

# Commissioners rally farmers for future fires

The Decatur County commissioners Tuesday urged all farmers to call dispatch with information that might help fight any future fires, including whether they have a tractor with a disc and how much water their tanks might be able to hold.

Dispatcher Marilyn Mack said the Norcat Fire Department already has a list of farmers with discs, tractors and tanks. It was provided to dispatch during the recent fires.

If others could call in with that information, said Commissioner Ralph Unger, it would be great. The number to call dispatch is 475-8100.

a class 3 misdemeanor, said County Attorney Steve Hirsch, with penalties up to six months in the county jail and a fine up to \$1,000.

Mr. Stallman said for safety, farmers and rural residents may want to disc a few swaths around a farmstead and mow the grass a little shorter than usual.

Also with the burn ban in effect, he said, people can haul their trash to the county dump. A pick-up load costs \$12, a large trailer \$24 and a dump truck \$36.

Sheriff Ken Badsky said he thinks the county needs to have an incident commander in future emergencies, someone who isn't working to put the fire out or on the emergency, but someone who is directing others on where they need to go.

With an emergency like the recent fires, Commissioner Stan McEvoy asked Mrs. Mack, do you call someone extra in for dispatch? She said they do.

Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman gave a list of employees with phone numbers to dispatch, said Mrs. Mack. Mr. Stallman said he has a list with cell numbers that he will get to the fourth floor.

It sounds like there were a lot of spectators at the fires, said Commissioner Gene Gallentine, some of whom were getting in the way of the fire crews. He added that he's not sure what can be done about that.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said when he went to Rawlins County on Saturday night to help there, an ambulance was parked on the road and they were turning people away who weren't there to help fight the fire.

That would be good, said Mrs. Mack, because there were a lot of spectators. There were even kids out there driving around.

Mr. Unger asked if there is a penalty for impeding firefighting? It's

During the fires on Tuesday, he said, he was worried about his place and last Saturday he jumped on a truck to help fight the fires.

He said he was told after the fires that two people had been seen flicking cigarettes out their car window. People need to be aware of the conditions, he said.

Mr. Unger commented those who helped put the fires out but suggested that the gawkers need to stay home.

Mr. Gallentine asked if the county needs to say deputies will issue citations to those getting in the way? Sheriff Badsky said he thought they should.

The spectators need to stay home and be kept away, said Mr. Unger, even if a citizen needs to be deputized to keep the gawkers out.

The commissioners scheduled a debriefing with department heads at 10 a.m. this Tuesday.



JUDGE JOHN BREMER (foreground) talked to John Beard, constituent services representative for Rep. Tim Huelskamp on Monday. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

# Aide to U.S. representative stops to listens to concerns

By CYNTHIA HAYNES  
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John Beard, a constituent services representative for U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, was in town on Monday at the courthouse talking to citizens and gathering complaints and concerns to take back to the congressman.

However, only three citizens and a reporter showed up to talk to him.

Marilyn Black, who attends almost all Oberlin City Council meetings, stayed the whole time and aired concerns on the health-care law, called Obamacare; the erosion of personal freedoms; and the amount of money our government is giving to other countries.

On the new health-care regulations, Mrs. Black said that it would just cause more taxes, especially on small and medium businesses.

Mrs. Black said she felt that there had been an erosion of freedom under President Obama and asked why the government was sending so much money to other countries and to the United Nations when the U.S. has no excess to give.

"They're giving billions and billions, and we don't have it," she said. "We've got more going out on interest than we have coming in."

Magistrate Judge John Bremer dropped by to tell Mr. Beard that he is concerned about two possible changes in laws that would affect the judiciary. One would require Kansas judges to be lawyers and the other would eliminate the "one-judge-per-county" rule in Kansas.

Judge Bremer said that although he is a lawyer and it helped him to win his job when he ran, he doesn't feel that a magistrate judge should have to be a lawyer.

The judge, who is retiring this year, noted that a lawyer and a layman are running for his job. He said he doesn't favor one over the other and would not want anyone to think that his views on lay judges has anything to do with the current race.

"If the law is so complicated that a layman can't do the work, we lose confidence in (the system)" he said. "I think we need the ability to get somebody in and out of court quickly."

Gary Walter, president of The Bank, also stopped by. He said he is concerned about the continued partisan fight that seems to be gridlocking the Congress.

Mr. Beard thanked everyone who came, then left for Hoxie, where he would do it all again.

# Board asks county for budget help

Members of the Decatur County Conservation District board asked the county to once again give the district \$19,000 for the next budget year.

This year, the district received \$19,000 from the county and \$19,000 from the state. In 2011, the district received the \$19,000 from the county but only \$18,608 from the state.

District Manager Diana Solko said they understand that what happens at the state level with the budget could change what the county can give, too.

She said they are happy they can still offer a cost-share program on water resources, even with changes in the budget.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said he appreciates what the district, and especially Mrs. Solko, do for the county.

Commissioner Gene Gallentine

said the commissioners haven't started working on the budget yet, but will soon. Commissioner Stan McEvoy added that the county will try to keep the district's budget the same.

Mrs. Solko was joined by board members Elden Huff, Torrey Morford and Amanda Sowers. Mrs. Sowers said the board had agreed to give Mrs. Solko a raise to get her up to the average of what people across the state in the same job make. Mrs. Sowers said Mrs. Solko came to her and said the district couldn't afford that kind of raise, so it was backed off.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Talked with John Miller, a Norton County commissioner who is running for state senate.
- Bought a 2005 Dodge Caravan for \$9,750 from state surplus. It has 38,000 miles on it.

