

County to hire two for summer crew

The Decatur County commissioners talked with the noxious weed director about hiring two part-time employees for the department.

Director Gaylen Huntley said he has three applications for the two part-time jobs. He said he would like to hire one person for just spraying weeds and another to help with recycling.

Mr. Huntley said the gasoline-engine Dodge truck is having some issues that will cost \$5,000 to \$6,000 to repair. He said he let federal surplus know what he is looking for in case something comes in.

The commissioners talked with Randy Dicks with Corporate Plan, the county's health insurance provider. Mr. Dicks said it seems everything is going well. Commissioner Ralph Unger said they haven't had any complaints

about the insurance.

Mr. Dicks said he will bring the commissioners some articles he has about being self-funded for some insurance costs.

Mr. Unger asked what effect Mr. Dicks thought being able to have children on the insurance plans until they are 26 will have. Mr. Dicks said he hasn't really put a cost to it, but the change will be reflected in premiums.

District Court Clerk Janet Meitl said she wanted to make sure the commissioners know the scheduled furloughs for the court system have been postponed. The Legislature has promised to pass a supplemental appropriations, she said Mrs. Meitl. If the money from the state doesn't come through, however, the courts will be closed on Thursday and Friday, May 24 and 25 and June 7 and 8.

Colby art club plans big show

Members of the Colby High Plains Art Club plan their first juried amateur art show for Friday to Sunday, June 8 to 10, in the gymnasium of the Heartland Christian School, 1995 W. Fourth St., Colby.

Money prizes will be awarded for first and second places in oils, watercolors, acrylics, pastels and charcoal, graphite and colored pencil, mixed media, sculpture and ceramics. Ribbons only will be awarded for the People's Choice and the Judges Merit awards.

Artists must be in high school or

older. A fee of \$15 will be charged for every two entries, with no limit on number. Every effort will be made to sell works designated for sale. The club will take 20 percent of the sale price.

Each artist or their representative must deliver and pick up their work. All paintings must be wired to hang. Final date for entries is Friday, May 25.

For information or a brochure, contact Marj Brown at 285 W. Cedar St., Colby, Kan. 67701, or (785) 462-3515.

City, advisor talk about money

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
c.haynes@nwkansas.com

The Oberlin City Council and a financial advisor went over information and ideas for how to pay for city projects at the council's second meeting of April.

John Haas of Ranson Financial Services gave the council a quick rundown on financial options for paying for a new swimming pool and additional upgrades at the airport.

"It is not my job to tell the city that you need an airport project," Mr. Haas told the council when he got started. "It is not my job to tell you that you need a swimming pool project."

"It is my job to tell you what your alternatives are and how that is going to affect the city financially. I'm not here advocating any project."

The city doesn't have a sales tax, he noted, adding that there are two types that could be put in place to pay for a swimming pool.

A general-purpose sales tax could go up to 2 percent and be used for any purpose, he said at the meeting April 19. It can be made open ended so it won't go away when a project ends unless the council canceled it.

A special-purpose sales tax can go up to 1 percent and must be used for the stated purpose. It will automatically expire in 10 years.

Both taxes require a vote of the people, he added.

Cash revenue bonds are expensive and not a good way to finance anything, he said.

General obligation bonds for a pool would require an election but not for the airport, as it is considered

a public building and improvements to an existing public building can be done without an election.

General obligation bonds are secured by the city property tax, he said, but can be paid for by other sources of revenue, such as sales tax.

Both Plainville and Phillipsburg passed public building commission revenue bonds paid for by a sales tax, he said, to pay for their new swimming pools. The tax pays for both the debt service on the bonds and for the operations of the pools.

An election would be required for this if there was a protest by 5 percent of the voters.

A public building commission is set up to issue revenue bonds, he said. This commission has the ability to issue bonds but no ability to collect money to pay for them. The city could lease the property from the commission, he said, and use the tax money to pay the bills.

The members of the building commission are selected by the council. It can have from three to nine members and can include members of the council.

The city already has more than \$6 million in outstanding bonds, he said, but debt on utilities (like water and sewer) is not subject to that limit, he said. Neither the airport nor pool could be considered a utility, he said.

The airport project will probably need general obligation bonds for \$800,000 to \$900,000, he said. That leaves \$1.2 million.

"My recommendation would be, if you want to proceed with the airport project," Mr. Haas said, "(figure out) what else is the city going

to do over the next two to three years on top of the airport project."

He said for the airport project, if the city issued bonds for \$850,000 for 20 years at 4.15 percent interest, it would cost a person with a \$100,000 home \$100 a year in taxes, and for a \$50,000 home, \$50 a year.

You could use a city sales tax to bring that property tax down, he noted. On the other hand, he said, a pool could use up the city's bond authority, and the city would be able to take on any more debt.

"If you just go with the swimming pool project for \$2 million in general obligation bonds," he said, "you won't see me for a long time."

So he said, he feels that if the city decides to go with the pool project, it should not do so with general obligation bonds but should go the public building commission route.

If the city decided to go with a sales tax of 1.5 percent, that should pay for the bonds on a \$2 million pool and leave a little left over to run it, he said.

The first step would be to create a building commission and request that it issue revenue bonds. That would depend on an election to approve a sales tax.

If the election passes, he said, the people are basically approving a pool project. This keeps the mill levy down and gives the city general obligation authority to do other projects if something should come up.

However, he said, if the city doesn't bring in as much as it expects in sales tax, it will have to come up with money to pay off the bonds from another source — property taxes, increased fees or something else.

"These are big steps for you," he said. "What else do you have going on?"

It's important to figure how everything fits together, he said.

City Administrator Karen Larson said she would like the council members to list their priorities.

Councilwoman Fonda Farr said she figured that if the council goes with the new projects plus the extra needed to bring water into the city from the Ogallala Aquifer, the city will owe \$10 million.

Mayor Bill Riedel said that everything borrowed has to be paid back from somewhere.

"We already owe more than the assessed valuation of the city," he noted.

Hays hospital has scholarship

The Bickle Family Foundation has established a \$2,500 scholarship for students majoring in respiratory care to be awarded each year through the Hays Medical Center Foundation.

Students will be evaluated on financial need, academic achieve-

ment, references, leadership potential and career goals. Recipients will be required to work at Hays Med for a year after becoming registered.

For information and an application, go to www.haysmed.com/scholarships or call the foundation at (785) 623-2350.

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