

Council agrees to negotiate for wind

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
kldavis@nwkansas.com

A proposal from Sunflower Wind, which has been on the city's table for seven weeks, almost died at the meeting Thursday night for lack of a motion, but was kept alive as all of the members agreed to go into negotiations with the company.

In early August, Sunflower Wind, a Goodland based company, asked the City of Oberlin to cancel their current contracts with Sunflower Electric and WAPA to purchase power from them at 5.6 cents per kilowatt.

After the council agreed that they wouldn't and couldn't cancel their current contracts which meant getting rid of the federal power at 3 cents a kilowatt, Sunflower Wind sent in a First Right of Refusal.

The agreement would give Sunflower Wind the first chance to bid and the chance to meet or beat any other offers when the city's contract

City talks with power experts

The Oberlin City Council talked with experts in the power field at the meeting Thursday night about the proposal from Sunflower Wind.

With around 20 people in the audience, the council asked questions, heard more about the Right of First Refusal proposal and finally came to a decision to pursue negotiations with the wind company.

Joe Herz, of Burr Oak, the independent person the city hired to look at the contract, said he hadn't seen any changes from the original contract for the Right of First Refusal, but he strongly recommended the city not execute it. There are just too many loose ends and too many things, he said, that he sees as a business or a private matter that can't work.

Talking about the first contract offered to the city, Mr. Herz said he didn't know if it could be fixed. It isn't clear from the contract, he said, of what exactly the business arrangement is. He said he isn't sure of

what Sunflower Wind can accomplish or how that fits into what the city needs.

Mr. Herz said in his experience he hasn't seen anything like this before especially with Sunflower Wind to do the manufacturing of the turbines.

This kind of process, he said, takes time, a contract like this will affect every person and business in the community.

"You want to proceed with this carefully," he said.

Although Mr. Herz never did receive the Right of First Refusal, he said the city doesn't want to get into an agreement with a company before they see what they can do.

If the city says yes to a power agreement with Sunflower Wind and then the company can't produce, said Mr. Herz, what if the city can't find a substitute supplier. Before even getting into a contract, (See QUESTIONS on Page 10A)

Wind a letter of intent, basically stating the company is welcome to bid to offer the city power.

Brice Barton, with Sunflower Wind, told the council that the company wants to spend money here. They want to invest in Decatur County putting up a 20 turbine wind farm. He said he wanted to see a vote at the Thursday meeting about the agreement on the table, stating the letter of intent was just one page that really didn't mean anything.

He said he is willing to work on the wording of the letter to make it into a contract.

Mayor Joe Stanley called for any action, which there was none and the discussion continued for just under two hours until the council came to an agreement.

The council discussed whether signing the Right of First Refusal would make this an uncompetitive project.

Councilman Ray Ward said he

thought this was a good opportunity, but wasn't ready to tie the hands of future councils. He said he would like to see Sunflower Wind bid in the next process, adding that competition is good for every business.

Mayor Stanley said the council needed to wrap this up, either make a decision or the decision would die.

Negotiation, said Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener, has been going through my mind for some time.

Sunflower Wind's lawyer, said Mr. Barton, is more than happy to go into negotiations to get the ball rolling. He suggested that the city hire Mr. Herz to help with that.

Mr. Herz said if it is for a Right of First Refusal he couldn't be counted out.

"I don't want my name associated with a Right of First Refusal," he said.

Mr. Herz said he doesn't know how the city can show the people (See CITY on Page 10A)

with Sunflower Electric is up in four years.

For several meetings the council talked about the offer, but didn't

agree to it. Instead the city offered Sunflower

Possibilities for youth ranch investigated

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
kldavis@nwkansas.com

A handful of people gathered last Monday to talk about the possibility of using the former Sappa Valley Youth Ranch as a boarding school, camp, conference center or something else, settling on the idea of a boarding school.

Under the direction of Rhoney DuQuesne, a consultant from Longmont, Colo., hired by the Oberlin School Board and the City Council, school staff, economic development officials and community members discussed ideas and possible road blocks at the school district office.

At the meeting were Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp.; Marlene Moxter and Rhonda Barth, high school teachers; Dr. Pat Cullen, superintendent of schools; principals Duane Dorshorst and Charles Haag; Dan Nedland, a school board member; Greg Lohofener, chairman of the economic development group; Peggy Pratt, regional juvenile justice authority worker; and Steve Haynes, publisher of *The Oberlin Herald*.

The first question, said Mrs. DuQuesne, is why do you want something at the facility? Not what you can have there, but why? Dr. Cullen said it would be a financial benefit to everyone, the city, the school district, the town.

The school and city, said Mrs. Pratt, have already put a lot of money into the facility.

Council hears results

The Oberlin City Council talked with the school superintendent about a recent meeting with a consultant on a plan to turn the former Sappa Valley Youth Ranch into a boarding school.

At a meeting on Thursday, Sept. 6 the council agreed to pay half of the fee to bring consultant Rhoney DuQuesne from Longmont, Colo., here to look at the facility. The Oberlin School District agreed to pay the other half.

