

County proposes property tax hike

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Decatur County commissioners approved a budget for next year with a 5.263-mill increase in the property tax levy at their meeting last Tuesday, skipping a donation to the Oberlin airport project but allowing for a raise for county employees.

The commissioners discussed the budget for several hours during the meeting with John Mapes of the accounting firm of Mapes and Miller, the county's auditors, before settling on the numbers.

The commissioners set a budget hearing for their meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 21.

The total property tax levy for this year was 67.212 and for the proposed budget it's 72.475.

With the increase, a taxpayer with a home valued at \$50,000 will pay an additional \$30.29 next year, said Appraiser Alan Hale, with taxes going from \$386.44 to \$416.73. Farmers would pay an increase of \$13.64 on a typical quarter of dryland, \$2.53 on a typical quarter of range and \$56.59 on a typical quarter of irrigated land.

The commissioners and Mr. Mapes spent a lot of times discussing this year's general fund budget. Looking at the numbers, Mr. Mapes said, the county won't have much left in the general fund at the end of the year, if anything at all. He said they might have to transfer money out of the equipment reserve funds.

Commissioner Stan McEvoy asked how much was in the general special equipment fund and how much the expenses are averaging a month.

County Clerk Colleen Geihlsler said

there's \$126,000 in the equipment reserve fund for general.

The county is really going to have to watch its spending, said Mr. Mapes.

"At about \$70,000 a month in expenses, and \$210,000 left in the general fund, where is the rest going to come from? Should the commissioners shut the county down for a few days or do pay cuts? he asked.

There should be sales tax and motor vehicle money coming in, said Mr. Mapes.

Commissioner Gene Gallentine said he thinks the county has tried to be prudent and

keep the tax levy down, but at some point it's going to have to be raised.

"We just cut too deep last year," said Mr. McEvoy.

Cuts were made to the general fund and the reserves were used to keep the property taxes from increasing too much this year.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch suggested going through things the county has already paid for out of the general fund that could have been paid for out of other departments and putting the money back into the general (See COUNTY on Page 12)



WITH HIS GEAR ON, fireman Matt Farr (above) crouched down as he held a hose and sprayed the water at the flames through a broken front window. Two more firefighters (below) got ready to fight the house fire at 604 N. Wilson on Thursday.

— Herald staff photos by Steve Haynes



Flames consume house

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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An Oberlin family lost their home and most of their belongings last Thursday when an electrical fire swept through the house at 604 N. Wilson, but fortunately, neither the family nor any of the day-care children who stay at the house was there.

Carrie Schurr, who has four children of her own, said she loaded everyone in the car and left to pick up day-care kids after school, only to return to a home fully engulfed in flames.

Fire Chief Bill Cathcart said the fire apparently started because of an electrical short caused by an overloaded circuit. It had nothing to do with anything that the homeowners did, he said; the wiring just wasn't sufficient.

The double-wide manufactured home was built before current building guidelines, he said, which would have called for better wiring.

The chief said when he got to the house, it was fully engulfed in flames. Heat from the blaze had blown out the front windows and flames were licking at the eaves as fire trucks rolled up.

The crew of the first engine to arrive donned bunker suits and grabbed hoses to start fighting the fire. The second crew laid (See FIRE on Page 12)

Bowling alley still needs cash for completion

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Supporters of the future bowling alley say they need just \$145,000 to finish the project. They're trying to raise the money by the end of the month.

The site, the north third of the new community center downtown, is ready. The center itself opened last year with the first show in the new theater the Friday after Thanksgiving.

Greg Lohofener, who's been working on the project since the beginning, said they want to have the bowling alley ready to open by the weekend after Thanksgiving this year.

On Sunday, Aug. 22, the Economic Development Corp. had a fund-raising kick-off to bring in the last needed \$150,000. Since then, Mr. Lohofener said, they have received \$5,000.

Kem Bryan and Shayla Williby of Dream Makers have written applications for three small grants, he said, one for the underground ball return and two others.

Mr. Lohofener said he wants to move forward with the project.

He said supporters will be contacting people about donating money. Anyone who wants to support the project should call him at 475-3459 or Connie Grafel at 475-2901.

