

## County scales back tax increase

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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The Decatur County commissioners last Tuesday approved publishing the proposed budget for 2012, cutting a proposed tax increase nearly in half, but still allowing for some new equipment and a decline in the county's valuation.

While preliminary versions had included a cost-of-living increase for county employees, commissioners said there is no money in the reduced budget for raises.

The county's property valuation is \$34,033,544 this year but only \$33,191,651 for next year. That's a drop of \$841,893, or about 2.5 percent. It will take a higher rate to come up with the same amount of money in property taxes, commissioners said.

At their meeting last Tuesday, the commissioners looked through the proposed budget, which included an increase of 4.1 mills in the county's property-tax levy — about 5.6 percent — and cut that to an increase of 2.582 mills, from 72.475 to 75.057 mills, or about 3.6 percent.

The commissioners went through the different departments, proposing to hold spending to the same as this year.

Commissioner Gene Gallentine said people should understand that it's hard to operate on the same levy with the cost of doing business going up.

Also, said Commissioner Stan McEvoy, the valuation is down, so it takes a higher levy to bring in the same amount. He said most departments are even with last year's budget.

Last year, the commissioners talked about borrowing money from the equip-

ment reserve to finish out the year in the county general fund. Mr. McEvoy asked if that ever happened, adding that if it had, it should be paid back.

The commissioners called Treasurer Jean Hale, who looked at the funds. She said \$17,479 had been borrowed from the equipment reserve.

Commissioner Ralph Unger made a motion to repay that money this month while paying the county bills, which was approved.

The commissioners talked with someone

at the Kansas Association of Counties about money for the 911 fund. Decatur County is supposed to get \$50,000 next year for 911 costs, they said, adding that the money would be paid in monthly payments.

"Is there any reason any of these funds need increases?" asked Mr. McEvoy.

Clerk Colleen Geihlsler said she included money in the budget for a new computer system. That increase ended up being split among the clerk, treasurer, register of deeds and appraiser's offices.

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## City continues search for water outside of town

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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The Oberlin City Council approved testing more irrigation wells in a continued search for better water to pipe to town instead of building a \$4 million-plus water treatment plant.

However, the wells tested so far offer usable water, an engineer said, with lower hardness, less staining problem and the ability to meet federal standards.

At the council meeting Thursday, Chris Miller, with Miller and Associates of McCook, the firm which planned the city's water project, had results from two irrigation wells tested. Both are under the limits on arsenic, nitrates and uranium, he said, and actually met federal standards on everything tested.

There isn't a lot of water in either of the wells, he added, and the city might need to look for more.

From 1997 to 2008, said Mr. Miller, the city used on average 541 acre feet of water per year. Since the city started doing water conservation in the summer in 2003, he added, the use has dropped.

Well No. 11, he said, is the only

existing city well that doesn't exceed federal limits for anything. It produces 250 acre feet a year, about half of what the city needs.

Of the current city wells, he said, No. 10 is over the limit in arsenic and uranium and wells No. 12 and 13 are also both over in uranium.

The irrigation wells sampled produce 82.6 acre feet and 41.2 acre feet, which leaves the need for another 167.2 acre feet if all three of those were used.

Mr. Miller said past councils have been through this search for water before. He said his firm plans to bring some more bottles to Councilman Jim Miesner to test more wells. In order to produce the same amount of water for the city, he said, it looks like it could take several irrigation wells.

On the last two water rights filed in the state, he said, officials took around six to eight months to approve changing the use.

The city is under a consent order to get the treatment plant done. If the council wants to continue to pursue looking for water elsewhere, he said, it might be good to file for an

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## Activities planned by Jennings firemen for annual Fun Day

There will be food, a parade and activities for all ages at the Jennings Firemen's Fun Day on Saturday.

This is the 20th year for the Fun Day, put on by the firemen and volunteers of all ages in Jennings.

Things start at 8 a.m. with a health fair and kolache coffee at the Senior Center. Sean Conroy, a physician assistant with the Decatur County Hospital and clinic, will answer health questions and do skin checks.

At 10 a.m., a Wobble Trap Shoot will start at the Kenny Wildeman farm north of town. Participants need to bring their own shotguns and ammunition.

Kolaches, the ever-popular fruit-filled Czech pastries, will be on sale until they are gone. On Friday, the Jennings women bake over 100 dozen of the treats.

In the morning there is also a cake walk and bingo.

Attorney General Derek Schmidt will be at the Fun Day from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

At 1:30 p.m., the parade starts, led by the Jennings American Legion motorcycle group. All entries, walkers, bikers, floats, vehicles, machinery and animals, are welcome.

There is no registration or entry fee, but entrants need to be at the south end of Pennsylvania (School) Avenue between 12:30 and 1 p.m.

