

District may need to cut four teachers

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

With the closing of the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch, the Oberlin School District may need to cut four teaching jobs this year, school board members were told last Monday.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said by law the board has until May 1 to give teachers a letter of intent not to renew their contracts. The letters will be discussed at the board meeting on Monday, March 12, he said, and then delivered the next day.

Then, he said, at the April meeting the board will act on the letters.

Mr. Glodt said the letters won't be a surprise to the teachers because he

School Roundup

At a meeting last Monday, the Oberlin School Board:

- Heard that the district may need to cut four teaching jobs by the end of the year because of the closing of the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch. Story at left.

- Agreed to purchase two new garage doors with openers for the bus

barn. Story on Page 3A.

- Heard that even with the six snow days the district has taken, the students will still get 27 hours more than the minimum "contact time" required by the state by the end of the year. Story below.

- Approved a calendar for the 2007-2008 schedule. Story below.

will talk with each of them so they know what's going on.

Layoffs would be done under the district's reduction in force policy,

which considers many factors, he said. The board has to ask what is best for the school district, look at all certified teachers and decide which ones they will need for the next year. Factors include who is qualified to teach courses or grade levels where the schools need teachers.

The closing of the youth ranch in September is the only reason the district is going to use the policy this year, said Mr. Glodt. The district had a school at the ranch with five and a half positions, but one of those was on a full-time month to month contract.

After the ranch closed, he added,

those teachers were given jobs in town because they were under contract for the full school year. The state has continued to help pay them just until the end of this school year, he said.

While the district has continued to lose enrollment in recent years, he said, that alone wouldn't force any layoffs this year.

This year the full-time equivalency number, which is used to determine state aide, is 409.3. A year ago it was 425 and in 2001 it was 495.5.

Mr. Glodt said four teaching positions will be affected.

After a teacher is let go, he said, the district has two years to recall them, but there are stipulations. For one thing, he said, the teacher needs to say they are interested.

Mr. Glodt said the board doesn't know if any teachers will ask for early retirement this year. Those letters aren't due until April 1.

If anyone quits or leaves, said Mr. Glodt, they will try to fill those spots with teachers who have been let go because of reduction in force or re-arrange, but he won't know for sure until the letters come in. Then it will depend on who is certified to teach what.

Salesman pitch system for 911 upgrade

The Decatur County commissioners talked to two salesmen about equipment and changes needed for an enhanced 911 upgrade, but didn't make any decisions at their meeting last Tuesday.

The county received notice that it would get a state grant for almost \$200,000 to put the enhanced 911 system into dispatch. The system will show the location of most calls on a map. Newer cell phones can broadcast their location, giving the dispatcher the cell phone number and location of the phone on the computer screen.

At a recent meeting, the commissioners signed grant assurances which said the county would start work on the project in the next 30 days.

Last Tuesday, the commissioners met with Bruce Hardesty, from R&S Digital Services of Great Bend, and Phillip Ryan with AT&T (formerly Southwestern Bell) out of Wichita. Both of the companies bid on the project.

Chief Dispatcher Jeanne Pachner said she invited the men to the meeting to answer questions about the grant and the equipment.

Mr. Hardesty, whose firm bid \$48,000 for the mapping part of the

County Roundup

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Approved an agreement with Penco Engineering to design a bridge on the Kansas Department of Transportation's five-year plan. Story on Page 3A.

- Talked to two salesmen about enhanced 911 equipment, but didn't make any decisions. Story at left.

- Approved the purchase of a new fax machine for the clerk of the district court's office. Story on Page 3A.

- Heard no objections at a public hearing for Decatur County Hospital to get a low-interest loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for a proposed expansion. Story below.

project, said the bid includes addressing locations in the county, sending out letters to the rural ad-

(See MEN on Page 10A)

Loan public hearing draws supporters for hospital project

There were no objections at a public hearing during the Decatur County commissioners' meeting last Tuesday on the Decatur County Hospital's application to get a low-interest federal loan for its proposed expansion.

The hearing is one of the requirements of the loan process for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In the audience were Connie Grafel, hospital board president and marketing director with the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp.; Corey Cook, a high school student; Ron Jansonious, technology director with the Oberlin School District; Marilyn Noone, branch manager for First National Bank; and Administrator Lynn Doeden, and two nursing supervisors, Susan Ahlberg and Margee Wilson, from Decatur Health Systems.

The group waited for Dave Barber, from the agency's state office in Hays, and when he didn't show up, they called him. Mr. Barber said he had forgotten to put the meeting

in his calendar, but planned to attend a hospital board meeting that night.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch said he hadn't received any information on the approved bond lawyers. Mr. Barber said he would get the list to Mr. Hirsch.