The \$145,000 will pay for automatic, electronic scoring with three flat screen televisions, costing about \$48,500; construction, including sound proofing the walls and finishing the locker rooms, at \$36,000; installing the six lanes and refurbishing the equipment for \$30,000; underground ball returns at \$10,650; six masking units for the front of the machines at \$4,670; sanding and refinishing the lanes at \$4,000; gutter bumpers for two lanes at \$2,400; pins at \$2,160; rental shoes at \$1,350; foul units at \$1,200; single division capping at \$960; new lane drop sweeps at \$900; and cost overruns, bar stools, seating, freight signs at \$7,210.

Volunteer labor will help move the machines and lanes to the bowling alley, saving \$10,000, Mr. Lohofener said.

All donations are tax exempt, including cash, checks, in-kind gifts, (See MONEY on Page 12)

City water rates may take a jump

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Oberlin City Council discussed raising water rates — from a minimum of \$17.40 today to \$38 to \$40 per month — to help pay for a planned \$4.73 million water treatment plant and \$1.2 million distribution improvements.

The minimum home water user now pays \$8.20 a month for water, with a \$9.20 "meter charge."

The council didn't make any decisions on the rates, but did talk about the need to repay the debt needed to build the plant. The council discussed applying for up to a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant to help offset the cost of the \$1.2 million distribution improvements.

On Tuesday, Interim Administrator Karen Larson said the city isn't going to pursue the block grant this year.

The council held a public hearing for the grant at the meeting. No one appeared to comment on it.

Corina Cox, with the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission, which handles the block grants, said the application deadline is Thursday, Sept. 30, and the city will find out in January whether it gets any money.

There are three things grants can be applied for, she said, including water, sewer and housing. City and counties, said Ms. Cox, can ask for

Council Roundup

At a meeting last Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Heard that several city utility users haven't paid their bills for the past several months and may have to go in front of the council to explain why. Story on Page 3.

- Discussed raising city water rates but didn't make any decision. Story on left.

- Heard that the automated weather observation system for the city's airport should be shipped soon and is scheduled for installation at the end of October. Story to come.

- Talked about extending the mowing contract for a second year but didn't make a decision. Story to come.

- Gave the go ahead for the city crew to trim some trees, weeds and pampas grass that presents a hazard to drivers. Story on Page 12.

- Talked about an offer to lease 646 acres of city land for oil and gas exploration. Story on Page 3.

up to \$500,000.

Last year, she said, there were 28 water and sewer applications, and (See WATER on Page 12)

Oberlin men scheduled to play in vintage baseball game on Sunday

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Oberlin First Nine plans to take to the field Sunday in a vintage ball game against the Hodgeman 9.

The 10 men from Decatur County will play by rules from the 1860s and '70s. Rusty Addleman is the manager and LaMoine Wolfram, the team captain.

Instead of having coaches, said Museum Director Sharleen Wurm, early day baseball teams were led by managers and captains.

Mr. Addleman said four generations of his family have played or coached baseball in Decatur County.

His grandfather, D.G. Addleman coached late 19th century and in the 1900s, while his father, Ted Addle-

man, played around 1920. Rusty and his son Chad also played ball.

During the summer of 1900, the ball teams' news was printed in The Oberlin Herald. Those stories told the scores, where the teams planned to travel to and who played.

In the June 7, 1900, newspaper reported, "A second ball nine was organized Saturday. D.G. Addleman' is manager and Ed Branstool

captain. With three catchers and four pitchers and a field comparatively as strong, the boys think they have a team that is better than Wright's Colts in their balmiest days."

An article later in June had Oberlin winning against Norcatgur 23-13 and McCook 11-10.

The article said about the McCook game: "The day was fearfully hot and the diamond was like

a furnace, but Oberlin was there to win and she did, by a score of 11 to 10."

About the Norcatgur game, "On Thursday of last week, the Oberlin ball team went to Norcatgur and met the town's aggregation on the ball diamond. It turned out to be a scrapping match with their mounts. The Oberlin boys played horse part of the time, as they did not have to

try very hard to beat Norcatgur. The final score was 23 to 13 in favor of Oberlin."

The newly formed Oberlin First-Nine includes players Jim Vanek, Boyd Wilson, Joe Stanley, Rick Touslee, Byron Hale, Chris Koer-

(See BALL on Page 12)