Superintendent Pat Cullen said he met with Mrs. DuQuesne and several commu-

"If we don't do something," said Ms. Moxter, "it will continue to deteriorate."

Ultimately, said Mr. Nedland, the plan would benefit the kids of the school district by bringing new kids into the community. This will help the schools keep programs and teachers and maintain their quality, he said.

(See GROUP on Page 10A)

Students disciplined for breaking rules

Students at Decatur Community High School who get caught drinking, using drugs, tobacco or not displaying good behavior making a bad reflection on the school can and are disciplined at the school.

Students who take part in any extra-curricular activities at Decatur Community High School sign a training rules contract which spell out the discipline for the first, second and third violation.

The biggest thing with the contract or the drug/alcohol policy at the school, said Principal Charles Haag, is that they have to have confirmation that a student has done something. This can't be on hearsay. There has to be confirmation. For example, if something happens outside of school or a school activity there needs to be a ticket given, breath test given or something like that so the school can take action. It can't just be done on a rumor.

The contract basically states that alcohol, non prescription drugs, tobacco or any other illegal substance isn't allowed. Students will also have to conduct themselves with

behavior that is a good reflection on the school.

The contract also covers absences that are excused.

Both the student and the parents sign the contract, said Mr. Haag.

The first violation after confirmation means the student will lose eligibility for two consecutive interscholastic events or two weeks of the seasons whichever is greater.

The second penalty after confirmation means the student will lose eligibility for six events.

After confirmation of a third penalty the student will lose eligibility of the next 12 events. If the student becomes a participant in a chemical dependency program or treatment program on their choice the student can be certified for reinstatement after a minimum of six weeks with proof of the program.

Not all students take part in activities though, said Mr. Haag. There is a board policy on drugs and alcohol too.

That discipline includes short-term suspension up to being expelled. (See ALCOHOL on Page 10A)



ONE OF THE FATHERS, Kevin Sims (above) touched one of the kids' pictures on the back of the bus while he was in Oberlin last Wednesday. Vander Davis (below) is one of

the fathers and riders on the Loneliest Road campaign to raise awareness and money for a type of childhood cancer.

Fathers bicycle for kids

By **CYNTHIA HAYNES**

Seven fathers biking across the country to raise money and awareness for a rare form of cancer which has struck their children stopped for a break in Oberlin last Wednesday.

The Loneliest Road Campaign started in Sacramento, Calif., on Sept. 10, the men said, and is supposed to end in Washington on Saturday.

The fathers, whose children have neuroblastoma, a rare pediatric cancer, say they are hoping to raise money to make new treatments available.

The men arrived here at 3:30 a.m.. While three fathers stayed behind at the Terrace Gardens RV Park to sleep and do laundry, the others headed on down U.S. 36.

"We're the night shift," one said, "the men who stayed behind."

Alec Oughton, a firefighter and paramedic from Fredericksburg, Va., said his daughter Grace is 3. He said he joined the ride because he wanted to do something besides sit by her side at the hospital.

So does Kevin Sims, a criminal investigator for the Air Force in Tampa, Fla., and Randy Monroe of White Pigeon, Mich., a quality assurance inspector at a manufacturing plant.

"My daughter's relapsed two times," Oughton said. "His (Sims') too. Both our kids are still in chemotherapy."

Neuroblastoma, the fathers said,



is a nasty disease. It usually starts with an abdominal tumor and some vague symptoms, but the survival rate is only 20 percent and half the children who seem to beat the disease will relapse.

Besides chemotherapy, the most common treatment is a specific antibody program, the said, but the serum is made from mice and frequently the child's body rejects the foreign substance and the victim builds up immunity to the treatment.

The men say that they have talked to doctors at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, where all their children have been treated, and there is a chance to humanize the serum, but it takes a lot of money — \$3 million to \$5 million for research.

The men said they decided that they had to do something and the cross-country bike ride was orga-

nized in short order.

"We, as parents, were empowered to do something for our kids except standard care," Mr. Sims said.

The ride started with five dads but there have been changes along the way, the men said.

One father just arrived from Denver to ride and he is replacing a man who had to return home to work. Besides, with sick children, they could be called away at any time.

"We need to do this as quickly as possible because we all have jobs and children in treatment," Mr. Sims said.

Usually, only one or two men ride at a time, they said, in shifts of one to two hours, but sometimes longer in flat areas. In the mountains, the riders rotated every hour.

While a couple of the fathers have enjoyed mountain biking in

the past, none is a dedicated cyclist, they said.

"You get a bunch of fat dads," Mr. Oughton said. "We all work out but aren't cyclists."

The men said that the ride over the Sierra Nevadas was tough, with the temperature falling into the 40s at night.

The men, with their support staff, travel with a bus, a trailer and seven bikes. It's a little tight, they admit, so a couple of them sleep in the trailer while the rest bunk in the bus.

"We eat, ride bikes and don't sleep a lot," Mr. Sims said. "We seem to overcompensate with food. Last night, we consumed 12 packs of ramen noodles and we've gone through case upon case of Gatorade and water."

The men said their journey is posted on their web site, www.loneliestroad.org.