

Wider shoulders planned

The highway east of Jennings will be widened and repaved during a Kansas Department of Transportation project that started this month.

A subcontractor is prewatering the soil and extending box drainage structures in the area, a department spokesman said.

The idea is to widen shoulders, which will mean the long stretch of guardrail east of Jennings won't be needed.

The pavement will be milled down three inches and covered with seven inches of new asphalt.

"The job is a major modification of K-383 in that we are widening the dirt shoulders five feet in order to improve the safety of the roadway," said Eric Oelschlager, Area 2 engineer for the department.

The work starts just west of Jennings on K-383 and runs east seven miles to the Decatur/Norton County line. The \$6.5 million contract went to Venture Corp. of Great Bend. Work is supposed to be done by Oct. 27.

The project had been on the department's endangered list under the current comprehensive highway plan.

"We have heard a lot of local discussion about whether or not this project would go through," said Oelschlager. "It is one that we will now see through to completion."

He said access will be maintained to Jennings streets and businesses through the project.

"Any closings of the involved city streets will be explained to the public," he said, "as KDOT is looking to host a public meeting within the next month. Questions and comments ... will be encouraged during that time."

Another contractor is at work rebuilding U.S. 36 in Norton County, from Norcatu east to the new pavement at the K-383 junction. That job involves a new road on an adjacent right of way. Work began in the fall.

Another project on the department's list is for 12 miles on K-117, from U.S. 36 north to the Kansas-Nebraska line. The job is an overlay and has been awarded to Dobson Brothers Construction for \$939,983.

Businesses to be closed

Banks and financial institutions, as well as county and federal offices, will be closed on Monday for Presidents' Day.

Most businesses will be open, including *The Oberlin Herald*, as will city and state offices.

There will be no mail service, so news and advertising copy may be left at the newspaper office.

Talking culture



AT OBERLIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL last Monday, "geography night" put on by Supporting Our Schools. The Heather Glodt showed a small scarab from Egypt during a small stone figure was for luck, she told the audience.

Council questions spending

The Oberlin City Council agreed to have the mayor send a letter to the Decatur County commissioners to ask how the money the county receives from a Homeland Security grant is spent.

During a meeting Thursday, Feb. 2, the council discussed the money, which last year bought two new radios for the Oberlin Police Department.

The county receives around \$17,000 a year from the federal program.

City Administrator Gary Shike said the council would like to know if a percentage of the money being spent on city uses is equal to the city population, the reason being that a large percent of the county's population lives in Oberlin.

The council approved paying Gina Martorell and Aaron Ploussard \$6 an hour when they work part-time in the kitchen at The Gateway. Mr. Shike said the council suspended the city's nepotism policy for Tiffany Farr and Aaron Ploussard, since their father, Kent Ploussard, supervises them when they work in the kitchen.

In other business, the council:

- Heard that the bid opening for the waste water treatment plant will be on Tuesday, March 21.
- Signed a resolution saying the city will be part of the Kansas Municipal Energy Agency's mutual aid program.
- Appointed Councilman Joe Stanley to the Convention and Visitors Bureau for another two years.

Speaker running for governor

By PAT SCHIEFEN
The Goodland Star-News

A former House speaker, a longtime western Kansas farmer, has thrown his hat into the political ring to run for governor.

Robin Jennison of Healy, which is 37 miles south of Oakley and 16 miles east on K-4, stopped in Goodland on Friday to campaign and get his name out. Mr. Jennison said he has been farming and doing *Kansas Outdoors* radio shows for the six years since he has left the Legislature. He also does some lobbying during the winter.

Mr. Jennison said he thinks the top issue facing the state is school finance. People elect a governor to make the tough decisions, he said, and Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, a Democrat, has not done that.

"I really don't think the governor

has fulfilled her role as governor," he said.

Mr. Jennison said when the Legislature passed a school finance bill in 2004 that Gov. Sebelius did not support, she did not veto it, so it went back to the Legislature. Basically, he said, she left it up to the courts to handle. He said the Legislature needs to handle the problems of school finance where there is some accountability to the people. The courts don't worry about that, he said.

"I do not support No Child Left Behind (federal education requirements)," said Mr. Jennison, adding that he thinks each school board should be able to decide its own priorities.

Mr. Jennison said he spent 10 years in the Kansas Legislature

starting in 1991. In 1993, he became the assistant House majority leader and in 1995 he became the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. He became majority leader in 1997 and served as the Speaker of the House from 1999 to 2000.

The other candidates so far in the Republican primary for governor are Sen. Jim Barnett, a physician in Emporia; Overland Park family advocate Ken Canfield; Prairie Village lawyer Timothy Pickell; Ozawkie lawyer Dennis Hawver; and Richard Rodewald of Eudora, a retired engineer.

The people of western Kansas are going to have to make themselves heard if they want to keep their schools open, said Mr. Jennison.

"With me as governor," he said, "I can make a difference."

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