

# Bond issue researched for airport

**By KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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The Decatur County commissioners asked the county attorney last Tuesday to research what kind of bonds the county could issue to help with the city's runway extension project.

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Economic Development Corp., and Greg Lohofener, president of the agency, asked commissioners to draft a letter of commitment saying that the county will help in any way it can with the project.

Mr. Lohofener said they have a follow-up meeting with the governor's office set tentatively for Friday, Sept. 7, in Oberlin. He said the group working on the project hopes the Federal Aviation Administration will pay for a runway up to 5,200 to 5,500 feet and that the Kansas Department of Transportation will pay for the rest up to 7,000 feet.

Even with the help from the two agencies, which isn't set in stone yet, he said, some local matching money will be needed. For the federal grant, he said, the match is 5 percent and for the state it is 10 percent. Mr. Lohofener said he thought the local share would be around \$400,000 to \$600,000, but that's just an estimate.

The city is up against the amount of its debt limit, he said.

There should be enough profit on fuel sales to do revenue bonds with the number of flights projected to come in and out, said Mr. Lohofener, but if the city can't do those, will the county possibly be able to.

Ms. Grafel said there are some questions to be answered, including whether there can be a city/county airport.

Whatever the amount is, said Commissioner Doyle Brown, if the county does a bond issue, what are the possibilities of someone wanting to buy the bonds. Mr. (See COUNTY on Page 5A)

## Airport receives grant

The City of Oberlin has received an \$80,000 grant to help buy land for airport development from the Airport Improvement Program through the Federal Aviation Administration.

Congressman Jerry Moran's office sent out a notice on Friday telling about the grant.

For about a year county officials, city officials and members of the county Economic Development Corp. have worked on plans for a longer runway, up to 7,000 feet, to accommodate business jets. The release states that this money will help assist in the runway expansion and resolve safety issues.

"A 7,000-foot runway will greatly benefit business and tourism and expand opportunities throughout northwest Kansas," said Connie Grafel, marketing director.

City Administrator Gary Shike said this is the first time the city has applied for this kind of grant. The money, he said, will be used to buy land for airport expansion.

"This grant is definitely the first big step in the right direction," said Mr. Shike. "This is a good signal and we are happy to have the Department of Transportation's support."

# Wind officials offer council a new proposal

**By KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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The Oberlin City Council received a new proposal from Sunflower Wind LLC on Thursday which would basically allow the firm to have the first chance to match any power proposal given to the city.

Oberlin would be able to keep its existing power contracts but pay a slightly higher rate for wind power the firm hopes to produce in Decatur County.

Earlier in the month, Dan Rasure of Goodland, managing partner for the firm, had given the council a contract which required the city to cancel its existing power agreements with Sunflower Electric Power Corp. and the federal Western Area Power Administration.

He gave the city three weeks to make a decision, but council members said they wanted to have an outside consultant look at the contracts.

Since then, said Mr. Rasure, Sunflower Wind had its lawyers draft a new proposal for first right of refusal to sell the city power. Basically, he said, the agreement allows the company an option to match any new power proposal term for term.

The company took out all of the economic development incentives, which would have provided power cheaper to companies willing to use more, he said.

City Administrator Gary Shike said he asked Kansas Municipal Energy Agency to go over what the (See CITY on Page 5A)

# Fair Finale section inside today's paper

Inside today's edition of *The Oberlin Herald* is the Fair Finale section, with results from the 2007 Decatur County Fair.

The edition includes pictures of grand champion and reserve grand champions in the livestock categories and all of the results for 4-H and open class competition.

THE OBERLIN HERALD'S  
**Fair Finale '07**  
4-H and open class results from the Decatur County Fair



## FunDay fun for all

**WITH A HOSE IN HAND**, Matt Farr (above) and his teammate tried to push the barrel with the water to other side of the wire during Jennings Firemen's FunDay Saturday. Alyson Vahling, 4, (right) pedaled a tractor to win a medal in the kids tractor pull, while Helen Muirhead (below) looked at a saddle outside the museum.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



# Flames destroy 640 acres and building

**By KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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A pasture and field fire Monday afternoon ripped through 640 acres northwest of town, driven by a wind that kept changing direction from the north to the south.

Patti Skubal, Decatur County emergency preparedness director,

said she believed all of the land belonged to Willa Urban's family, although the fire did jump a road and might have burned some of a neighbor's land. Fire Chief Bill Cathcart was still at the scene Monday evening and couldn't be reached.

Mrs. Skubal said the fire had destroyed a vacant house on the Urban property.

Giant smoke clouds could be seen from Oberlin most of the afternoon as the volunteer firefighters worked at getting the flames knocked down.

Mrs. Skubal said several fire departments helped work the fire, including volunteers from Oberlin,

Jennings, Norcat, Hoxie and from Beaver Valley and Red Willow County in Nebraska.

Chief Cathcart was the incident commander for the emergency, she said, and she helped with getting resources in. She said everyone she called was willing to help with the (See FIRE on Page 5A)

## Senator talks about troops

**By CYNTHIA HAYNES**

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts believes that the U.S. can't just pull out of Iraq or we'll be sending troops back into the area again to fight a bigger, tougher war.

The senator visited with 50 to 60 constituents in Oberlin during a tour through northwest Kansas last Tuesday answering questions and touching on issues ranging from the war to rural health care, genetic modification of plants, the farm bill and water quality standards.

Joel Shaw, a farmer who lives in Center Township, asked why government offices are closing around the country when at the same time the U.S. is sending "suitcases of money" to the Middle East.

Sen. Roberts said that the U.S. is making progress in the war, but there is still a lot to do to stabilize

the Iraqi government and ensure a better life for the people there.

He said he hopes the U.S. can help to get the Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis to quit killing each other.

They can still hate each other, he said; they just have to quit killing. But if the U.S. pulls out now, the area will become so de stabilized there could be an area-wide war because Iran would try to make Iraq its satellite and its moderate Islamic neighbors won't allow that.

"We haven't had another 911, thank God," Mr. Roberts said. "We were attacked six times before we went into Iraq, killing Americans. It was the USS Cole before we connected the dots (to fix the blame on al-Qaida)."

"We need to lower the political rhetoric if we can and take a hard look at the situation."

If we leave the area now, he added, we'll just have to come back

later to solve bigger problems.

Mr. Roberts, who served as head of the Senate Intelligence Committee for four years, said he, along with everyone else in the government, believed before the war that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction before the war started.

"I think Saddam Hussein thought he had the weapons of mass destruction," Mr. Roberts said. "Nobody would tell him otherwise ... or they'd come out feet first."

Randy McHugh, who just returned from a National Guard tour in Iraq, was introduced and applauded and the senator thanked him and all those serving in the military.

Banker Bob Gaskill asked about a bill to extend the Farm Credit Bank. Sen. Roberts said a bill in the House was dead and (See SENATOR on Page 5A)

## Water use stays down

Cooler temperatures last week and rain showers kept water use under the 700,000-gallon trigger point for a water emergency.

With the city on water restrictions, people can only use water outdoors on alternate days depending on their addressed.

Last week, the city pumped:

- 624,000 gallons on Monday, Aug. 20.
- 586,000 gallons on Tuesday, Aug. 21.
- 624,300 gallons last Wednesday.
- 495,500 gallons on Thursday.
- 341,700 gallons on Friday.
- 410,700 gallons on Saturday.
- 405,600 gallons on Sunday.