

## Clerk named city administrator

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

After 15 minutes behind closed doors Thursday, the Oberlin City Council approved hiring a long-time employee who has been serving in the administrator position temporarily as the new city administrator and clerk.

Karen Larson has served as the clerk and interim administrator since last May, when Austin Gilley resigned to take another job.

Since that time, the council has offered the job to three people but none has ac-

### City Roundup

At a special end-of-the-year meeting last Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Approved continued utility subsidies for the Last Indian Raid Museum and Sunflower Cinema for the new year. Story below.
- Briefly discussed farmland leases that

will come due this year and asked the city attorney to bring them to the next meeting. Story on Page 3A.

- Held a closed session for 15 minutes for nonelected personnel, then approved hiring Karen Larson as the permanent city admin-

cepted.

During a special meeting to wrap up the end of the year, the council met for 15

minutes in a closed session to discuss "nonelected personnel." The first few minutes included the mayor, council and attorney.

A few minutes later, Mrs. Larson was called into the session.

After the council returned to open session, Mayor Joe Stanley proposed hiring Mrs. Larson as the full-time city administrator/clerk with a salary of \$53,000 a year. Councilman Ray Ward made the motion, which was seconded by Councilwoman Rhonda May and approved by all present, ending with a round of applause from the council and handful of people in the audience.

Mayor Stanley thanked Mrs. Larson for her continued hard work.

He added that he would like to propose to the council promoting Jan Elliott to deputy city clerk/treasurer with a \$2 an hour pay raise. The motion was made and that vote also was unanimous.

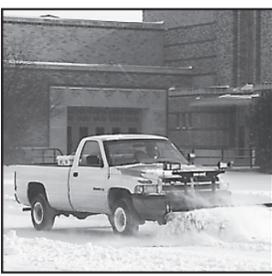
Mrs. Larson reminded everyone that the city office was scheduled to be closed Friday for New Year's Eve. She added that she was excited about the new position and has appreciated the support she's had from the council and the community. Mrs. Larson told the council she's proud to represent them and the citizens. She added (See WOMAN on Page 10)



### Storm brings moisture

**ON MAIN STREET** on Monday, Nan Stanley (above) of the city crew helped clean up the snow that had been piled in the center of the street. Gary Bruggeman (right) shoveled off a porch Friday after lunch as it started to snow again. Terry Ream (below), school district maintenance supervisor, cleaned off the parking spots in front of the high school on Friday.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



## Dry months don't keep area from wet year

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

Although it's been dry the past few months, Oberlin finished the year with above-normal moisture.

The long-range forecast, however, is for continued dry weather through the winter, with the area moving into a moderate drought.

As of Thursday, the town had recorded 24.67 inches of moisture in 2010, with 22.5 inches considered normal. With the storm at the end of last week it bumped the total up to 25.01.

That's 2.17 inches about normal. Obviously, said Chris Foltz, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Goodland, it's been dry as of late, but 2010 did see some wet periods as well.

According to the service's numbers, moisture for the year included:

- In January .018 inches, with the normal being .49.
- In February .55, with normal at .63.
- In March 2.62, with normal at 1.65.
- In May 3.51, with normal at 3.65.
- In June 5.79, with normal at 3.3.
- In July 4.52, with normal at 3.75.
- In August 1.67, with normal at 2.74.
- In September 1.61, with normal at 1.5.
- In October .31, with normal at 1.17.
- In November .27, with normal at 1.03.

So far for December, said Mr. Foltz, Oberlin has recorded .43 of an inch of moisture with normal at .48. Before the snow storm on the night before and morning of New Year's Eve day the county only had .09 inches of moisture, but the five inches of snow received in the first winter storm helped boost that number.

To get the normal numbers for the area, he said, they look back through the numbers for a 30-year period, from 1970 to 2000. Then an average is taken on a daily basis and those are compared and added up to come up with the normal for a month.

