

County looks to keep budget near last year's

(Continued from Page 1A) likely try to keep the budget similar to what it was last year.

"Just because we got more doesn't mean we have to pad everything," he said. "I'd like to reduce the property tax, though; that's always something to look at. And with the extra we're getting, we should be

able to do that."

The commissioners received two mock budgets, said Ms. Geihlsler, one that is basic and one that is a little more involved. The basic one, which gives a little more money to all county departments, has a tax levy of 63.819. The other one, which adds more to the general fund and focusses on increasing

employee benefits, has a levy of 71.024.

"They were example budgets that I threw out there," Ms. Geihlsler said Monday. "I gave them two different examples so they can go through and put what they want, so nothing has been decided yet."

"Most of the budget talk means nothing yet at this stage. They'll be making their

first decisions on Tuesday. We were just putting out figures, and they're going to play with them."

Last year, the county's assessed value went down, and the budget that was approved ended up cutting a proposed tax increase nearly in half, which meant a slight increase in taxes and no cost-of-living

increase or raises for county employees. Ms. Geihlsler said she hopes, with some extra money this year, they'll be able add to the employees' benefits without having to raise taxes.

"It's going to allow everyone to get what they want in their budget," she said, "and allow the levy to fall."

* Man served county

(Continued from Page 1A) "I don't know who it was," he said, "but they didn't blow away, because the wires and everything were gone."

All the same, he said, he's proud to have served Decatur County as long as he has. Mr. Unger will be joining the ranks of other retired long-time Kansas county commissioners, including Wiley McFarland of Gray County, who served 44 years.

Mr. Unger said one of the things he's most proud of is having had an influence on the state's license tags. Anytime you see a school, county or state vehicle's tags, he said, you're seeing an idea of Ralph Unger's. He said it changed the process of licensing official vehicles by making those tags a one-time, transferrable purchase.

"Ralph has always had the best for the county in mind," said Commissioner Stan McEvoy. Commissioner Gene Gallentine agreed.

"There were a lot of times that I myself would ask Ralph about his knowledge over his years about things that went on at county and state levels," Mr. McEvoy said, "and use that information and knowledge, and that's something that's good to fall back on - someone who's been there."

Mr. Unger said the only bit of advice he would give to incoming officials is to not let the job interfere with his family life.

"I don't think anyone does it intentionally," he said, "but don't neglect your family to serve the public all day, every day. Family is a high priority, and it should be the No. 1 priority. And also - I should caution every public official - you can never make everyone happy."

And just because he won't be in office, he said, it doesn't mean he'll be disappearing from the community scene any time soon. He said he does look forward to spending more time with his kids and grandkids, and even doing a little bit of traveling.

Mr. Unger said he sat down and did the calculations with his wife, and all told, he's spent six years traveling while serving Decatur County, going to Topeka, Kansas City and Hays, wherever needed to get things done.

"It isn't just a two-or-three-hour-on-Tuesday-morning kind of job," he said, adding that if he had one more word of advice for a new commissioner coming in, it's to be prepared for the public.

"You go out to dinner, to church, anywhere," he said, "and people are going to talk to you. This job is 24/7, and 365 days a year. And I feel privileged to have served here."

* Dairy petition finished

(Continued from Page 1A) conversation with state Rep. Ward Cassidy, who told him that four California dairies were looking to set up in northwestern Kansas. He said he wants to change the rules on the books here so that the county has a shot at courting them. Ms. Grafel said that there will be a community meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 12, in the theater at The Gateway. It will be to discuss the dairy and other issues, she said, and there will be officials there from the state departments of Commerce and Agriculture.

And the winner is...



CAR NO. 17 DASHED past the finish line as the flag waved at Friday night's races. The car was driven by Cody Salem, son of race promoter Rick Salem, and grandson of Bob Salem, for whom the races were named.

— Herald staff photo by Stephanie DeCamp

Schools have more students

Preliminary numbers showed the Oberlin School District up eight students from the start of last year, the Oberlin School Board heard at its August meeting.

Superintendent Duane Dorshorst said 254 kids have enrolled for the year so far.

That's eight up from the beginning of last year and four above the end of the year, he said at the meeting Aug. 13.

The state's official count day isn't until Thursday, Sept. 20, he noted, so the figure used for next year's budget may be different.

The board agreed to accept a \$605 memorial gift honoring Phil Law. Mr. Dorshorst said Mr. Law's widow had called about the gift.

Mr. Law was a music teacher for 25 years and played the trumpet at the Memorial Day services at the Oberlin Cemetery for several years.

The gift, said Mr. Dorshorst, was for the high school music department.

In other business, the board:

- Discussed a request from Pete

* Offices to close for holiday

(Continued from Page 1A) Oberlin's Dollar General will be open its regular hours from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. while Raye's Grocery will have shortened hours from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Both convenience stores will maintain their normal operating hours: CrossRoads Express from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Eagle Convenience, open all day.

Administrators get raises

After four closed-door sessions, the Oberlin School Board gave both building administrators raises at its August meeting.

