

Change in project costs city extra fees from engineers

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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Changing from a water treatment plant to wells in the Ogallala Aquifer will cost Oberlin some extra engineering fees but should save money in the long run, the City Council heard Thursday.

Chris Miller, an engineer with Miller and Associates of McCook, the firm that does the city's work, told the Oberlin City Council that his firm had done about 70 percent of work needed for a water treatment plant. Since the city has changed its mind, he said, he needs an amendment to the 2006 contract between Miller and Associates and the city.

The well project has modified what his company needs to do, he said, and will include a lot less paperwork.

He said \$75,880 is left of the \$271,000 fee the city was to pay Miller to do the engineering on the treatment plant. The fee for the well system will be \$194,000, he said, leaving the city to pay another \$118,120.

However, Mr. Miller said, while the well project will cost more in engineering fees since the city changed plans in midstream, it will save money in the long run because it would have cost Oberlin more than \$100,000 a year to dispose of the uranium taken out of the water at a treatment plant.

In other business, the council:

- Agreed to continue with Blue Cross and Blue Shield health insurance for its employees. The rates have gone down this year from \$664 per person per month to \$575 per person, the council heard. The city pays all of employee's premium and half the cost for spouses and children.

- Appointed Elizabeth Terry, a teacher with the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center, who moved to Oberlin with her husband, veterinarian Will Terry, in July, as the city's representative on the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. board.

- Held two 10-minute closed sessions for attorney-client privilege. The first with the city administrator and city manager and the second

with those two and Mr. Miller.

- Learned that Verizon has gotten a Federal Communications Commission license and will start paying the city \$400 a month for rent on property east of the Decatur Co-op, where the firm plans to put a cell tower.

- Was told that there is more than \$7,000 in the cemetery directory fund now. The council had said when the fund reaches \$10,000 a new digital directory could be ordered.

- Signed a work authorization order for Larkin Aquatics out of Kansas City, Mo., to start design on a new swimming pool for Oberlin. The company does consulting and design work for municipal pools. The city's swimming pool committee already has the \$5,200 it will take to pay Larkin for its work in designing a pool, setting up public meetings and basically getting the project to a vote on a city sales tax.

- Heard that after a pre-construction conference on the airport last Wednesday, the start date has been set back to Monday, April 23, so the airport will be open until then. The construction company then will have 150 days to complete the project, which includes relocating, resurfacing and revamping the runway. The airport will be closed during that time.

- Learned from Mrs. Larson that she planned to submit a request to the Kansas Department of Transportation to replace the pavement with concrete on U.S. 36 from Penn Avenue west for about two blocks to meet up with the existing concrete, plus some curb-and-gutter work on the highway. Even if the request is authorized, she said, the project wouldn't start for at least three years.

- Got a clarification on the city's leash law from City Attorney Steve Hirsch. Mr. Hirsch said that the statute says that any vertebrate or invertebrate animal must be on a leash and under the control of its owner when not confined to a yard or on a lead in a yard. That means, he said, you can't let your dog, cat or lizard out without a lead and you can't even take your bee for a buzz without one.



DECATUR COMMUNITY HIGH PRINCIPAL Ben Jimenez (left) got a grin out of his three top seniors, (from left) Tyler Shields, Nolan Henningson and Dalton Jones, during the KU Honors banquet. — Herald staff photo by Steve Haynes

Oberlin students honored at banquet

By STEVE HAYNES
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Three Decatur Community High seniors were among 59 students honored by the Kansas Honors Program at a dinner Wednesday in Oakley.

Also on the list were two seniors from Golden Plains High School in Rexford.

The program, sponsored by the University of Kansas Alumni Association, honors students across Kansas who make up the top 10 percent of their graduating classes. The dinner in Oakley, held at the Northwest Kansas Educational Service Center across from the courthouse, was one of 41 put on by the association this spring.

The program, begun in 1971, honors top students regardless of their plans for higher education or family ties. Many of the students said they would be attending Kansas State University or another school,

though several said their plans included KU.

Students get a certificate and a copy of Webster's New College dictionary. Several of the superintendents and principals accompanying the seniors recalled getting their dictionaries in the early years of the program.

Alumni volunteers had to take over the program after KU officials called to say the university's plane was fogbound in Lawrence and probably couldn't land in Colby or Oakley anyway.