Since late September, he said, conditions have really started to dry out. The weather pattern just hasn't

### Drought possible for area

By **KEVIN BOTTRELL**  
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

With three months of unseasonably dry weather and no end in sight, much of western Kansas is being listed under drought conditions.

The U.S. Drought Monitor at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln lists most of the county as under "abnormally dry" conditions, just a shade under moderate drought. The monitor lists most of western Kansas south of Decatur County in a moderate drought.

Moderate drought means the area has seen two to three inches less moisture than usual, the monitor says. (See drought.unl.edu/dm/DM\_highplains.htm)

The National Weather Service is predicting clear skies and only slight chances of snow Sunday. The Drought Monitor says that the drought is expected to increase in western Kansas through February.

Thomas County Extension Agent Clint Milliman said the area has been getting close to drought conditions for several months.

This is a critical time for (See DRY on Page 10)

been conducive to receiving much moisture.

There is a drought developing, said Mr. Foltz. How much of a drought depends on what happens the rest of the winter, but the trend is showing a drought. For Oberlin, he said, the forecast is for a moderate drought with the weather being abnormally dry.

Moving farther southwest, he said, things could develop into a severe drought.

Conditions are supposed to remain the same if not worsened through the winter, he added.

## Workers refurbish old pin machines

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

Work continues on the new bowling alley downtown, with fund raising for the project just \$19,000 short of completion.

In all, finishing the bowling alley will cost \$180,000 with \$161,326 already raised as of Thursday.

Greg Lohofener, with the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., said the past several Tuesday nights about 10 people have been cleaning up and refurbishing the pin-setting machines taken out of the old alley out on U.S. 83. They will have another work night at

6:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Sappa Valley Construction shop on North U.S. 83.

There's been a real dedicated crew of farmers and others who have come out each week to help, he said. They are trying to get everything ready for workers from Jayhawk Bowling to get here and start installing the equipment, possibly this week.

Mr. Lohofener said the engineers had signed off on everything this week. Their certification has been faxed to Brunswick and the lanes should be ready to ship. Actually, he said, he anticipates some of the equipment arriving (See ALLEY on Page 10)

## Conference will focus on no-till farming

Farmers, industry professionals and university experts will come together to learn about and discuss farming in northwest Kansas during the upcoming Cover Your Acres winter conference this month in Oberlin.

The two-day event, scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday, Jan.

18 and 19, is sponsored by Kansas State University Research and Extension and the Northwest Kansas Crop Residue Alliance. It will again be held at The Gateway in Oberlin.

This is the eighth year for the event, said Brian Olson, Extension regional agronomist in Colby.

Each year, more than 500 farmers attend.

The conference focuses on no-till practices and crop production systems that enhance productivity in this part of the state.

Early registration must be post-marked by Tuesday, Jan. 11. It will cost \$25 for Tuesday sessions, \$20

for Wednesday or \$35 for both days. After Tuesday, registration will cost \$50 per day.

The program is the same both days, he said, and will include sessions on fertilizing for no-till, alternative crops, technology and hardware solutions, spray applica- (See SESSIONS on Page 10)

## City OKs utility credits for museum, theater

The Oberlin City Council approved continued utility subsidies for the Last Indian Raid Museum and Sunflower Cinema at a special meeting last Thursday.

The cinema, said Mayor Joe Stanley, has received a \$100-a-month credit for utilities. If the bill is over \$100, the theater board has to pay the difference.

The bill normally runs between \$100 to \$116 a month, said acting City Administrator Karen Larson.

What about the museum? asked Councilman Bill Riedel. It gets \$3,500 a year, said Mrs. Larson; anything over that is paid by the museum.

The museum's utility credit, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch, was set

up that way "many moons ago."

At one time, said Councilman Ray Ward, it was whatever the museum used in utilities. Then a \$3,500 cap was put on it.

Does the county support the museum? asked Mr. Riedel. Yes, said Mr. Hirsch, it has a tax levy. The county budgets \$12,000 for the Oberlin museum.

