



Legislators hear views on districts

By KEVIN BOTTRELL
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Only about a dozen people came to see the Kansas Legislature's joint Committees on Redistricting on Thursday at Colby Community College.

The combined House and Senate committees are holding public meetings throughout the state to answer questions and take comments from the public. Fifteen members of 36 total were present.

Rep. Mike O'Neal, speaker of the House and chairman of the House committee, emphasized that the committee hasn't drafted

any maps yet, even though several are circulating online and in the press. The committee is holding the public meetings first, he said, before coming up with a plan.

Sen. Tim Owens, chairman of the Senate committee, went over the guidelines that the committee has agreed on, which include not reducing minority voting strength, preserving the core areas of existing districts and keeping counties intact whenever possible. Sen. Owens said the committee is also looking to keep districts as compact as possible.

Districts have to be within 5 percent on

the target population, 22,716 for a House district and 70,986 for a Senate district. The basic unit considered is voting precincts, rather than counties, which means some counties may have to be split.

Corey Carnahan with the Legislative Research Department said any Kansan can set up an appointment to come to the department's office at 300 S. W. 10th St. in Topeka and draw up a district map to be considered. These maps are published at redistricting.org. Three have been drawn; two by the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce and one by citizens of Junction City.

Rep. O'Neal said the state's overall population growth was enough to prevent the loss of a congressional seat. However, geographically the state lost population in more areas than it gained, adding people in urban areas and losing them in rural counties.

For the U.S. House of Representatives, the 1st District, which includes all of western Kansas, needs to gain about 57,000 people to reach its ideal number. The 3rd District, which includes Kansas City and part of Lawrence, needs to lose about 54,000. Unfortunately, Rep. O'Neal said,

the two do not border each other, so any redrawing of the boundary lines will affect the 2nd District, which is only 2,233 people under ideal.

Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, a Democrat from Topeka, talked about what he thought the committee's priorities should be.

Sen. Hensley talked about gerrymandering, the practice of redrawing districts to suit a political agenda. He pointed to the 2001 redistricting process. The committee adopted the same guidelines, he said, but (See STATE on Page 5A)



BRANDI KOHART DROPPED OFF mail at the Norcatour post office on Saturday morning (above). The facility is one of many in small Kansas towns that are on the list to be closed. Abilene Postmaster Robert Mikulecky Jr. conducted a public meeting last Monday on plans to close the office. — Herald staff photos by Carolyn Plotts and Kimberly Davis

Murder rap filed in death of airman, 22

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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An Oberlin man was being held on a \$500,000 bond after murder charges were filed by the state attorney general's office in the fatal shooting of Corey Ryan Cook on Sunday, Oct. 16.

Dylan Robert Coryell Jr., 24, faces three charges for allegedly shooting Airman Cook, 22. He was arrested the morning after the shooting.

The first count of the complaint is for premeditated murder in the first degree with an alternative count of felony murder in the first degree. A felony murder charge applies when a death occurs during a planned felony crime, regardless of whether the death was planned.

Both are "off-grid" felonies under Kansas law, with life in prison as the maximum sentence.

The second count, for aggravated battery, alleges that another person, Sarah Campbell, was injured by a shotgun blast. If found guilty, Mr. Coryell could receive a possible sentence of 11 to 34 months in prison with a fine of up to \$100,000.

Ms. Campbell is listed as a survi-

vor in Airman Cook's obituary (See Page 2A).

The third count is for aggravated burglary for "unlawfully, feloniously and without authority entering into a building with the intent to commit a felony." That count carries a possible sentence of 31 to 106 months and/or a fine up to \$300,000.

At the request of the county attorney's office, the attorney general's staff will prosecute the case. Nicole Romine, assistant attorney general assigned to Goodland, will lead the prosecution team, according to a statement released last Tuesday.

Two lawyers, Justin A. Barrett and Calvin K. Williams of Colby, were appointed to represent Mr. Coryell. He made his first appearance in District Court last Tuesday before District Magistrate Judge John Bremer.

His next court appearance was scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Friday before Judge Preston Pratt in Decatur County District Court. Courthouse observers said that may be put off.

As of Monday afternoon, no additional arrests or bookings had been recorded in the case.

Norcatour crowd united against closing of office

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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It was standing room only in the gym in the former Norcatour High School last Monday night as residents of the tiny border town fought to keep their post office open.

Robert Mikulecky Jr., postmaster from Abilene, conducted the public meeting with just under 70 people in the audience. No one spoke in favor of the post office being closed.

Mr. Mikulecky told the audience that they could get a post office box in Oberlin or Norton if the office in Norcatour is closed, or they could put up a mailbox near their home to receive mail.

All the comments and questions, said Mr. Mikulecky, would be put in the public record and then sent to a committee at postal headquarters in Washington, where the final de-

cision about closing the Norcatour office will be made. He said he didn't have a say in whether an office would stay open.

If the office is to close, said Mr. Mikulecky a notice will be posted about the end of November. People will have 60 days after that, until around the end of January, before the actual closing. If that notice goes up, he added, residents will have 30 days to contact the Postal Regulator Commission about an appeal. That would have to be based on a claim that the Postal Service had not followed its own rules in making the decision, he said.

"I am 86 years old," said Dorothy Ward. "I don't look forward to crawling across snow drifts to get my mail."

