

## Letters to the Editor

# Reader says vote 'no' for the airport

To the Editor:  
In a few days, you will receive a ballot on the Oberlin Airport project. Please read carefully and understand the possible consequences of your vote. On your vote rides the future of Oberlin.

Our community is surrounded by dead and dying towns, and of many who have decided to surrender. A "yes" vote will freeze any airport construction for 10 years and put Oberlin in the dying category.

Our community has been saddled with a water treatment plant and wastewater treatment plant mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Unless we reverse the course, our declining population means that each remaining citizen must shoulder more and more of the service charges and taxes for these plants. Though costly, the plants will not bring in any new taxpayers. It is highly unlikely any industry will want to build alongside the sewage treatment plant.

A "no" vote is a positive sign that Oberlin believes in its future. The Federal Aviation Association believes strongly enough in the airport expansion project to pay for

95 percent of the majority of the cost, while the Kansas Department of Transportation will pay about 90 percent of the remainder.

Congressman Jerry Moran, U.S. Sens. Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts, state Rep. John Faber, state Sen. Ralph Ostmeier, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Kansas Department of Transportation have strongly backed and worked for building a northwest Kansas regional airport at Oberlin. Very few towns have backing that strong and that wide. Rejection of this state and federal backing and money by a "yes" vote would be shortsighted, with negative effect on any future projects.

Also at risk is our health care system, visiting specialists who commute by air and physician recruitment.

A "yes" vote could equal no doctors.

Please read the ballot carefully, as the wording may seem confusing. A "no" vote against the proposed airport ordinance will give our community an opportunity to grow.

Jay Anderson  
Oberlin

# Relative praises staff at Cedar Living Center

To the Editor:  
On Tuesday, Nov. 24, I went up to Cedar Living Center to visit my mother. While we were there, I was pleased to find out the high school singers would be performing for the residents, and what a performance it was!

I want to commend the students (especially the guy in the blond curly wig), the accompanist and the director on a fine display of talent. It is so good to live in a small town where the teachers and the students will take the time and put in the effort to entertain the older folks who might not otherwise get to see a show.

The amount of talent in the girls

ensemble, boys ensemble and girls quartet is amazing, I hope they sing and dance there again soon. It was better than anything we ever did the entire seven years I was in high school.

Also, I would like to thank the staff and volunteers at Cedar Living Center for the wonderful Thanksgiving Dinner they provided for the residents and their families on Sunday, Nov. 22. It was a delicious meal that took a lot of time and hard work; once again they outdid themselves.

Thank you again to Decatur Community High School choirs and the center's staff for caring so much.

Tom Votapka, Jennings

# Man says vote out obstructor

To the Editor:  
Please be aware of your senators' and Congress members' actions. Are they obstructing appointments? Obstructing health care reform? Obstructing transparency? Obstructing education and other reforms?

Voters were outstanding in the 2008 election in weeding out ob-

structors. Unfortunately, only one-third of U.S. senators were up for election. The 2010 election will bring up the second-third.

Step 2 is now. If your senator or member of Congress is constantly obstructing, find another person.

John Bauer, Martinez, Calif.  
www.bauerletters.com

# \* Ballots in the mail for airport election

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Tuesday at the Golden Age Center. There have been questions about the cost of the project and how much city taxes might increase.

The city's share of the cost for the project would be \$295,000, said Ms. Grafel, with the total cost of the project at \$12,560,000. The county has pledged to kick in \$50,000 from existing funds.

Of the \$295,000, she said, \$163,000, would come from "recovery" bonds under the federal stimulus bill, leaving \$87,000 to come from a loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development administration. The city would put in \$45,000 from cash on hand.

Ms. Grafel said she talked with the county appraiser about the payment on the bonds and loans, about \$18,500 a year. On a home valued at \$50,000, she said, that would cost the owner just \$17 a year.

The financing also includes about \$400,000 in revenue bonds to be paid off from fuel sales.

Steve and Marilyn Horn, who helped circulate the petition to get the ordinance on the ballot, said they received a letter in the mail from Councilman Rob McFee, which they felt pretty well summed up how they feel about the issue.

The letter includes a postscript saying that it was written after a Decatur Tomorrow public meeting on the issue held Sept. 30.

The letter says that some have asked why not do the project if someone else is going to pay for 95 percent? Mr. McFee asks in the letter why people would stop in Oberlin for fuel when many planes can fly anywhere in the United States on one tank. He added that it was said at the steering committee meeting that Oberlin has good airspace, but McCook has the same

good airspace.

If the revenues aren't enough for the maintenance, marketing and managing, then who pays? he asked. Taxpayers, wrote Mr. McFee. He figured an increase of \$35 a year on a home valued at \$50,000.

