

## City could slash taxes next year

### Council hasn't voted yet

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

Faced with a big hike in water bills, the Oberlin City Council is crafting a budget that could slash city property taxes next year.

Preliminary figures show a significant decrease in property taxes, although nothing has been voted on yet.

The council held a special meeting last Thursday to start discussing the budget. With wish lists from the departments and the idea of trying to lower the property tax, the council ended the evening with the levy at 76.251 mills, a cut of about 12 percent. Last year it was 87.069.

That would mean a decrease of 10.818 in the property tax levy. Each mill, said City Administrator Karen Larson, brings in \$6,720. The preliminary budget would mean a decrease of \$72,696 in city spending.

The staff, said Mrs. Larson, has continually tried to cut expenses. The electric fund is low, she said, so they don't want to do a lot of transfers. Electric rates, she said, aren't going to increase this year, though the recent wind storm cost the city \$50,000 to \$75,000.

She said she's asking for a new street sweeper this year. With the government discount and leasing to own for five years, it will cost \$35,000 a year. The old one was bought 10 years ago and has been giving the crew problems for the last several years.

The preliminary budget also includes a new police car. Originally, a new car was to be purchased this year, but it was taken out of the budget. Mrs. Larson said she thought a new car would cost around \$18,000.

There was some discussion about trading off a lawnmower from the cemetery and replacing it. That would cost around \$6,500.

Also, she said that something needs to be done with the directory in the cemetery. She said they are looking into a digital directory, which could be done with memorial money and possibly donations.

There was enough money put into the budget for a boiler for the swimming pool, just in case, said Mrs. Larson.

Another piece of equipment in the budget is a used dump truck, which would help move snow. Mrs. Larson (See COUNCIL on Page 12)

## Physician assistant starts at hospital

The newest addition to the Decatur Health Systems staff started Monday, seeing his first patient before lunch time.

Sean Conroy, a physician assistant, said he was born and raised in McCook, and still has ties to the area. He said his parents, aunts, uncles and sister still live there.

Mr. Conroy attended Chadron State College in Nebraska, graduating in 2003 with a degree in human biology. Then in 2004, he received a bachelor's degree in medical technology from the University of Nebraska Medical Center and in 2010, a master's degree in physician assistant sciences from Union College in Lincoln, Neb.

For the past year, he's been working at a bone and joint clinic in Kansas City. He said he never planned to go into orthopedics and wanted to move back to a rural area, as he didn't care for the city and wanted to get back into primary care.

Growing up, he said he knew he wanted to go into the medical field fairly early. His mom was a nurse and he would read her nursing journals. When he was a junior in high school, he decided he wanted to be like a physician assistant who worked in McCook.



Sean Conroy

Mr. Conroy said he doesn't want to go back to school to become a doctor.

Monday morning, he jumped into the new job with both feet. He went on rounds with Robin Williamson, another physician assistant, and started seeing patients.

Mr. Conroy has two sons, 6 and 3. He enjoys golfing, tennis, hunting, fishing and watching Nebraska football.

## One lucky winner to get \$1,000 prize

Any interest in winning \$1,000 in scrip money to pay for a shopping spree at the end of August?

Now is your chance, by signing up at sponsoring businesses for the Oberlin Merchants' Annual \$1,000 Shopping Spree.

Anyone 18 or older can enter without making a purchase. Just fill out the entry form at participating businesses and drop it in the box.

You can sign up as many times as you want at any or all the sponsors. The deadline is 4 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 16.

The drawing will be at the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce's Back to School Picnic in City Park at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday,

Aug. 17.

The lucky shopper must be present to win. Names will be drawn until a winner is found.

One person will win \$1,000 in scrip money and have until Wednesday, Aug. 31, to spend it at participating stores only. The shopper has to notify *The Herald* so a photographer can go with them.

