



AT THE MEETING last Thursday night, Judge John and Dianne Bremer listened to the presentation about the upcoming school budget election. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

Principal juggles staff to fill opening

With one less teacher at the Oberlin Elementary School, Principal Duane Dorshorst has come up with a creative way to help kids learn though there will be one section of sixth-graders.

Mr. Dorshorst shared the plan with the Oberlin School Board at their meeting last Monday night.

When Cassandra Holdeman resigned as a fifth-grade teacher, he said, they decided to move Jeri Buchholz into that position because the fifth-grade received a technology grant and needed to have two teachers. The school board decided to go with one sixth-grade teacher to save money.

Mr. Dorshorst said they had two options. The first was to bring Cynthia Matson out of the remedial programs and back to teaching sixth-grade full time. Mr. Dorshorst said he didn't like that idea because they would have to send federal money back.

The other option is to move one of the fourth-grade teachers into sixth grade and just have one section of fourth grade. There is a new program for technology learning in that grade through a grant, so he didn't really like that idea either.

Instead, said Mr. Dorshorst, he came up with a third option which,

although it isn't ideal, has the least amount of impact.

Carol Dixson will be the sixth-grade lead teacher and handle math, science, social studies and a section on computers.

Mrs. Matson will then teach two sections of sixth-grade English, while Steve Cullen will teach sixth-grade health.

The students will have band before lunch instead of after next year. Miss Dixson will have study hall by herself for all the sixth-graders.

The sixth-graders will have computers taught by Miss Dixson and Mrs. Buchholz. Reading will be taught by librarian Shanna Richards.

The students will still have an activity period including art, library or enrichment.

All the teachers have been contacted, said Mr. Dorshorst and said they will all do what needs to be done.

The downside to it, said Superintendent Kelly Glodt, is that the classroom time may take away from library, counseling and title services.

When one of the teachers is sick or there is a field trip in the fourth grade, it may be hard to find a substitute for just a few sections, said Mr. Dorshorst.

* Meeting lets voters hear need

(Continued from Page 1A) option budget will bring in just \$169,259, he said.

He said some people have asked why, if the district is having money problems, it can afford to keep fixing up its buildings and facilities and buy a new practice field. Mr. Glodt said things like building repairs, new vehicles and the land are paid for out of capital outlay fund. That money cannot be used on salaries or fixed costs under state law, he said.

The board was paying around \$3,000 a year to rent the practice field out of the general fund, but when they bought it, that money could come out of capital outlay fund, which in turn saves the general fund \$3,000 a year.

Mr. Glodt said that the state used to increase per pupil spending each year by \$50 but the Legislature cut it by \$7 last year and it will stay the same for next year.

He said that the district is not re-hiring a sixth-grade teacher this year to save money and has made other cuts already.

Ray Bryan asked how much it would cost to reverse the sixth-grade situation and hire another teacher. The base teacher salary for someone straight out of college is around \$32,000, Mr. Glodt said. He said he hopes that position can be

brought back, but it's hard to bring things back once they get cut.

Mr. Glodt said two-thirds of the staff is maxed out on the salary scale at around \$40,000, which he said is a good thing because it means the district has experienced teachers.

Mr. Glodt said the board tries to buy locally as much as they can, but there are bid laws that they have to follow. If a local business can match or beat a bid, he said, he would much rather buy in town.

Is a 5 percent increase enough, one patron asked. Mr. Glodt said probably not, but before he cuts teachers, he will be back next year asking for another increase.

Jeannie Unger, who teaches in Atwood but lives here, asked why the district didn't ask for 25 percent, which is the maximum the state allows.

Board Member Barb Olson said the board talked about that and half of the members felt they should only ask for what they needed. Since that decision was made, she added, some costs have gone up. If she had known then what she knows now, she said she would have asked for 25 percent.

Mr. Glodt agreed the district should have gone for 25 percent.

"Every single staff member we cut will have a negative effect on

what we produce," he said.

What is the board doing about home schooled kids and those that leave the district, asked Mike Helm, a rural mail carrier who lives in Norcatur. Legally, Mr. Glodt said, children can go out of district. The system loses \$96,000 with students going elsewhere, but the board is looking at a home schooling policy now.