Sherrie Wiedeman of Colby was the regional chair for the dinner and the designated master of ceremonies. She asked Jeff Mason, a Goodland lawyer and KU law grad, to fill in for the scheduled speaker, Dr. Don Steeples, a professor of geophysics and former deputy provost of the university, who grew up in western Kansas.

Melissa Stramel of Colby, a phar-

macy graduate, took over for Danny Lewis, director of alumni programs for the association, who was to have presented the gifts.

The crowd, including principals and students, parents and area KU alums, filled the dining room at the service center.

Mason gave the students a little advice as they get ready for college, but warned:

"I am not an expert. An expert is someone who's more than 50 miles from home. Also, I don't expect you to remember anything I say."

He advised parents to be patient with their children.

"Some of you probably feel like you've fallen off the stupidity cliff recently," he said, "but some day, your child will come back to you as a resource."

"Be prepared for them to come home, too."

He told the students they shouldn't be afraid to change majors. He ad-

vised them to dream big.

"Don't underestimate yourselves," he said. "Go out and get to work. Have fun and stay curious."

Oberlin students at the dinner were Nolan Henningson, son Robbie and Jeni Henningson, Norcat; Dalton Jones, son Jeff and Belinda Jones of Oberlin; and Tyler Shields, son of Paul and Kelly Shields of rural Oberlin. They were introduced by Principal Ben Jimenez.

Hororees from Golden Plains were Hannah Antholtz and Trey Schwarz. They were accompanied by Superintendent Mary Ellen Welshon.

It was not the first time the university's plane had been unable to deliver the dignitaries from Lawrence for a dinner out here. The same thing happened a couple of years ago. As the awards wrapped up and the dinner ended, however, no one seemed to mind.

Few willing to change system

The Decatur County commissioners talked with the road and bridge supervisor last Tuesday about feedback from the township meeting.

At the township meeting, supervisor Tim Stallman suggested the township boards give him control of their road budgets and tell him what they want done, which he said would make maintenance more efficient.

The commissioners asked if he'd received any feedback after the

meeting. Mr. Stallman said some township officials said they were interested but no one wants to be the first one off the township system.

The thing is the maintenance, he said. If the township road maintenance could be put on a schedule, it would be better. Right now, said Mr. Stallman, immediate maintenance needs to pull the road crew off another project. If the roadside needs to be mowed, he said, other projects are dropped.

The townships either need to con-

tract with the county for their road maintenance, said Mr. Stallman, or find someone else, not call on the county for help. The work needs to be on a schedule.

The county has the equipment to do the maintenance and the special projects, said Mr. Stallman, though the number of people on the road and bridge crew is down right now.

A maintenance schedule, he said, would really help.

Democrats to caucus in Oakley

The Kansas Democratic Party will hold its Presidential Preference Caucus on Saturday at meeting locations across the state, including one in Oakley for this area.

Registration for the caucus for the 40th Senate District serving northwest Kansas will begin at 1 p.m., with the caucus to begin promptly at 2 p.m. at the Northwest Kansas Education Service Center in Oakley.

The Decatur County Democratic party is asking anyone interested in serving on the party's county com-

mittee to contact Bob Strevey, county chairman, at (785) 693-4597. He asks that anyone interested in participating in the caucus to choose delegates to the national convention call him or write to him at Box 204, Norcat, Kan., 67653.

Statewide caucuses will be held in 50 locations, one or more for each state Senate district. The party's caucuses are open to all Kansas residents, but all caucus goers must apply to register as a Democrat before they can participate.

A complete list of caucus loca-

tions, along with many more caucus details, can be found at www.ksdp.org/content/delegate-selection-process-2012.

The caucus site in Oakley is west of downtown on Second Avenue, south across the street from the Logan County Courthouse. It can be reached directly from U.S. 83 by turning left at the Ampride remote pumps, just before the railroad tracks. The directional sign reads "NWKESC."

Barn Tour

of Oberlin Sunday, April 15, 2012

Leaving at 2 p.m. from the Gateway parking lot, please carpool. Refreshments will be served.

Oberlin Arts and Humanities Commission season ticket event or \$12 for adults or \$7 students grades 1-12. **Special family price \$25.00.** For information call Ella Betts (785) 475-3557 or Mary Henzel (785) 470-0218.

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