Councilwoman Rhonda May made the motion to leave the utility allowances for the cinema and museum the same as it has been, with Mr. Ward giving the second. (See CINEMA on Page 10)



## Take that, and that, and that



**OVER 300 TEENAGERS** took part in Pure Rock in Norton on New Year's Day, including eight from Oberlin's Teens for Christ. The teens learned about being Godly and had some fun, too. Johanna Mason and Katie Glading of Oberlin pretended to fight on one of the blow-up games during the day.

— Photo by Doug Mason

# \*Dry conditions are forecast to stick around

(Continued from Page 1)

the wheat crop, he said, because it hasn't gone dormant yet. Wheat goes dormant when the soil temperature gets below freezing every night, he said. Until then, the plants continue to grow and any moisture from rain or snow will soak into the unfrozen ground, helping the wheat establish good roots. If those roots aren't well-established, Milliman said, farmers will see a lot of the plants simply blow away over the winter.

Worse still, the dry weather may delay some wheat from sprouting, which will reduce yields.

"Anything that sprouts in the spring instead of fall will bring 50 to 60 percent yield loss," Milliman said.

The agent said the lower yields will hurt area farmers, especially after the good yields of the past several years. Last year saw a wetter fall and winter and an extra-wet spring, with enough rain in July to delay harvest.

"The moisture was there to get it started," Milliman said. "This year, the wheat has already been

hit hard."

Milliman said some farmers may end up tilling up their fields and replanting the fields with corn in the spring.

Dave Floyd, a meteorologist with the weather service in Goodland, said one of the main contributing factors to the dry winter is La Niña, colder-than-average sea temperatures in the Pacific. A moderate to strong La Niña means thunderstorms will generate in the South Pacific near Indonesia rather than near Hawaii or South America, he said, affecting weather over the continental United States.

"It's sort of a trickle-down effect," he added.

"There are other things that can influence winter as a whole," he said, "but the most predictable is the La Niña-El Niño ocean water swings, and we're in a moderate to strong La Niña right now."

Floyd said current weather models predict the La Niña influence in western Kansas will continue until late spring or early summer, when the jet stream usually moves north to the Canadian border.

# \*Sessions focus on no-till crops

(Continued from Page 1)

tion technology, fertilizer and wheat varieties, to name a few.

Mr. Olson said the agencies started the conference eight years ago because he thought they needed a place to bring together farmers, industry professionals and university people to talk about production in this part of the state. It's been successful, he said, and has become one of the marquee agronomic conferences for K-State.

Although farmers from Nebraska and Colorado come to the conference, 85 percent are from Kansas. They come from as far away as Barton County (Great Bend), ranging across the area from Mankato to Scott City. Mr.

Olson said they started to hold the conference at The Gateway because it's a unique facility for this part of the state. Looking around at facilities in northwest Kansas, he said, someone would be pretty hard pressed to find one that offers everything that The Gateway has, except maybe at Fort Hays State University.

The facility includes space where farm machinery can be pulled inside the arena.

The Cover Your Acres conference, he said, is held at a good time. While it used to be scheduled for February, farmers have already started calving season by then, so the conference was moved up a few weeks.

# Senator to head Natural Resources panel

By KEVIN BOTTRELL  
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell has been chosen to head the Senate Natural Resources Committee when the Legislature comes back into session this month.



R. Ostmeyer

Sen. Ostmeyer, a Republican whose district includes Decatur County and the entire northwest corner of the state, said he was pleasantly surprised to hear he'd gotten the job. Natural resources, he said, was one of the committees he had expressed an interest in to the Senate leadership.

Many committee assignments were being shuffled after Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt was elected as Kansas Attorney General this year. Senate President Steve Morris had mentioned to Sen. Ostmeyer that the chairmanship of natural resources was a possibility,

as long as Sen. Ostmeyer supported Jay Emler of Lindsborg for majority leader. Sen. Ostmeyer, however, decided to support Sen. Terry Bruce of Hutchinson for the job.