# Agency seeks new candidates

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP  
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The U.S. Farm Service Agency is looking for candidates, especially women, to fill a position on the agency's Decatur County committee.

The elected member will represent Sherman, Harlan, Grant,

Olive, Roosevelt, Lincoln, Center, Alton, Garfield and Pleasant Valley townships.

The deadline to file nomination forms is Wednesday, Aug. 1, said Diane Barrett, county executive director for the agency.

To be eligible, you must be a farmer or rancher of legal voting

age, live in Decatur county and participate in at least one of the agency's programs, Mrs. Barrett said. These also are the requirements to vote in the election.

The committee decides on issues such as producer appeals, hiring county executive directors, commodity prices, conservation programs, support loans, payments and disaster assistance, the agency says.

# Bank commissioner visits

Kansas Bank Commissioner Edwin Splichal visited Oberlin on Monday to meet with bankers, part of a tour of northwestern Kansas.

Mr. Splichal met with Gary Walter, president, and Bob Gaskill, chairman of the board of The Bank; Barney Horton, chief executive officer of Farmers Bank and Trust in Atwood; and Kirk Lowry, chief executive of Farmers State Bank of Atwood.

Mr. Splichal joked that his tour

of the northwest was a great way to get out of the office.

"I was in Hutchinson when I started," he said, "and I've always had a real affinity for western Kansas. The folks are just so friendly here."

Mr. Walter said the meeting was private, and a reporter would not be allowed in. The commissioner was scheduled to have dessert at the LandMark Inn with the bankers, but that, too, was a private affair.

Ballots will be mailed to eligible voters by Monday, Nov. 5. The last day to return them is Monday, Dec. 3, and elected members will take office on Tuesday, Jan. 1.

To file yourself as a candidate or to nominate someone else, go to

# Drought forces next step

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP  
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This year, there just hasn't been enough water.

If it wasn't the drought that was coming after the crops, it might have been the wildfires. Either way, you may be wondering how Oberlin area farmers are coping with all the threats to fall crops and a possible early harvest, the answer is actually pretty easy — crop insurance.

Most farmers elect to buy crop insurance for many reasons, and this year's debacles are among them. So how does that work? Is it the same as our car insurance? A little bit, said Vince Carswell, agent at the Great Northwest Insurance Agency on Penn Avenue.

"We're already getting some claims coming in," he said. "There were a few on wheat, but we expect more for the corn. A lot of them are revenue claims."

Revenue claims, he explained, are typically what a farmer will purchase insurance for, and it covers losses from unpredictable weather as well as dropping prices. The target prices are set in February and October, so if the price for wheat or corn drops by the time harvest rolls around, the insurance company will pay the difference to the farmer based on the previous price setting.

"The whole deal is based on your own 10-year average," said Mr. Carswell. "So, say that you are a farmer, and on average every year, you pull in 100 bushels of wheat per acre. You then decide to purchase crop insurance, which will allow you to insure anywhere from 50 percent of your crops to 85 percent. You decide to insure 75 percent of your crop.

"What that means, is that the profit for 75 out of the expected 100 bushels is now guaranteed to you by the insurance company. If the average price for your crop was \$4 in February, then you can count on getting at least \$300."

For protections from price dips, he said, it's similar. Say 75 percent of your crop is insured at \$4 a bushel, but by the time harvest rolls around, the price for a bushel is only \$2. Your policy will make up the difference. If you insured that crop for \$4, but the market price shot up to \$7, you would still get the \$7.

So in the end, there's no reason to get too anxious about the enduring drought and uncertainty of rain, he said. A lot of protections have been set up over the last century to guard against any big financial disasters. Just remember to keep asking questions, and keep praying for rain.

**Is there something we should know about?**

Call Stephanie at  
The Oberlin Herald  
(785) 475-2206

# Hospital finds savings with supply agencies

The Decatur County Hospital materials manager talked with the board about the contract agencies she uses to order supplies.

Judy Scott said she wishes she had kept a log of the savings she's accumulated since she started using the agencies. She said she does know that over the last three years, she's saved 30 to 50 percent on items ordered using the contracts.

Ms. Scott said she does buy some items direct. When she finds a product that the hospital needs, she cross references the contract prices and the vendors to see what price is best.

The hospital, she said, has also saved money on a group buying for big items like the CT scanner, digital mammogram and a treadmill for the fitness center.

Ms. Scott said she gets word ahead of time about upcoming group buys and can see whether the hospital wants to take part.

Every six months, she said, as long as the hospital makes purchases under a contract, money comes back to the facility. So far \$56,628 has come back to either retire debt or in cash, she said. That money went back into operations, she said.

## On Target

### Handgun Instruction

will conduct the  
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July 15, 2012  
at the Oberlin American Legion  
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AUCTION LOCATION:  
The Gateway, Oberlin

Land will be offered in 4 tracts & combinations of tracts.

**TRACT 1:** E/2NW/4 & Cropland ac in NE/4 of 14-1-30

**TRACT 2:** Grassland ac in NE/4 of 14-1-30

**TRACT 3:** SW/4 of 14-1-30, less 5 ac improvement tr

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