Sponsors for this year's Shopping Spree include Dale's Fish 'N' Fun, Culligan Water, Ward Drug Store, Stanley Hardware, R&M Service Center and *The Oberlin Herald*.

The scrip is good for merchandise only, and only at sponsoring businesses. No change will be given.



ON MONDAY, Clay Anderson (above) sat behind the wheel of his combine on one of the last days of his 2011 wheat harvest. Mr. Anderson drove the Gleaner combine

(below), cutting wheat close to his home. Kurt Olson (bottom) drove a tractor pulling the grain cart.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

## Crew cuts wheat

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

As he got ready to go out to the harvest field Monday morning, Clay Anderson said farming is something he's always wanted to do.

He attributes his love of farming to his childhood, growing up on the farm west of Oberlin in the Midway area, and riding with his dad. He started out driving the grain cart during harvest and worked his way up from there.

While he left home for a year to attend Colby Community College to study agriculture and business, he returned to the family farm.

Mr. Anderson said he farms with his mom, Gayle Carlson, and brother Jason. He said he and his brother were able to return home to farm, thanks to his mother, who kept things going after his father, Dennis Anderson, died in 1993.

When Clay returned home in 2003, his brother was in college and working.

The family has land in both Rawlins and Decatur counties, with almost all of it south of U.S. 36.

Since he first started helping out on the farm, he said, things have changed. They switched to 100 percent no-till planting 10 to 12 years ago. They no longer have any tillage equipment, which was a big switch.

Changing to no-till, he said, has made farming a little less labor intensive for them and has freed up some time to do some other



things.

He said the family started this year's harvest on Tuesday, June 28, but it's been hit or miss since then. He estimated that they have received five to six inches of rain since cutting the first field. In the past week, he said they have hardly been able to cut anything, maybe 50 acres.

Things are getting better. He said they haven't wanted to cut in wet fields and leave tracks. Without tilling a field, he said, it's hard to smooth out the tracks. If tracks from the combines and equipment are left, he noted, they would have to till it to repair the field, which could mess up what they have accomplished in the past years with no-till.

Mr. Anderson said he thought they had just a few days of harvest left.

Besides his brother, who drives the truck and his mom who helps with the grain cart, Kurt Olson and Yancey Sowers also help out.

The family eats in the field with Mrs. Anderson or Mrs. Carlson bringing food at noon and a lunch in the evenings.

He and his wife Jennie have two sons, Cowen, 2 1/2, and Grant, 4 months. They live on a farm south



of Midway.

He said Cowen loves to ride in the combine with him.

For anyone who wants to get into farming, he said, it's important that it's something they really

enjoy. Farming is a lot of work and certainly isn't a 9 a.m.-to-5 p.m. job.

Besides wheat, he said, the family raises corn and has a cattle operation.

## Trucks keep local elevators hopping

Harvest trucks rolled in and out of town last week as scorching weather dried out fields, keeping elevators hopping during the late afternoon and evening hours.

At the Hansen Mueller elevator on U.S. 36, Janice O'Hare said they had taken in close to 950,000 bushels in Oberlin and Cedar Bluffs. It seems the trucks start to come later in the afternoon, she said, with the elevator staying open until around 10:30 p.m.

Cedar Bluffs is about half done with harvest, she said.

The crop is dry, around 8.8 percent moisture on some loads, said Mrs. O'Hare.

After the rain storms earlier in the month, though, test weights were around 57 to 58 pounds per bushel. There has been very few in the 60s, she said. A weight of 63 pounds is considered normal.

Mrs. O'Hare said she's not sure when harvest will end. Some farmers have said they won't start to cut in terrace channels made soggy by the rains until next week.

Some in the Herndon area are looking for dry fields to cut, she said, as they don't want to tear up their ground.

Everything is going well, said Mrs. O'Hare, adding that she hasn't heard any yields yet.

At the Decatur Co-op, grain manager Fred Brubaker said the co-op has taken in a little over 3 million bushels. It looks like it's going to be a long harvest, he added.