"I liked Jay as chairman of the Senate Ways and Means Committee," Sen. Ostmeyer said. "I felt he was doing good work there."

When Emler won the post of majority leader, Sen. Ostmeyer said, he didn't think he had a chance at being picked for the committee.

"I know how the game is played," he said.

However, the leadership decided to give the chairmanship to Sen. Ostmeyer, who was vice chairman two years ago.

Sen. Ostmeyer said he is pleased and excited to be back on the panel. The natural resources committee handles a lot of issues critical

to western Kansas, he said, such as wildlife, parks and especially water.

"I've got water issues out here that are more important than anything," he said.

The committee was pretty quiet last year, Sen. Ostmeyer said, but has issues coming up with the state shutting down wells. Unfortunately, he said, there won't be much money to work with.

The state budget crisis will take up a lot of the Senate's time. Sen. Ostmeyer said he hopes to avoid any more large cuts to education.

"Education is a big industry in western Kansas," he said. "We've made so many cuts out here already. Time will tell."

Sen. Ostmeyer voted in favor of last year's sales tax increase, something he said put him on the outs with some of the more conservative state senators. Sen. Ostmeyer said that when he toured the district, many people asked him to vote in

favor of the increase to help schools, which were losing state money and already suffering from drops in enrollment.

"People were in my face," he said. "They wanted to know how long I was going to just say no (on raising taxes), and what I was going to do for them. I had no answers."

Sen. Ostmeyer said he hopes the economy will improve so that the Legislature can eventually get rid of the tax increase without cutting schools.

He also was picked for the redistricting committee, which will look at population numbers and redraw legislative district boundaries. In the 2010 session, he was chairman of the Agriculture Committee.

He said he will head to Topeka for the swearing-in ceremony Monday. There will be a lot of new faces after last year's election. Sen. Ostmeyer said he'll have to meet the new people and figure out where they stand.

# \*Woman accepts job

(Continued from Page 1)

that she wants to help keep the town "going and growing," and for it to continue to be a place where people want to live.

Mrs. Larson has done a terrific job, said Mayor Stanley, even when put on the spot.

She is a wonderful fit in this position, said Councilman Bill Riedel. She not only brings expertise to the

table, but she also brings an awful lot to the community.

He said he's been prodding her along for a long time to take the job.

The city needed someone who is not just professional, but gets along with the people in town and wants to see the town grow, he said.

# \*Cinema and museum receive utility allowance

(Continued from Page 1)

Mr. Riedel said his only concern is that the city also has a request to do a utility allowance for the bowling alley at \$100 a month. If the council decides to do that, he said, it's only fair to keep all the groups

the same.

The allowances are all over the map, he said, although all the groups that get a subsidy are important. If the museum isn't healthy, then the city should pitch in and help out, but if the museum is healthy, said

Mr. Riedel, why is the allowance set at \$3,500.

When the \$3,500 cap was set on the utility allowance, said Mr. Ward, it was done so the city could know what it was promising, since prior to that the used utilities weren't

tracked.

The council approved continuing the allowances, but didn't make a decision about the bowling alley request.

# \*Alley project needs cash to finish

(Continued from Page 1)

this week. For the most part, said Mr. Lohofener, the interior work on the bowling alley, the lights, ceiling, acoustical boards and painting is 98 percent finished. There is some electrical work to be finished.

Mr. Lohofener said they hooked the surround-sound speakers to one of the televisions with the help of Ron Jansonius.

They have ordered bowling shoes and bought bowling balls. They will probably be ordering a nacho-chili-cheese machine and be able to sell pizza, ice cream and pretzels out of the snack area.

The bowling locker room is pretty well finished.

Although they will know more once Jayhawk Bowling gets here, they are hoping that the alley will be done by the end of January or early February.

Mr. Lohofener said they have five applicants for the manager position and will be interviewing and making some decisions about the job soon.

Anyone interested in league bowling can contact Mr. Lohofener at 475-3459 or Connie Grafel at 475-2901 or talk with Valerie Faris. Leagues will include women, men, mixed and possibly a youth league.



