

School plan could shift money flow

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

A cost study order by the Kansas Legislature released last week could mean less money in the general fund for the Oberlin School District but possibly more for at-risk students.

The proposal would slash low-enrollment subsidies that Oberlin and other small districts depend on, officials say, shifting the money to urban schools with more "at-risk" students.

With enrollment continuing to decline, the change could mean more cutbacks for

Oberlin schools, though nothing is certain yet.

The study by the Division of Post Audit, the research arm of the state Legislature, calls for the state to spend \$316 million to \$399.3 million more on schools to make sure each meets requirements set by the state Board of Education. Although it is being referred to by many as the "post-audit report," its formal name is "Elementary and Secondary Education in Kansas: Estimating the Costs of K-12 Education using Two Approaches."

Although the additional money is laid out in the documents, a 30-page summary and 264 pages of the report, rural districts like Oberlin could lose money in the general fund, while possibly gaining some for at-risk kids.

Basically the "low-enrollment" rate is lower in the proposed model than in the current formula, and that affects smaller districts. The at-risk weighting is higher, especially in the urban areas, where there is higher poverty. The report says that the estimated at-risk weighting should be .484 per

free lunch student in most districts, but the current plan is a weight of .193 per free lunch student.

Instead of counting each "at-risk" student as 1.2 enrolled, schools will count them as nearly 1.5 students, and that could tip the budget scale away from rural schools.

Raising the at-risk and urban-poverty weights will cost the state at least \$350 million for the one approach budget and \$361 million for the other.

Under the current formula, at-risk funding would cost \$112 million for next year,

so the proposed plan would cost \$238 million to \$249 million more.

Oberlin Superintendent Kelly Glodt said he had a hard time finding anything in the audit that was positive for smaller schools. From the summary, he said, it looks like most of the money will either go to large schools or for at-risk students, those who struggle or might not graduate.

The state defines "at-risk" usually by economic status, indicated by whether a student qualifies under federal rules.

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Good Samaritan should be safer with new alarms

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

The Decatur County commissioners last Tuesday approved putting new smoke alarms, wiring and remote indicators in the Good Samaritan Center for \$17,255.

Administrator Janice Shobe said the center had a sensitivity test done on the old smoke alarms recently and 45 failed.

Those that failed are really old, she said, and by law, the ones that failed and aren't in residents' rooms need to be replaced.

Since the center has the sprinkler system, said Mrs. Shobe, the detectors in the residents' rooms don't have to be replaced.

Mrs. Shobe said she got some bids and options from Eagle Med, the company that services the rest of the fire alarm system in the building.

To remove and replace the 45 detectors would cost \$7,125. To replace just the smoke detectors in the common rooms and rewire the system would cost \$6,725 and to rewire the rooms and add remote indicators outside the rooms would cost \$10,530.

To do both the second and third option with rewiring, smoke detectors in and outside the rooms and indicators outside the rooms would cost \$17,255, she said.

The indicators outside the rooms, said Mrs. Shobe, would be lights that show which room has an alarm.

Are the smoke detectors that aren't working only in the rooms? asked Commissioner Doyle Brown. No, Mrs. Shobe replied, they are all over the building.

It seems a little ridiculous that the center isn't required to have smoke detectors in the rooms, said Commissioner Ralph Unger.

Mrs. Shobe said she thinks down the road that the remote indicators, like the lights outside the residents' doors, will be required.

It seems a lot easier to spend the money up front, said County Steve

County Roundup

At their meeting last Tuesday, Decatur County commissioners:

- Approved putting new smoke alarms, wiring and remote detectors in the Good Samaritan Center for \$17,255. Story at left.

- Heard that the Decatur County Chamber of Commerce will honor farmers and ranchers with a dinner and entertainment on Saturday, March 11, at The Gateway. Story on Page 3A.

- Approved several yearly resolutions, including setting a meal allowance, mileage reimbursement rate and designating an official newspaper. Story to come.

Hirsch, instead of wishing that you had when it is required.

Do we need other bids? asked Mr. Brown.

Mrs. Shobe said she thought there was one other company out of WaKeeney that does this kind of work.

Taking more than one set of bids, said Mr. Unger, sometimes makes them more competitive.

The problem is that if they get someone else to do this job, Mrs. Shobe said, then the center will need two companies to do the service work.

Companies only service what they have put in, she said. It would be a lot easier to have one company do the service work.

The commissioners approved the job for \$17,255.

"To me it would be a step back not to have the detectors in the rooms, since we do now," said Mr. Unger.

Mr. Hirsch said Mrs. Shobe needs to get a contract with a completion date and payment terms.



AT DECATUR COUNTY HOSPITAL, Peggy Barnett held her daughter, Americus Dawn Barnett, while her husband Cecil sat next to her. Americus was the first baby born in Decatur County in 2006. — Herald staff photo by Kim Davis

First baby of 2006 takes its time getting here

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Born a week and a half into 2006, Americus Dawn Barnett is Decatur County's first new baby of the year.

