

County raises cash for programs

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
k.davis@nwkans.com

The Decatur County commissioners approved a \$4,588,055 budget for next year last Tuesday but held off on publication so they could discuss it one more time.

The commissioners approved a \$25,000 increase each for the health and rural fire departments, but that could change.

Even with the increases, the proposed property tax levy would stay at 67.121, commissioners said, as it was in the first published budget. There was talk of eliminating a \$50,000 annual contribution to the city's airport expansion plan, but no decision was made.

The commissioners planned to take

the budget up again at their meeting this week.

The budget hearing, held at the meeting last Tuesday, packed the room on the second floor of the courthouse with dispatcher Roxie Pomeroy; Janet Meitl, clerk of the court; Jean Hale, treasurer; Kari Ketterl, register of deeds; Tim Stallman, road and bridge supervisor; former register Judy Gaumer; Marilyn Gamblin, county health administration; Brenda Ulery, with the juvenile justice authority; Gaylen Huntley, noxious weed director; Fire Chief Bill Cathcart; and Appraiser Alan Hale in the audience.

Not all of those present had questions or voiced opinions; some came to support others or just listen.

Mrs. Meitl kicked off the discussion, asking why the court budget, approved for \$26,500 in the current budget, had been changed in the proposed 2010 budget to read \$21,000 for 2009.

In 2010, if it needs to be cut to \$21,000, said Mrs. Meitl, she's wouldn't contest it. She said she knows the county needs makes be cuts and she's willing to help with that.

Another one of the line items is for court-appointed attorney fees, she said, which dropped from \$12,000 to \$11,000. That amount, she said, is something that she doesn't have control over. If they go over that, then that money comes from the court budget. She said the office had almost used that \$12,000 this year.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said some of the items were adjusted based on the cash usage in the first half of 2009 and then changed again for 2010.

Although the new budget shows only \$21,000 for 2009, said County Attorney Steve Hirsch, that doesn't change the actual budget authority, the amount that can be spent under the current budget. That amount is still \$26,500.

The health department's proposed 2010 budget, said Ms. Gamblin, includes a \$25,000 cut. She said she too doesn't mind doing her share to save money, but the cut seems a little extreme. It may mean the department won't get the \$7,000 grant from the state, she said.

The department is looking at possibly doing three flu clinics this year and who knows what else is coming, she said, so it may need more.

So the county has to maintain that money at the current level of support in order to get the state grant? asked Commissioner Stan McEvoy. Ms. Gamblin said that is correct.

If that money is restored to the health department's budget, said Mr. Hirsch, it needs to either be taken from somewhere else or the property tax levy will need to be raised.

Part of the problem, said Mr. Unger, is that the health department has a buildup in (See COUNTY on Page 5A)



SHOTGUN IN HAND, Kaine Fredrickson (above) took aim at a clay target while Gary Bruggeman, with the Oberlin Gun Club, looked over his shoulder. Rick Doeden (below) helped Tabor Erickson learn how to hold a shotgun. — Herald photos by Sarah Fredrickson

Youths here learn to shoot

Dressed in bright orange vests, 21 kids tried their hand at trap shooting Sunday evening at the Oberlin Gun Club east of town.

The Sunflower Chapter of Pheasants Forever worked with the gun club to put on the event, said Rick Doeden of Custom Trophy and Engraving, one of the organizers.

The shoot was free for the kids, who ranged in age from fifth grade to seniors in high school, said Mr. Doeden. The sponsors supplied guns and ammunition, and the students, including one girl, each got an orange hunting vest from Pheasants Forever.

The students used shotguns provided by the volunteer group and some from the state Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Dale's Fish 'N' Fun, said Mr. Doeden, helped out on the shells.

The kids shot over 1,000 rounds in three hours, said Mr. Doeden, and there probably were a few sore shoulders Monday morning.

At the annual Pheasants Forever banquet in the fall, he said, the group has a youth auction. That money is set aside for youth activities, said Mr. Doeden. Without programs like this, he said, the kids today might not learn hunting.

This is the first time Pheasants



Forever has done a free youth shoot. It went well, he said, and the group will probably try it or something similar again.

Some of the kids had never

shot before, he said, although the majority of them knew how. Each student started out with a 10-shell chance, but they continued shooting through the evening.

Mr. Doeden said some of the kids were able to load their gun, while the adults loaded others. The kids got to take home their hunter-safety orange vests.

Moisture helps fill up corn ears for fall harvest

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
k.davis@nwkans.com

With lots of rain over the summer, fall crops in and around Decatur County look pretty good so far.

Bryan Olson, area agronomist for Kansas State University Research and Extension, said with the cool temperatures, some farmers are a little concerned about an early freeze, but other than that, the crops look pretty good.

The corn, he said, is coming along nicely and the milo looks good, too.

On the later-planted milo, or grain sorghum, said Mr. Olson, it needs more heat to move it along. Normally, he said, August is a hot month, and that helps the crop, but with cooler temperatures, it hasn't progressed as much as it should.