The board approved a \$2,000-a-year raise for Principal Ben Jimenez, who is in charge of the junior/senior high school, at the meeting Aug. 13. The board also approved a \$250-a-month vehicle allowance for Superintendent Duane Dorshorst, who is also the principal at Oberlin El-

ementary School. Mr. Dorshorst didn't get a pay raise, however.

His yearly salary is \$95,000 and Mr. Jimenez's is \$77,462.

The board held a 10-minute closed session for non-elected personnel with the board and superintendent, with no action taken afterward. The board then held two 10-minute closed sessions and one for two minutes with just the board before voting on the raises.

Zander to speak to the high school and junior high student body on the first day of school to instill in the students the idea that they represent the community and urge them to continue doing a good job.

The board left the decision up to the administrators, but one suggested maybe Mr. Zander could recruit ambassadors for the school or talk to some groups instead of

speaking to everyone. Someone suggested that possibly Mr. Zander could speak another day, not the first day of school.

- Approved out-of-district transportation requests for Elsa Temmel and Jodi Ward for the Norton School District and Sheila Ritter and Stephanie Ritter for Golden Plains.

- Voted to continue buying milk from Cash-Wa Distributors out of Kearney, Neb.

The prices, said Mr. Dorshorst, fluctuate monthly, but the Thompson Co. of Grand Island, Neb., charges a \$5 drop fee for each school.

Cash-Wa doesn't charge the additional fee, he said.

- Decided to discuss visiting the district's buildings for tours during the September board meeting and possibly doing the tours in October.

County will need new computers

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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Decatur County will have to buy a new computer system soon, commissioners heard Tuesday, after operating on the same one for 11 years.

"We'll be mandated into (a new system) sooner or later by the state," said Commissioner Ralph Unger, who along with commissioners Stan McEvoy and Gene Gallentine, heard the most recent of many proposals on what the system could cost.

Manatron, a company that sells software to the county, has long been the one the county works with when it comes to computers and software. Brent Gustin, a Manatron representative, said that this year, they think they can make some badly needed upgrades work for an affordable price. More affordable, at least, than it used to be.

Mr. Gustin said that the total purchase, if the county went through him again, would likely be around \$20,000, as opposed to the \$31,000 that the old system cost. He said the state can no longer leave the county on its old computers because the operating system on it no longer works with the state's computers.

In fact, he said, the state hasn't worked with that operating system since 2009.

"We've stalled these last three or four years because the state of Kansas used an input-output processor," he said, "but we can get into a (new) machine so much easier now, we don't need that anymore."

"We've delayed this for some time," said Mr. Unger, "but it will save us money in the long run, because there's been changes (to computers and their systems) along the way. Because we delayed it, the price has gone down on the package."

"We're just investigating every-

thing. In the long haul, there will end up being updates made."

County Clerk Colleen Geihlsler said that the commissioners have heard other presentations from other firms, but more than likely would end up going with Manatron again. Commissioner Gallentine said that no purchases or final decisions have been made.

Mr. Gustin said that he put in for a 5 percent price reduction for the county, but hasn't yet heard back from his superiors about it.

"Tell them we're one of the least prosperous counties, and that we don't have gas lines here," said Commissioner Ralph Unger.

"We're a farming community," Commissioner Stan McEvoy chimed in dryly, "in a drought."

There is no set date for when the equipment will need to be purchased or the overhaul will begin.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved hiring of a part-time worker in the noxious weed department to help out until winter sets in.

• Heard that the weed department will begin spraying for bindweed in town after the first frost to avoid killing flowers or gardens.

"We sent out a reminder letter to residents that we are spraying," said Mr. Huntley, "and that costs \$7 no matter the size, just per city lot. We're more concerned with getting it under control so people can take a little pride in their lawns."

• Heard that the main water leak in a the weed department office had been fixed and the line buried, though now they have to replace the hydrant at the other end because it's leaking. The road and bridge department will have to take out the first foot or so to do that, because it's rock, said Mr. Huntley.

* Disease blood borne

(Continued from Page 1A) state and Hays Med were concerned that he might have contaminated needles or equipment at the Kansas hospital, said Miranda Steele, communications director for the department.

About 474 patients received the procedure in Hays during that time, the hospital said, and those who might have been exposed have been contacted by mail to come in for free testing.

So far, 54 of those patients have been identified as deceased prior to the notification process, said the agency. Of the rest, 334 people have so far been tested, and 311 have tested negative. Others are still awaiting results.

A hotline has been set up at (877) 261-7140 for anyone concerned

they might have been exposed. It's available from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Hepatitis C affects the liver, says the department, and only one in five people who contract the virus has any initial sickness. Officials advise all patients who might have been exposed to come in for the test. Symptoms range from mild illness to severe disease, with most developing a chronic infection that can cause long-term health problems.

Around 2,000 new infections are reported every year in Kansas, the state says, and there is no vaccine against the virus.

For information on hepatitis C, go to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/C/index.htm.

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