

Schools face cuts to program

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Superintendent Duane Dorshorst painted a bleak, but not hopeless, picture of the the district's finances now and in the future for the board members, teachers and school officials during a meeting before the regular school board session last Monday.

At the beginning of the meeting, the superintendent said with declining enrollment and a reduced budget, the district is only going to be able to keep all its programs for

a limited time. They need to start planning for the future.

The good news, said Mr. Dorshorst, is that although the budget will be down because of state budget cuts, the district has been good about making cuts as needed. In 2005, he said, the district made major cuts and it has continued to cut back in several areas.

It also helps that the district has had strong cash balances at the end of the year, he said. The community continues to support the district with a local option budget that brings in

\$900,000 a year.

There are some accounts that are separate from the general fund, he said, including capital outlay, which is for capital improvements, equipment and the like; food service; and others.

Years ago, said Mr. Dorshorst, the district was transferring money into the food service program. Almost \$80,000, said Member Barb Olson, from off the top of her head.

The program, said Mr. Dorshorst is pretty much self sufficient now.

The contingency reserved fund is

at \$323,532, the maximum the district can have. That fund is kind of like a rainy-day account, he said.

When those accounts that are outside the general budget start with a positive cash balance, he said, it really helps the district budget.

Last school year he said that the district received \$4,433 per student for around 385 students. The enrollment since has shrunk to 372.

If the per pupil base had stayed the same for this year, he said, the district should receive \$3,271,110.

In June, however, the base per

pupil was cut \$215 by the state Legislature. That cost Oberlin an estimated \$158,648 from the current budget.

Since then, the governor cut an additional \$216 per student, or \$152,000. That means the district lost \$310,656 this year, Mr. Dorshorst said.

During the 2008-2009 school year, salaries and benefits were \$3,108,464, although not all of them came out of the general fund. Projected salaries for this year are (See BUDGET on Page 8A)

School Roundup

At its meeting last Monday, the Oberlin School Board:

- Listened to a presentation by the superintendent about school finances this year and for the future. Story at left.
- Heard that the cracks in the parking lot at the high school could be repaired this week while the students and teachers are on spring break. Bottom of page.
- Heard about changes coming for the vocational education program at the high school. Story to come.



City signs off on contract for circle drive

Mayor Joe Stanley signed a contract for JL Construction to do the circle drive at the front entrance of The Gateway, with work expected to start after Memorial Day weekend.

City Administrator Austin Gilley said at a City Council meeting Thursday, March 4, he wasn't sure if they needed another vote for the contract or just a signature. There's a spot for the mayor to sign, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch. The council has already voted to accept JL's bid and approve the circle drive.

Mr. Gilley said he had reviewed the contract and the mayor signed it.

The work on the drive won't start until after alumni weekend and the banquet in the arena.

Mayor Joe Stanley said he will try to have someone to appoint to Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener's seat on the council by the next meeting on Thursday. So far, he said, three people have approached him about serving.

Anyone else who is interested should contact him this week, said Mayor Stanley.

There is training available to anyone who wants to fill the spot on the council, said Mr. Gilley.

Mayor Stanley thanked Mrs. Lohofener for her service on the council. She received a round of applause from her fellow members and the audience.

In other business, the council:

- Heard that a public hearing on the environmental assessment for the airport expansion project will be from 5 to 7 p.m. next Wednesday in the Morgan Theater at The Gateway.
- Heard that survey crews are out marking locations for planning a water treatment plant and water line improvements.
- Talked about the smell coming from the waste water treatment plant. Mr. Gilley said they hope to have solar-powered mixers installed soon if all goes well. The engineers

Airport on agenda

The Oberlin City Council plans to look at an airport design update during its meeting Thursday night.

City Administrator Austin Gilley said the new design is from BWR, the city's engineering firm, of Kansas City.

A representative with the 125th Anniversary celebration committee will be at the meeting to ask the city to enter a float in the parade scheduled for Mini Sapa Day at the Last Indian Raid Museum this fall.

Mr. Gilley said the council will look at summer mowing agreements, a bid to remodel new office space, possibly an agreement to trim the trees and an update on the solar mixers to cut the smell from the wastewater lagoons.