The board has sent a letter to all the families who choose to send kids out of district, said Mrs. Olson, asking them to come look at Oberlin schools. Some parents choose to go elsewhere for family reasons, including parents who work in another town, or tradition. She said she is not going to fight a family decision. Kids can get a great education here, and the district tries to do what is best for them.

If the local option budget increase passes, asked Librarian Shanna Richards, will a sixth-grade teacher be hired? No, said Mr. Glodt. He said even with the increase, the district can't hire a sixth-grade teacher for next year.

Dianne Bremer asked if anything will happen to the gifted program if the increase doesn't pass. Mr. Glodt said the last program the district can cut is special education, because there are federal rules about it.

He said cutting activities wouldn't save much, because they are a small piece of the pie.

Where does the athletic money raised at the door go? asked Brad Larson. Mr. Glodt said money raised by gate receipts stays with the kids; it can't go to pay salaries.

How much does the election cost? asked Dennis Richards. Mr. Glodt said the district had already received a bill for \$2,800.

Mrs. Unger brought up the idea of a door-to-door campaign to support the increase. Mrs. Olson said the board can't do that.

Mrs. Unger said that other people can. She said it would be an important part of education for kids to learn that the price of going out to dinner two Saturdays could finance the increase.

Mr. Helm said he is having a hard time with the election because he has five kids and received a 13 percent decrease in pay when teachers in the last two years have received a 5 percent increase. Teacher Rhonda Barth said even with that raise, she was taking home \$20 less. The teachers are not getting a raise this year, she added, nor is anyone in the district.

Mr. Helm said he thinks there are a lot more people in the district hurting.

School roundup

At a meeting last Monday night, the Oberlin School Board:

- Had a first reading of the home schooling policy recommended by the superintendent and decided to have the policy review committee look it over before adopting it. Story on Page 5A.
- Approved several items, from

handbooks to banks, to get the school year started. Story on Page 3A.

- Heard the teaching assignments at Oberlin Elementary School with one less teacher. Story above.
- Found out how the district ended the year financially and how it will be starting with less money than normal. Story on Page 1A.

* Money runs short for school budget

(Continued from Page 1A) about what the district can do with the budget.

The most positive thing that happened this year, he said, is that the district didn't have to send back any federal money. In most years, the district has had to send back part of the money, but this year the district was better organized with those programs and either spent all of it or got balances low enough to carry it over.

Mr. Glodt said preliminary counts for the new school year are showing a decrease of 20 students. The counts show 238 in the high school and 215 in the grade school.

At Sappa Valley Youth Ranch, he said, the numbers have been up. There is a waiting list now to get in because of the summer school program. Hopefully, on the first count day in mid September there will be 35 to 36 kids so the district knows the budget.

Mr. Glodt said he thinks if Oberlin can hold onto its programs longer than the neighboring districts, there should be more kids coming here.

With the special election just around the corner, he said, he has been busy preparing for that. He said he has made fliers and started to get those circulated. He has also had to write a very difficult letter to the teachers to let them know what is

going on.

The board discussed running a full page ad in *The Oberlin Herald*. They agreed to insert a handout which talks about money and why the additional 5 percent is needed and run a half page ad in the paper.

Mr. Glodt said he knew of one teacher who had written a letter to the editor in favor of the increase and said he had asked that others write also. The board members suggested talking with people and asking them to write letters.

Board Member Barb Olson said she has a calling list but isn't sure if she should call her voters before the public meeting and invite them or before the election and remind them to vote. She said people she has talked with still think this election has to do with a bond issue, which it doesn't. This is just to pay increased costs in the general budget and keep the district running, she said.

Board Member Kurt Vollertsen asked how much impact a signature page in the paper would mean. Mr. Glodt said he thought a lot if they could get a number of signatures.

The board agreed that President Chris Bailey and Mr. Jackson would attend the public meeting in Norcatur and Mrs. Olson and Mr. Vollertsen would attend a meeting in Oberlin.