Women of any age are encouraged to enter the queen contest. Registration will be at the parade entry site, and candidates will be introduced during the parade. The public can vote for the queen at the speaker's stand until 5 p.m. Ashley Vacura of Omaha is the reigning queen.

The theme this year will be "Celebrate Kansas' 150th Birthday," but the day will also commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"We are pleased to have World War II veterans George Launchbaugh and Gayle Bainter as special guests," said Mayor Marge Hartzog. "They, with the assistance of Cindy Schelle, will present a slide show at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. in the City Hall of their Honor Flight trip to Washington."

The Jennings Czech Museum will be open during the day.

Other events will include a dunk tank, coin search, pony rides, giant slide, Nex-Tech's Wii game and

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**THE BIG WINNER**, Leona Hilker, (above) smiled as she opened the door of her brand new upright freezer. Mrs. Hilker won the prize in the Oberlin Merchants' Big \$1,000 Shopping Spree last Wednesday. On Monday, she bought a shop vacuum and a big can of bug spray from Joe Stanley (below) at Stanley Hardware.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

## Winner spends money

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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The money is mostly spent by now.

Almost all of the \$1,000 scrip money given away in the Oberlin Merchants' Big \$1,000 Shopping Spree last Wednesday has been spent at the sponsoring businesses, with the majority of it used before lunch on Monday.

The Oberlin Herald staff gave the \$1,000 away during the Back-to-School Picnic last Wednesday in City Park. Several hundred people at the picnic ate and socialized on one of the last nights before school started in Oberlin.

Kira Addelman, 4, drew the first entry form out of the blue bucket holding the tickets.

"Jack Fortin," said Cynthia Haynes, co-publisher and business manager for the paper. "Jack Fortin."

No one responded, and another name was drawn since the winner had to be present.

"Leona Hilker," said Mrs. Haynes, and up shot a hand. Mrs. Hilker and her husband Lyle were



sitting at a nearby picnic table.

Mrs. Hilker said she was shocked to win. While she visited most of the sponsoring businesses during the six-week sign-up period, she said she didn't fill out an entry form for the contest very often.

She said she would like to buy an upright freezer, adding that they had a chest deep freeze and she

wanted to make a change.

On Monday morning, that's what she did. The Hilkers picked out a white upright freezer at R&M Service Center after winning the money last week and returned Monday morning to pay for it.

Then they headed across the street to Stanley Hardware to buy a shop vacuum and a big bottle of bug spray.

The Hilkers said they planned to then head to Ward Drug Store to buy some gifts and Dale's Fish 'N' Fun for some spotlights.

This was the eighth year for the shopping spree. It's made possible by the sponsoring businesses, which this year included Dale's, Culligan Water, Ward, Stanley, R&M and *The Herald*.

## Park gets new outlets, donation

Work continues to improve Sappa Park with new electrical outlets in and ready to use for camping and a recent donation by the Modern Woodmen Fraternal Financial group for bathrooms.

Last Wednesday, members of the Oberlin camp of the Modern Woodman of America were at the park to present a check for \$3,290 to the Sappa Park Committee and city officials for bathrooms.

Committee members sold raffle tickets earlier in the summer, with a match coming for the Modern Woodmen. City Council members Fonda Farr, Rusty

Addelman and Jim Miesner, Mayor Bill Riedel and City Administrator Karen Larson were also present for the presentation.

The money, said Kimberly Davis, a park committee member, will be used for the proposed bathrooms in the historic shelter house.

Mrs. Davis said the park committee appreciates the work the Modern Woodmen members did to make the matching raffle possible. She added that the committee also appreciates support for the park from the

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## Treasurer to return property

Kansas State Treasurer Ron Estes will make a stop in Oberlin on Thursday to help people find any return any unclaimed property they state may be holding for them.

Mr. Estes will meet with people from 8 to 9:30 a.m. at the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center at 104 S. Penn Avenue.

The state Treasury Department currently holds more than \$230 million worth of unclaimed property. Estes and his staff are touring the state to talk about how citizens can

search records to see if they have any unclaimed property.

"We encourage everyone in the area to stop by and check their name and the names of family and friends," said Estes. "In this economy, everyone could use a little help, and we feel it is important to be sure that these resources get back to the rightful owners."

In addition to cash, stocks and bonds, the unclaimed contents of safe deposit boxes are also turned over to the treasurer's office, he said.

The office has more than 15,000 safe deposit box properties on file.

About 600 boxes are turned over to the treasurer's office each year.

Anyone who can't make it to the event may call the treasurer's office at (800) 432-0386 or go to [www.KansasCash.com](http://www.KansasCash.com) to search for unclaimed property.