Farmers in the southern part of the county are starting to wind down, he said, while the middle and northern areas are still going strong.

The quality of the crop, said Mr. Brubaker, is starting to go down hill some because of the rain. The test weights are struggling to stay about 60 pounds, with more in the 58 to 59 region. Before the rain, he said, they were seeing test weights

at 62 to 63.

Even so, the moisture has been good for other crops, said Mr. Brubaker.

Harvest, he said, is probably 80 percent done, ranging from 100 percent in the Lenora area to 50 percent around Danbury in the north.

Mr. Brubaker said there's been a lot of variation in the yields, from the mid 30s up to 70 bushels per acre.



# Work begins on roads

By STEVE HAYNES  
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

Contractors are resurfacing several highways in Decatur County, with other work expected before the end of summer.

A work crew should begin "chip sealing" the pavement today on K-383 between the end of new pavement at the Sheridan County line and the west side of Jennings.

Flaggers and a pilot car operation will guide one-lane traffic through the work zone. Expect delays of 15 minutes or less, said Kristin Brands, northwest district public affairs manager for the Kansas Department of Transportation in Norton.

The workers will cover the road with a thin layer of emulsified asphalt, followed by a layer of lightweight aggregate, which gets embedded into the asphalt.

"The new surface is then rolled and swept before being reopened to traffic," said Mathew Withington, area construction engineer in Atwood. "It is a relatively quick process, and the contractor can treat several miles of roadway per day."

Chip seals are a low-cost method of sealing minor cracking, blocking moisture from penetrating the surface and extending the life of the pavement, he added. The work also smoothes out the surface.

Hi-Plains Sand of Kanopolis has a \$389,260 contract to do the work. The project is part of T-WORKS, the transportation program passed by the Kansas Legislature last year, Mrs. Brands said. The work should be done by the end of next week.

A similar project finished up last week on U.S. 83 north of Oberlin to the state line. That job was done by Blevins Asphalt Construction Co. of Mount Vernon, Mo., on a \$355,097 contract, Mrs. Brands said.

Another job, this one on K-9 and K-123 in southeast Decatur County, should begin next week. Construction crews will mill off the surface of K-9 from the junction of K-123 east to the Norton County line and all of K-123 in both Sheridan and Decatur counties. Work could start as soon as Monday, Mrs. Brands said.

After the milling, Mr. Withington said, the crew will overlay the roadways with two inches of new asphalt starting around Monday, Aug. 8. The entire project totals approximately 19 miles. Flaggers and a pilot car will guide traffic.

The contractor is Venture Corp. of Great Bend. The work should be done by mid-August.

Sometime after that, Venture will begin work on two other repaving projects, one from Oberlin south about eight miles and the other from there to the K-383 junction east of Selden. A stretch of U.S. 36 east of Penn Ave. in Oberlin to near the city cemetery also will be repaved.

This week, the department plans to do pavement evaluation tests on parts of U.S. 36 in Decatur County. A pilot car operation will control traffic. These annual falling weight deflectometer tests measure the quality of the pavement so the department can plan maintenance work.

Technicians will be working in four-mile segments, Mrs. Brands said. Delays of 15 minutes or less can be expected.

Mrs. Brands asked drivers to slow down, be careful, pay attention to orange construction signs and watch for workers when driving through any work zone.

For questions, contact Mr. Withington at (785) 626-3258 or matheww@ksdot.org or Mrs. Brands at (785) 877-3315 or kristenb@ksdot.org.

# Concert planned

The four-person group Dustin Evans and Good Times will be here to perform during fair week at the beginning of August.

Stan McEvoy, who arranged the concert, said tickets are on sale for \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door.

The concert will start at 8 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 6, in the arena at The Gateway.

Mr. McEvoy said Mr. Evans got involved in music at a young age. As a teenager, he taught himself to play the guitar, drums, bass and piano and started to write his own songs.