Another woman said that most of the people in town are senior citizens who don't want to drive to

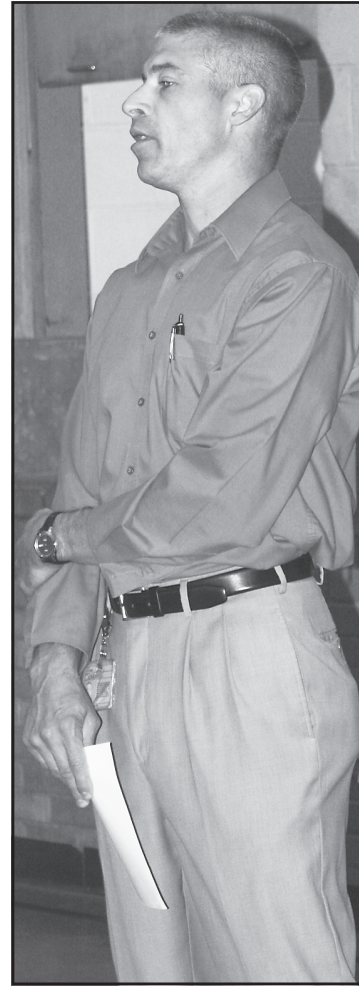
Norton or Oberlin to get the mail. Norton is 15 miles from Norcatour and Oberlin is 19.

"Look around this room," said Pastor Ed Woods. "Look at the color of most people's hair. For them, driving to Oberlin or Norton to get their mail is impossible. For some, driving across town is an adventure."

People use the post office as a greeting place, he said, a hub of community life and a place to get news.

Pastor Woods said he didn't think postal officials had thought of all the problems the closing would cause. For farmers who live in the county, he said, it could take half a day just to drive to Norton or Oberlin to get their mail and return home.

There have been problems with the post office ever since it separated



City gets enough to apply for grant

The city has received the income surveys it needed to apply for a grant to repave nine blocks of streets.

At the council meeting last Thursday, Administrator Karen Larson said the city had enough surveys back, which was a big accomplishment, since they needed 961 people who fell into the low-to-moderate income category. She added that she appreciates the cooperation the city got from the community and from Kimberly Davis, associate publisher of *The Oberlin Herald*, for keeping the story in the paper each week.

The engineer has sent in the report and Corina Cox, with the Northwest Kansas Regional Planning and Development Commissioner, came and took pictures of the streets to be repaired. Mrs. Larson said Mrs. Cox told her that the streets are

pretty bad.

The next step, said Mrs. Larson, is to put together information on what the city has done in projects with city money in the last five years, including street projects, the wetlands at Sappa Park, the sewer project and others.

In the information for the grant, she said, she needs to include some quotes from the city about the streets, so if anyone has anything to include, let her know.

Mrs. Larson and the city staff, said Mayor Bill Riedel, worked hard on the project, going door to door to collect surveys. He added that the city had to use the 2000 census data, which he didn't understand because anyone can go online and get the 2010 numbers. What that meant was the city needed 150 more people than is should have.

City needs more donations for new cemetery directory

City officials are still looking for donations and memorials to help pay for a computerized directory at the Oberlin Cemetery.

The unit will cost about \$20,000, said cemetery Sexton Jeremy Tally, with a little over \$1,500 raised so far. He added that he's still waiting to hear about a \$750 grant from Rotary.

Once half the money is in place, he said, they can start putting the information about who is buried where in the cemetery into the database. Then the vendor will install the system and give the city a year to pay for the other half.

The old display case at the cem-

Burial ground will remain open all night

The Oberlin City Council talked about putting a cable across the entrances to the city cemetery to keep cars out at night, but after discussing the idea, the group didn't seem in favor of it.

Councilman Rusty Addleman said after the council passed cemetery ordinances during its meeting Thursday, Oct. 6, he got a call saying people were in the cemetery after dark partying.

Police Chief Wade Lockhart said the main concern is vehicles in the cemetery after dark, not people. He said he understands that people like to go to the

cemetery in the evenings in the summer and walk. It's the vehicles after dark that worry him.

"What about stretching a cable across the entrances at night?" asked Mayor Bill Riedel.

There was discussion on who would close the cables each night.

There's not just one entrance, noted Chief Lockhart. The idea probably wouldn't be accepted very well. If there are vehicles in the cemetery at night, he said, head stones are going to get hit whether people

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they want posted, but the cost isn't terribly high.

The current display, he said, doesn't have a good map of where people are buried. It can be hard to find the headstones. The new directory, said Mr. Tally, would include a map.

The city can opt to update the directory as many times a year as wanted, he added, although it costs \$100 each time that's done.

Mr. Tally said he's looking into fund-raising ideas. Anyone can make a donation to the city for the project. A separate account has been set up for gifts and donations. Anyone who wants to donate can clip out the ad on Page 7A of today's newspaper and send it with a check to the city. Donations, said Mr. Tally, (See DIRECTORY on Page 5A)

2011-2012 HUNTING GUIDE
Nor'West Newspapers

Bird City Times, Fair Press, THE OBERLIN HERALD, Goodland Star-News, The Spirit of Oberlin, The Spirit of Francis Herald, TELEGRAM

Nor'West Newspapers' annual fall Hunting Guide is included in today's copy of *The Oberlin Herald*. The section includes articles on the outlook for hunting pheasants, deer, turkey and waterfowl in this area, where to buy licenses and the rules and regulations for the year. It also has maps showing where hunters can find walk-in access.