## Cover Your Acres Winter Conference

January 18 and 19, 2011 at the Gateway in Oberlin, KS

Kansas State University and the Northwest Kansas Crop Residue Alliance

Discussing the latest technology, methods, and conservation practices to improve crop production on the High Plains

Time	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4	Exhibit Hall
7:45 - 8:15 a.m.	Registration				
8:20 - 8:27 a.m.	Welcome in Exhibit Hall				
8:32 - 9:20 a.m.	Fertilizing for no-till (D. Leikam) <sup>1</sup>	Compaction and crop yields (D. Presley) <sup>1</sup>	Monsanto update - seeds, traits, and weeds (I)	The good & the ugly of growing safflower (I)	Sponsor Displays
9:20 - 9:50 a.m.	View Exhibits				
9:57 - 10:45 a.m.	What is your problem (D. Beck) <sup>1</sup>	Alternative crops (K. Roozeboom) <sup>1</sup>	Strip-till: a seed bed preparation practice (I)	Corn refuge fertility & management (I)	
10:52 - 11:40 a.m.	No-till machinery innovations	Cover your acres for less	Tools to maximize your yields and profits (I)	What is your problem (D. Beck) <sup>1</sup>	Sponsor Displays
11:47 a.m. - 12:35 p.m.	Fertilizer Placement (R. Ward) <sup>1</sup>	Sunflower management (I)	Lunch		
12:43 - 1:31 p.m.	K State wheat breeding program (A. Fritz) <sup>1</sup>	Spray applications technology (R. Wolf) <sup>1,2</sup>			
1:38 - 2:26 p.m.	No-till crop rotations (A. Schlegel) <sup>1</sup>	Technology and hardware solutions for you (I)	Planning for the future: ensuring your legacy (I)	Wheat varieties (J. Shroyer & E. DeWolf) <sup>1</sup>	Sponsor Displays
2:33 - 3:21 p.m.	DC wheat behind soybeans and corn (J. Shroyer) <sup>1</sup>	Plant nutrition (I)	United Sorghum Checkoff progress report (I)	Fertilizer placement (R. Ward) <sup>1</sup>	
3:28 - 4:16 p.m.	Stripper heads and stubble height (L. Haag) <sup>1</sup>	Fertility on high pH soils (D. Ruiz-Diaz) <sup>1</sup>	Marketing plans and financing (I)	Strip-till: a seed bed preparation practice (I)	
4:16 - 4:46 p.m.	View Exhibits				
4:53 - 5:41 p.m.	Q&A with D. Beck <sup>1</sup>	Wheat varieties (J. Shroyer & E. DeWolf) <sup>1</sup>	Spray application technology (R. Wolf) <sup>1,2</sup>	State of Fertilizer in 2011 (I)	

<sup>1</sup>CEU credits for CCAs have been applied for. <sup>2</sup>CEU credits for 1A for Commercial Pesticide Applicators have been approved. <sup>1</sup> Industry sponsored sessions indicated with an (I) will have no CEU credits offered.

**Diamond Sponsors: Pioneer, Hoxie Implement, Lang Diesel, Brothers Equipment, Crop Production Services, Cargill AgHorizons, National Sunflower Assoc., McCook National Bank w/Market Data**

**Registration** - The conference will be held for two days with the same program each day. **Early registration must be postmarked by January 11. Please register early.** If paying for more than 1 person, **please include the name for everyone being registered. \$25 Tues 18, \$20 Wed 20 Early Registration for one day. Please mark which day. \$35** Early registration for both days which has the same program each day. **\$50 Registration per day after January 11 or at the door.** All registrations include proceedings for conference along with refreshments and meals. For questions, please call 785-462-6281. **Mail registration and check, payable to KSU to:** Northwest Area Office, Attn: Brian Olson, PO Box 786, Colby KS 67701. **Program will be held regardless of weather.** Please include the following information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_