Also with the band is Tim Deats on keyboards, harmonica and vocals; Gary Snow on lead guitar and vocals; and Ned LeDoux on drums.



## Kids cook snack food

AT THE 4-H BUILDING last Wednesday at the Decatur County Fairground, Madelaine Johnson (above) worked on a yogurt/juice drink during the Kids a Cooking class. Sage Lohofener (right) got ready to eat a snack she had made.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



## Some fair events set for next week

While the Decatur County Fair doesn't start until August, a few events will be held next week.

The first will be the clothing construction, buymanship and fashion revue starting at 9 a.m. Tuesday at the United Methodist Church. The

kids' outfits will be judged that day, then during the fair there will be a public fashion revue at 5:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 5.

The 4-H and open class horse show starts at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 30, at the Tripple Creek

Riders Arena just south of the fairgrounds.

That event is open to the public.

# \*Council starts budget work; taxes may drop

(Continued from Page 1A) said she thought that would cost less than \$25,000.

The water department asked for a power saw to cut pipes and a crane, which would be \$11,000 together.

In the electric department, proposed expenses include repairs on the radiators and the power plant and catalytic converters for the diesel engines, which could cost \$200,000 to \$300,000.

Mrs. Larson said some of the areas the city has been able to save is by paying off the consolidated improvement loan, which was costing \$120,000 a year. That loan consolidated bonds for water system improvements, The Gateway, streets and renovating of the former youth ranch.

In 2010, she said, actual expenses at The Gateway were \$214,000. So far, the estimate for 2011 is \$149,000, a savings of \$65,000. The Gateway, said Mrs. Larson, is doing more business this year. One full-time job was cut from the staff at the civic center.

Some requests the city received aren't in the preliminary budget,

Mrs. Larson said. Those include \$5,000 for the Chamber of Commerce, \$1,000 for the library and money for Options Domestic and Sexual Violence and the Western Kansas Child Advocacy Center.

The mayor and council are trying hard to lower taxes this year, said Mrs. Larson. People just can't afford an increase, but water rates will have to go up to pay for required improvements, either a treatment plant or new wells.

The budget, said Mayor Bill Riedel, isn't final yet. It's in the preliminary stages. He said he would like to see the city be able to help some of the groups like the child advocacy center.

This budget doesn't include a \$75,000 transfer from the electric fund to the general fund. Mrs. Larson said the city staff has done an excellent job keeping the expenses down. The Gateway isn't going to need a \$60,000 transfer this year, she said, and that's because of the staff.

The budget is on the agenda again for the regular meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway.

## Commissioners opt for program

The Decatur County commissioners asked the county attorney to write a resolution to participate in the Rural Opportunity Zone program not to exceed \$26,000 a year on the county's part.

The commissioners plan to talk about the draft resolution at their next meeting.

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., with board members Sid Metcalf, Greg Lohofener and Kevin Rippe, came to ask the commissioners to consider the program. Kem Bryan with DreamMakers and James Foster with the state Rural Opportunities office in Colby, joined them.

Ms. Grafel said they all hoped the county would get involved in the program. The hospital has hired a new physician assistant, she said, and they have also been working with a doctor from Arkansas who is interested in coming here.

This program, which gives anyone moving to rural Kansas from out of state a tax break, might come in handy, she said. With county approval, the state would split the cost of paying off part of a new worker's student loans.

Ms. Grafel said they plan to mail around 100 letters to Decatur Community High alumni living out of state to see if they want to return for a professional job.

Ms. Grafel said they would like to see the commissioners sign a resolution putting the county in the program so it can be published.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said that the commissioners had agreed to have County Attorney Steve Hirsch draft a resolution for the program for up to \$26,000 on the county's behalf.

The blanket resolution the state sent out was vague, said Commissioner Gene Gallentine. The language needs to be adapted to Decatur County.