The corn plants are filling out their ears and some are starting to dry down. Some of the early planted corn or short-season varieties, said Mr. Olson, might be ready to harvest in the next couple of weeks.

The rest of the crop should be ready to be cut the end of the September to the beginning of October.

With cool temperatures, said Mr. Olson, there is some concern that it will freeze early. Monday morning, the overnight low was 44 degrees.

It would be nice, he said, if the highs could stay in the 80s and lows in the 50s. The area doesn't need anything in the 40s, he said.

Some sun would also help fill out the ears of corn a little more, the agronomist added.

Forecasts for Oberlin for the rest of the week include highs in the 80s and low in the 50s, according to the National Weather Service office in Goodland.

If it gets cold, but there isn't a hard freeze, Mr. Olson said, it will just slow down the filling of the ears. An early hard freeze, on the other hand, will kill the plants and stop the kernel filling all together.

In the middle of the month, farmers should start planting wheat, said Mr. Olson. The "Hessian-fly-free" day depends on the environment, he said, but historically for Decatur County it is Sept. 19. After that time, farmers can plant wheat without giving the pesky fly time to breed in the new crop.

With all of the rain and cooler temperatures, he said, there should be a good moisture profile for farmers to plant their wheat into.

That weather also means that guys need to make sure to control the volunteer wheat in their fallow ground, he added. Lots of rain means lots of volunteer plants — the ones that grow from grain spilled during the summer harvest. These plants can harbor pests and virus infections which then spread to nearby wheat in the spring if they are not controlled. Usually, that's done by spraying chemicals to kill the volunteer wheat, he said.

Local cable channel to shut off Friday

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
k.davis@nwkans.com

Oberlin's cable community access channel will shut down Friday, since apparently no one wants to volunteer to work on the station.

Jack Benton said the channel started on Jan. 5, 1995, with a volunteer committee at the helm including himself, Bill Duncan, Royce Wilson, Sandy Fair, Marvin Matchett and Monica Lincoln.

Current committee are Mr. Benton, Mr. Duncan and Regina Stanley, he said.

While he does most of the work,

Mr. Benton said, Mr. Duncan helps out.

The channel has no paid employees, said Mr. Benton. Money collected through business advertisements goes to paying the bills, including a \$50 monthly phone bill, to buy equipment and the rest went to the annual telethon.

The Seeds of Hope Telethon, he said, started the same year as the cable channel. The telethon, he said, brought together 60 to 70 volunteers for cameras, emcees, sound people and others to run the video board. (See LOCAL on Page 5A)

Utility customers to appeal to council

The Oberlin City Council plans to hear from five utility customers who have filed an appeal on their bills when it meets at 7 p.m. Thursday.

Under a new utility policy, the council serves as the city's appeal board. These five customers, said City Administrator Austin Gilley, face having their utilities shut off because they haven't paid their bills.

The new utility policy gives customers until the 10th of the month to pay the bill, then within ten days after the 10th of the month the customer receives a shut off notice. The customer then has seven days to appeal to the council.

The appeals are from customers that have new delinquencies that

haven't paid their bill and others that signed an agreement on a past due bill and haven't paid and became delinquent again. All of them are facing having their electricity shut off.

Mr. Gilley said he has new information about the city possibly going to a smaller water treatment plant. The council talked about the idea at its meeting on Thursday, Aug. 20.

The auditor from Mapes and Miller will present the 2008 audit. The 125th Anniversary Committee has asked for a representative from the council, he said.

The meeting will be upstairs at The Gateway. It is open to the public.

Music teacher remembered by many

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
k.davis@nwkans.com

In 38 years of teaching music at Oberlin Elementary School, there's no telling how many lives Jim Buchholz touched.

Some would venture to guess that everyone Mr. Buchholz came into contact with took something from the experience. After his death Saturday, Aug. 23, from cancer, friends set up a tribute page on the Facebook website. Former and current students, friends, relatives, parents of current and former students and others left remarks on the page. All had fond memories of

the veteran teacher.

Mr. Buchholz, who received a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from the University of Northern Colorado had a deep love for music that he shared with hundreds of students over the years. One of those was Joe Hirsch, now a junior at Decatur Community High School.

Mr. Hirsch said Mr. Buchholz taught him his love of music throughout grade school. He said he learned about his love for theater during the sixth-grade play, which Mr. Buchholz directed.

Mr. Hirsch said he remembers that Mr. Buchholz told him that people always remember the

funny guys from the play. He said his teacher taught him to love those parts. To this day, said Mr. Hirsch, he still plays the "funny guy" parts.

The year Mr. Hirsch was in sixth grade, he said, they did the play "Lady Pirates of Captain Bree" at the end of the year. He said he played Samuel Prescott, the character who wore a dress for half of the performance.

That experience, said Mr. Hirsch, has helped keep him acting. One of his ideas for the future, he said, is studying to be a grade school vocal teacher.

(See MUSIC on Page 5A)