The meeting will at 7 p.m. in the upstairs meeting room.

Hearing set for tonight

A public hearing on the environmental assessment for the city's airport improvement project starts at 5 p.m. tonight in the Morgan Theater on the first floor of The Gateway.

Anyone who wants to look at the assessment should stop by the city offices.

and contractors are discussing it, he said.

• Heard the council was supposed to get information on painting the outside of The Gateway, but no one with contractor was there to talk.

The mannerly dine high

AT THE GRADE SCHOOL, Landen Macfee (above) took a big bite of an ice cream sundae while Skyler Brown and Alyssa VanVleet (below) enjoyed sandwiches during a "banquet" celebration for helping win the Manners Olympics for their class. Kimberly Witt's second grade won with the most medals in the kindergarten through third grade group. Special education teacher Mardi Lohofener (right), who helped run the program, made a sundae.

— wHerald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



Crews to fix school parking lot this week

While students and teachers are on spring break this week, the cracks in the parking lot at the high school should be repaired.

Terry Ream, outdoor maintenance supervisor, told the Oberlin School Board last Monday that the parking lot work is penciled in for the week of spring break. B&H Paving out of Scott City will come clean out the cracks and seal them.

The crew will return to "chip seal" the lot with asphalt this summer.

Superintendent Duane Dorshorst said four Purifans will be added to the ceiling fans in the four classrooms on the west side of the grade school to help purify the air in those rooms. The four fans will be used for a trial period, said Mr. Dorshorst.

If they decide to keep them, the fans are \$390 a piece, he said. Fil-

ters are \$75 a piece and have to be changed twice a year.

Mr. Dorshorst told the board that he attended the Decatur Tomorrow community conversation on recreation.

He said he thinks the district's buildings are underused. There are janitors in the schools from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., so maybe there could be more activities going on when

the buildings aren't being used by the kids.

One idea, said Mr. Dorshorst, is having adult time set aside for the weight room at the high school. He said they would need to contact the Kansas Association of School Boards to see if there are any liability issues with that.

Mr. Dorshorst said he doesn't (See PAVING on Page 8A)

Consultant studies need for new motel

The Oberlin City Council should receive a feasibility study about a new motel by the middle of April.

Last Wednesday and Thursday, Fletcher Simmons, a consultant with the Simmons Company out of Manhattan, talked to people in Oberlin about the need for a new motel.

Mr. Simmons said for a study, he looks at tourism, travelers, events and potential occupancy relating to business – basically, anything that would create hotel business in Oberlin and create a need for more rooms.

He said he was open to talking to anyone in town about the need for a motel. As of last Wednesday, Mr. Simmons said he thought things were going well.

He had talked to a few business owners and planned to talk with more that afternoon.

Mr. Simmons said he would then take the information and try to quantify the size (number of rooms) and amenities needed for a new motel.

City Administrator Austin Gilley said the city hired Mr. Simmons after Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., sent out proposals to three companies.

Mr. Simmons said he's been a commercial real estate appraiser for close to 30 years, specializing in motel appraisals. For the past 15 years, he's been doing these feasibility studies.

He added that he only does about one motel appraisal a month, so the studies go hand in hand with that.

After the day and a half in town, said Mr. Simmons, it takes about 30 days for him to get the study ready. The city will pay him \$5,000.

This isn't the first motel feasibility study the city has ordered. The first wasn't completed because the man doing it died before finishing.

School carnival needs workers, donations of food

The Oberlin Elementary School carnival, sponsored by the school and the parent-teacher group Supporting our Schools, is set for 5:30 to 8 p.m. Monday, March 29, in the gym and cafeteria at the school.

The group is looking for volunteers to work a

shift or donate food.

Last week, students brought home orange sign-up sheets, which should be returned.

Anyone who wants to volunteer should contact Abby Hissong, who is coordinating volunteers, at home at 475-2696 or at work at 475-3883.

Needs included 20 pounds of hamburger, 12 packages of hamburger buns, 10 packages of hot dog buns, 35 decorated and frosted cakes for the cake walk, eight dozen brownies bagged individually, pop in cans, 18 six packs of 24-ounce bottles of pop and pint bottles or water.