"The tax increases," he wrote, "coupled with the increases that are going to occur for the water treatment plant, ongoing electrical increases in two or three years when the city renegotiates the power contracts, and general living increases from health care and food and shelter costs, may be more than many of our citizens can keep up with, since retirement plans often don't contain cost-of-living increases."

Mr. McFee asks about the cost of cleaning snow off a longer runway and the number of flights going in and out of the current runway as advertised on a website promoting the airport project.

"The last two great economic developments we've had here were The Gateway and the new senior center-entertainment complex," he wrote. "Both came in over the budget after it was announced. 'We've got the money, let's get started.' Going on history, The Gateway has cost us over half a million dollars 'transferred from electrical.' So your electrical rate went up, not your taxes.

"The new building is \$300,000 short of being funded. The income from The Gateway never materialized, and the new project is up in the air. If...if it doesn't produce income as projected, where will that money come from? I believe that the city will be asked to fill in the gaps. It's happened before."

Not everyone received a copy of the letter, but Mr. and Mrs. Horn did and said they agreed with it.

A message left for Mr. McFee on Monday went unanswered.

# Lighting the path of Christmas



**LIGHTING THE FIRST ADVENT CANDLE** at Faith Luthern Church, Kyleana Blau, 9, was ready for the beginning of the Christian religious year last weekend. One candle is lit each of the four weeks of Advent, a season of reflection and preparation for Christmas.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

# County looks at meals cooked here

The Decatur County commissioners discussed a request to have the senior meals prepared at the new Golden Age Center instead of in Atwood.

At the meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 10, Commissioner Gene Gallentine said someone asked him about having meals prepared here since the new center has such a nice kitchen.

County Clerk Colleen Geihlsler said she talked with a representative from the Area Agency on Aging about the idea. They told her the meal site really needs 50 to 60 people to eat daily to have the commodities truck stop in Oberlin.

Now, the food for several area towns is cooked in Atwood and then someone from each town drives there to pick it up each weekday.

Someone from the agency can come to the meal site, said Ms. Geihlsler, to check on the numbers and see if the commodities truck can stop here.

What if they wanted to buy the food here? asked Mr. Gallentine. The agency wouldn't help pay for the cooking or packaging, she said.

The county pays \$4,300 a year to the agency for the meal site now, said Ms. Geihlsler.

How many people are eating now? she asked. Mr. Gallentine said he thought it was less than 20.

Also, said Ms. Geihlsler, now site manager Helen Gee wants the job, but what happens after her?

The commissioners briefly talked about where the rent money outside groups pay to use the center goes. Ms. Geihlsler said it doesn't come to the county.

If the county is paying for the utilities and other things, said Commissioner Ralph Unger, maybe the rent money needs to go to the county or the utility bills need to go to the center.

Mr. Gallentine said people from the Golden Age Center may be coming to talk to them about the meal site.

The commissioners also talked with Janet Meitl, clerk of the district court, who said she has an order from the chief justice, basically saying

that with the flu going around, if someone in the office is sick, they can call Judge Bill Elliott and close the office.

The state is looking at furloughs for the courts, she said, possibly closing for six weeks in the first six months of 2010, but not all at once. This will be unpaid time off because of a budget shortfall, she said.

Mrs. Meitl said she would like to get a color printer, which will help with printing training materials. That will cut down on the cost, so employees don't have to go to training outside the county, she said.

She said she found one from Infnitec for \$789. Mrs. Meitl said she also looked online and found one from Hewlett Packer for \$700, but would rather pay the extra \$89 and have someone in the area that knows about it.

The commissioners approved buying the printer for \$789.

# Making some hard choices



**CHECKING THE SALAD ASSORTMENT**, Marlin Bowen was one of about 125 people to attend the annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner put on by St. John's Lutheran Church on Thursday.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes.

# Utility bill donations on agenda

The Oberlin City Council will discuss the city's utility donation to the Last Indian Raid Museum and Sunflower Cinema at its regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday.

Other items on the agenda for the 7 p.m. meeting at The Gateway include the administrator's evaluation and a proposed code of conduct for the City Council, which has briefly been discussed at a past meeting.

The meeting, in the upstairs meeting room, is open to the public.

# Pancakes help youth

A pancake supper at St. John's Lutheran Church brought in close to \$3,000 for the youth recreation part of the new community center downtown.

Ralph Unger, who helped with the dinner, said the Smoky Hills chapter of Thrivent Financial will give a \$1,000 match, so they will have close to \$4,000 for the project.

At the dinner Friday, Nov. 20, he said, they served anywhere from 225 to 270 people.