She is the firstborn of Cecil and Peggy Barnett, who are 19 and 20 respectively. After 30 hours of labor, the baby was born at 9:16 a.m. last Wednesday morning at Decatur County Hospital, weighing 7 pounds, 5.8 ounces.

Mrs. Barnett said their daughter was named after a little girl in the movie "Where the Heart Is," taken from a book featured by Oprah Winfrey's book club.

The couple said they knew beforehand they were having a little girl. Mrs. Barnett said they didn't want to do "the whole surprise number."

Thursday night, she and Americus were still patients at the hospital, but they were released first thing Friday morning.

Mrs. Barnett said right now, she doesn't want more kids, but Mr. Barnett said "maybe later."

Mr. Barnett works at Hansen Mueller and Mrs. Barnett is a certified nurse aide, but hasn't worked since the couple moved to Oberlin last year. She said she is looking

forward to getting a job in the area as soon as possible. The couple said they moved here in August because a friend had a house they could live in here.

Americus' grandparents are Peggy's mom, Elizabeth Hardy, Oberlin, and Cecil's dad, Craig Barnett, Hays. Great-grandparents are (Miss) Lee and Richard Elson, Great Bend.

As parents of the first baby born in Decatur County in 2006, the couple has won prizes given by area businesses.

They will receive a case of baby food from Raye's Grocery, a

pizza for two from Pizza Hut, a \$20 gift certificate from Mary Kay, a gift from Fredrickson Insurance Agency, a \$10 gift certificate from Ben Franklin in McCook, a gift from Ray Jewelry, a \$10 gift certificate from Ward Drug Store, a \$25 gift certificate from Rocking R, a \$25 savings bond from First National Bank, a \$10 gift certificate from Stanley Hardware, a \$25 gift certificate from Shear Creations West and Day Spa, a \$25 gift certificate from Adleman Drug Store, a \$10 gift certificate from the Dresser and a year's subscription to *The Oberlin Herald*.

Tourney requires lots of help

With the help of almost 80 student and adult volunteers, Decatur Community High School played host to the annual Oberlin Invitational wrestling tournament all day Saturday.

Volunteers did everything from taking tickets at the door, to announcing, timing and much more, said Athletic Director Randy Olson. Jill Reichert and Pam Simonsson, both mothers of wrestlers, kept the "bout sheets" going all day, he said.

Around 23 student volunteers ran the scoreboard, ran the wall brackets and helped in other areas. Some students were at the school at 8 a.m. Saturday to help at the seeding meeting.

The school couldn't hold the tournament without all of the volunteers, said Mr. Olson. It is a huge job to have an event like this.

There were 150 wrestlers at the school, from 14 teams. That's a lot of people and a lot of matches. Mat action kicked off at 10 a.m. and didn't finish until 9:30 p.m.

By the end of the day, there had been 296 matches, he said.

"The volunteers are great about everything," said Mr. Olson. "They get involved because they have kids" (See WORKERS on Page 12A)



AT THE OBERLIN INVITATIONAL WRESTLING TOURNAMENT at the high school Saturday, Pastor Charlotte Strecker-Baseler helped out at the Oberlin Lions concession stand in the cafeteria. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Volunteers needed for ambulance class

Classes start Monday for a new batch of first responders for the Decatur County ambulance service.

Anyone 18 and over can serve on the volunteer department. Director Patrick Pomeroy said 17-year-olds can take the course, but can't be certified to work until they are 18. The county ambulance service, with a crew in Oberlin and Jennings, is run by volunteers who are paid a little for each run. In Oberlin there are 20 members and Jennings, 13. There is a first responder and emergency medical technician in Norcorator who

respond to calls.

Mr. Pomeroy said the first responder course, which is the first for crew members, is free to county residents who agree to serve for a year. If the person decides not to serve, he said, they have to pay for the class. In the past that amount has been \$400.

The training will run from 6:30 to 10 p.m. Monday and Thursdays, covering cardiopulmonary resuscitation, splinting, childbirth, ambulance operations, airway management (See RESPONDER on Page 12A)

Chamber banquet to cut council time

The Oberlin City Council plans to hold sort of a "drive-by" meeting around 6:30 p.m. Thursday since the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce banquet starts at the same time.

City Administrator Gary Shike said the council needs to approve a pay request for well No. 12 and also extend the contract date on the project.

Woofter Pump and Well was supposed to be done with the new well on Sunday, but the factory making the variable frequency drive is be-

hind and the part isn't here. Mr. Shike said Woofter has everything done except that.

The variable frequency drive allows the well to pump at different rates. The city is getting one for Well No. 10 also.

Woofter has asked for an extension for the final completion date to March 31, he said.

Mr. Shike said the meeting will probably be in his office. The meeting is open to the public but because of the location will not be on cable local access channel 7.