Mr. Barber said he didn't think anything major would come up during the public hearing.

Are the environmental approvals for the project done? asked Ms. Grafel. Yes, said Mr. Barber.

What has happened since last month when you were here? asked Commissioner Stan McEvoy. Mr. Barber said he is just waiting for the comment period to end.

He said he did get some paperwork from the architect that he needed. Mr. Barber said he would meet with the architect before the hospital board meeting.

After Mr. Barber hung up, Ms. Grafel asked about the state community tax credit program. She said it sounds like an application has to be made and then the tax credits are

(See LOAN on Page 10A)

Officials to stop here

Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer and Rep. John Faber plan to be in Oberlin on Saturday to talk about what's going on this year in the Legislature.

A coffee hour sponsored by the Decatur County Farm Bureau will run from 11:15 a.m. to 12:30

p.m. in the courtroom on the third floor of the Decatur County Courthouse.

Everyone with questions or concerns on rural education, the farm bill, health care or other issues in the 2007 Legislature is urged to attend.



AT THE SALE BARN Monday afternoon, men and women (above) filled the stands to check out and bid on livestock. The barn owners expected 600 head, including

some which sold as singles and some as a group like the ones (below).

— Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes

Barn draws big sales

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Anyone driving by the Oberlin Livestock Auction sale barn on north U.S. 83 the last few Mondays probably noticed a full parking lot, with trucks and trailers spilling over to nearby businesses.

Owner Jerry Fortin said big auctions are normal for this time of year, regardless of the weather. On Sunday, he said, with a hard freeze that night, he expected about 600 head of cattle for Monday's sale. If it doesn't freeze, he said, it is a little harder for stockmen to get cattle to town because of the mud.

Although it has been stormy, he said, he's had a sale almost every week, some with fewer cattle than others.

Some people are selling because it's just that time of year, said Mr. Fortin. Others are selling because there is a shortage of



feed. With the weather so bad, he said, ranchers have had to start feeding their cattle earlier than normal because the corn and milo stocks weren't easy to get to.

Ranchers are getting rid of yearlings so they have enough feed for

the cows they have, said Mr. Fortin.

Since the first of the year, he said, they have sold a couple of entire cow herds at the Monday sales, so a few owners got out of the business.

With corn prices high, he said, it has been hard on stockmen who need to buy feed, but at the same time, the high grain prices are good for the farmers.

Mr. Fortin said they have

(See BARN on Page 10A)

Schools still OK on hours

Even with the six snow days the district has taken this year, Oberlin students will still go to class 27 hours more than the minimum required by the state.

In fact, said Superintendent Kelly Glodt the schools could take another four to six storm days and still get by. Oddly enough, that's mostly because the district spent around \$180,000 on air conditioning on some classrooms last year.

At a meeting last Monday, school board members heard a report from elementary Principal Duane Dorshorst about the hours. Mr.

Dorshorst handed out a form showing the "contact hours" the schools have so far, what the state requires and the projected hours for the year.

One thing that really helps this year, said Superintendent Kelly Glodt, is the schools already have 20 more contact hours this year than last year. He said that is because the district didn't have to go on the heat schedule since the air conditioners were put in.

The schools had:

- 72 contact hours in August.
- 129 in September.

- 131 in October.
- 125 in November.
- 83 in December.
- 125 in January.
- 118 projected in February.
- 111 in March.
- 129 in April.
- 115 in May.

Mr. Glodt said the district is still in good shape on hours. Even if the district meets the minimum hours required, he pointed out, the board will have the students make up the snow days. There wasn't any discussion about that, however.

Calendar for next year OK'd

The Oberlin School Board approved the 2007-2008 calendar at a meeting last Monday, with students going to school 181 days and teachers 189.

The first quarter has 47 days, the

second 45 days, third 43 days and fourth 46, said Superintendent Kelly Glodt. Classes will start Friday, Aug. 17, and end Friday, May 23.

Included are several training days, vacations and parent-teacher

conferences. Thanksgiving break will be Wednesday, Nov. 21, through Friday, Nov. 23; Christmas break from Monday, Dec. 24, to Tuesday, Jan. 1; and spring break (See BOARD on Page 10A)

Limbs revealed

As the snow piles covering the grass melt, Oberlin residents will have to face up to the mounds of tree limbs in their yards.

The limbs, most of which fell during an ice storm before Christmas, have been buried in 24 inches of snow.

The city will pick the limbs up, said City Administrator Gary Shike, but they are still working on a plan. He said he has talked with Principal Charlie Haag at the high school about getting some help with the project, but nothing is set.

Mr. Shike said the city will set up a schedule so people can have their fallen limbs at the curb. He said he will know more next week.