out of Wichita or D&S Forklift Inc. of Seward, Neb. The men talked about where the money would come from. It's really a recycling thing, said Commissioner Stan McEvoy, so the money needs to come out of that budget, which is in the county general fund. Mr. Richards said there's enough material in the recycling building that the truck will probably have to come pick it up next week. In the past, they have been able to borrow the forklift and an operator

from the Decatur Co-op, he said, but that isn't going to work anymore. The commissioners called several businesses in town about renting a machine. They left messages and got prices including \$40 an hour for the one from Southwest Implement and \$70 for one from Ultimate Fertilizer. Mr. Unger said he thought they needed to do some more looking and studying before they buy a forklift. The men also called the state surplus office and will send an e-mail asking them to look for a used machine.

Chamber plans 'thank you' lunch

The Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce board has sent invitations to businesses inviting them to send their secretaries and other administrative employees to the annual "thank you" lunch. The chamber will sponsor the luncheon on Administrative Professionals Day on Wednesday, April 22, at the Old Bohemian Hall at the Last Indian Raid Museum. Tickets are \$14. Businesses need

to turn in their money, the names of the employees invited and the address of the business by next Wednesday to the Chamber office. For questions, call Tina Watson, Chamber secretary, at 475-3441.

Annual egg, candy hunt set for Saturday

Kids will have a chance to find Easter candy again this year in City Park on Saturday. The Oberlin Lions Club plans to hold its annual Easter-egg hunt for kids from ages 1 to 8 at 1 p.m. Saturday. Lion Jack Benton said kids will be divided into four age groups, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 and 7-8. Before letting the kids out into a roped off area, he said, members of

the Lions Club will scatter wrapped candy in the grass. The candy is being donated by the Mountain Slope Masonic Lodge of Oberlin, he said.



Learn how to deal with the Internet Valuable Business Seminar

Join John Dehn, director of new media services for Haynes Publishing Company and learn how to use the Internet and the northwest Kansas business directory and search engine. He'll answer any questions you might have about web site design, e-commerce and Internet marketing. He has been in the Internet and newspaper industries for over 20 years combined and is an award-winning online director in content, revenue and systems. "We want all of our businesses in northwest Kansas to benefit and prosper from what the Internet has to offer." He says, "this is for any business owner who wants to learn how their business can benefit from a web page, e-commerce payment gateways, and Internet marketing." We look forward to seeing you at this valuable business seminar. Cost is only \$10 and applies toward the purchase of any of our online products.

Wednesday, April 15, from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

call 785-462-1149 to reserve your seat

THE OBERLIN HERALD (785) 462-1149