If only part of the 50 eligible counties take part in the program, asked Mr. Gallentine, what happens to the extra money? Could those counties that choose to participate get more money?

Mr. Foster said he thinks that might be possible, but the county would need to increase its share, too.

Mr. Gallentine asked how many counties have joined the program. Nearly half, said Mr. Foster.

This program, said Ms. Grafel, could be an opportunity to bring some people into the county.

"We have to make investments in our community," said Mr. Gallentine, "although sometimes we don't know what the payoff will be."

**COST SHARE FUNDS (Non-Point Source)**

The Decatur County Conservation District will be taking cost share applications from **July 18 through July 29**.

"Funding provided by the Division of Conservation, Kansas Department of Agriculture through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund."

**"Failing" SEPTIC SYSTEMS** – Please apply now as this will be our only sign-up for this year.

Our office is located at 410 South Buffalo Avenue in Oberlin. For more information call 785-475-3131 Extension 101. Ask for Diana Solko.

**Water Resource Cost Share Program Funds**

These funds will also become available to the Decatur County Conservation District Office. Applications for the cost share funds will be accepted from **July 18 through July 29**.

Some of the eligible practices are: terraces (including rebuilds), diversions, livestock wells, pipelines, tanks and grass seeding.

"Funding is provided by the Division of Conservation, Kansas Department of Agriculture through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund."

Applications **will only** be taken **July 18-29** at our office located at 410 South Buffalo Avenue in Oberlin. (Office hours will be from 8-11:30 a.m. and from 12:30-5 p.m.)

For additional information, please call 785-475-3131, Extension 101, and ask for Diana Solko.

*Patient-centered and family-oriented*

**Brenda Kopriva, M.D. will soon practice general surgery in McCook!**

Community Hospital welcomes Dr. Brenda Kopriva to our surgery team and community.

Dr. Kopriva graduated from the University of Kansas School of Medicine in 2006 and completed her five-year residency at the same institution in May.

Dr. Kopriva will begin her practice at Community Hospital in August, where she will join Dr. Walter Eskildsen of Surgical Associates in McCook as a member of Community Hospital's medical staff.

Natives of Ness City and Atwood, Kansas, Dr. Kopriva and her husband, Jim, look forward to raising their son, Nathan, in the McCook area.

To make an appointment with Dr. Kopriva, call the Community Hospital Surgical and Orthopedic Clinic at 308-344-8376.



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**UPCOMING EVENTS in Kansas**

Brought to you in part by Kansas Department of Commerce Travel & Tourism Division

**National Day of the Cowboy**  
July 23, Abilene  
Celebrate the American Cowboy with activities at Old Abilene Town. Gunfights, stagecoach rides, can-can dancers, class in a one-room school, ice cream social, music and more!

**KKOA Leadsled Spectacular Car Show**  
July 29-31, Salina  
World's Oldest & Most Famous "Traditional" Kustom Car & Truck Event! 1,000+ Customs, Hotrods & drag machines. Live entertainment. kustomkempsofamerica.com

**Dodge City Days Festival**  
July 29-August 7, Dodge City  
Western heritage comes to life. Parades, BBQ, concerts, rodeo & more!  
(620) 227-3119, dodgecitydays.com

**Wild Bill Hickok Rodeo**  
August 3-6, Abilene  
Put on your boots and hat and attend this exciting PRCA event.  
Bullfighters, clowns and specialty acts. wildbillhickokrodeo.com

**Dodge City Roundup Rodeo**  
August 3-7, Dodge City  
The greatest show on dirt!  
(620) 225-2244 or (866) 327-6366  
dodgecityroundup.org

**Wichita Flight Festival**  
August 20-21, Wichita  
Three day festival celebrating the past, present and future of aviation in Wichita, the Air Capital of the World.  
(316) 462-2787, wichitaflightfestival.com

**My Kansas**  
You will want to own and share this photographic journey of Kansas. The 156 pages inside this hard-bound book are as rich as the jacket image.



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