

## Center may need more cash

After looking over the money for the project to build a new Golden Age Center, county commissioners discovered Tuesday, it looks like two of the amounts for county money had been counted twice, putting the project off by a few thousand dollars.

Greg Lohofener, a member of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. board who is leading the project, talked with the Decatur County commissioners last Tuesday about the money. A handout he gave the men included \$35,000 out of the Golden Age fund, \$17,000 in insurance money for the roof and \$1,570 for money raised by the Thrivent Financial for Lutherans group.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said they looked at the numbers and the \$17,000 and the \$1,570 are included in that \$35,000 as best they can tell.

That means, said Mr. Lohofener, that he's off and will need to do some more fund raising or get that from money the corporation is holding.

Mr. Unger said it looks like the Golden Age group also spent more money last year than it had the year before.

There have been extra bills lately for the Golden Age Center for the refrigerator, a storage unit and other things, said Clerk Colleen Geihlsler.

If the group exceeds the amount it gets from the county property-tax levy, said Mr. Unger, money is going to have to come out of some fund to pay the bills or out of the group's kitty.

Right now, said Mr. Lohofener, they have enough money to complete the Golden Age Center and cinema, including the inside. He said he's short about \$90,000 to finish the entire project, including the bowling alley with electronic

## Dirt traded for labor

The Decatur County commissioners agreed last Tuesday to trade labor for dirt with a landowner south of town, with the county covering a hole it will use to dump demolition concrete on his land and taking dirt in return.

Tim Stallman, road and bridge supervisor, said he had permission to haul clean debris from the old Golden Age Center and Sunflower Cinema to a pit south of town on Elmer Kathka's land. The idea is to fill in the hole because Mr. Kathka wants to be able to farm that ground, he said.

Mr. Kathka has offered dirt to haul back to town for the Golden Age/recreation center project on Main Street, said Mr. Stallman.

The idea is that the county can get dirt, but will cover the rubble using county-owned equipment, he said. The work to cover the hole cost about as much as the value of the dirt, said Mr. Stallman.

If the rubble is short of bringing the land up to grade, asked Commissioner Ralph Unger, he doesn't want the

scoring. There are some bills that need to (See PROJECT on Page 5A)



**DURING THE SNOW** on Friday, Police Chief Wade Lockhart (above) shoveled the walk in front of the police station on Commercial Street. Lindsey Eskew (below)

played in a pile of snow in front of her house before lunch.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

## Snow causes work, fun

People dusted off their snow shovels Friday to clean off sidewalks, driveways and porches across Decatur County.

Snow flakes started to fall early in the day, covering the streets by 7:30 a.m. School had already been called off for parent-teacher conferences. Icy roads in the morning seemed to keep people who live in the country at home.

The snow just kept falling, sideways at times, until lunch time.

People were out all day keeping sidewalks cleaned. Kids played in the white stuff, some building snowmen and a few adults tried their hand at snowshoeing at Sappa Park.

In all, the county got anywhere from 2 to 6 inches, said Tim Stallman, county road and bridge supervisor. He said he figured the north end of the county probably got 4 to 6 inches while the south side had around two.

On Friday, he said, the county crew cleaned off the airport runway, getting it open just in case of an emergency.

Ninety percent of the roads have been blown clean, he said, but the crew opened up others and knocked down a few heavy



drifts. Mr. Stallman said the crew also worked on the bridges to get snow off.

The city crew was out at lunch time cleaning off some of the streets in town. Foreman Dan Castle was called on Monday, but wasn't reached.

State highway crews worked

all day Friday. Tom Weishapl, foreman at the Oberlin office, said he called the crew out around 7 a.m. and they plowed until about 4:30 p.m. By then, the roads were pretty clean. The state crew hadn't done any pretreating, he said.

By Sunday, the sun was out and parts of the county didn't look like

the area had received any snow at all. People traveling on dirt roads were kicking up dust.

The National Weather Service office in Goodland said the next chance for snow would be today, but it's only a 10 percent chance with little to no accumulation expected.

## School has engineer check heat system

By KIMBERLY DAVIS  
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The Oberlin School Board agreed to hire a Hays engineer to work on a plan to update the heating system at the high school at its meeting last Monday.

Jay Connelly, with Connelly and Associates LLC out of Hays, told the board that the school has a good heating system, and Garrett's Plumbing had done a good job putting in the new condensation line under the older part of the school.

Although it's a good system, the engineer said, it needs better controls.

The board didn't vote to hire Mr. Connelly, but agreed by consensus to have him put together a plan, with the work not exceeding \$6,500.

Mr. Connelly was the engineer who inspected the work by Garrett's for the recent job.

There are a couple rooms that need some attention, he said. The main office, including the principal's and secretary's offices, is like an oven. Mr. Connelly said the thermostat works fine, but it's still hot. They have to open the windows in the office some days.

The office is over the boiler room, which is warm, he said. In general, the heat works, but in some places there's too much.

He said he would suggest upgrad-

## School roundup

At the meeting last Monday, the Oberlin School Board:

- Agreed to hire a Hays engineer to work on a plan to update the current heating system at the high school. Story at left.

- Continued working on the policy book. Story on Page 3A.

- Decided to table a decision to let the alumni association use the district office as the group's mailing address in order to get more information. Story on Page 3A.

- Approved installing a new boiler which the district purchased in 2007 at the high school, parts of which have been without heat most of the winter. Story on Page 5A.

- Conditionally approved the school calendar for the 2009-2010 year. Story on Page 5A.

ing or repairing steam valves to control the temperatures and replace the thermostats. That could be done in stages, he said. It will help get rid of the problem of it being too hot in some areas.

(See DISTRICT on Page 5A)

## Skunk killed in country tests positive for rabies

Test results came back positive for rabies in a skunk killed recently outside of Norcat, and while that's not unusual, officials say people should be wary if they come in contact with wild animals.

Marilyn Gamblin, Decatur County health nurse, said the skunk got into a fight with a dog in the country

outside of town. The dog hadn't had its rabies vaccination and had to be put down, she said.

The skunk was shot and the head was sent to Kansas State University School of Veterinary Medicine for testing.

People need to be aware that there (See RABID on Page 5A)

## Big man runs paper technology business

By VERA SLOAN  
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At 6 foot, 3 inches, and tipping the scale at well over 300 pounds, John Dehn is a big man.

He calls himself corporate director of new media resources and sales for Nor'West Newspapers and *The Oberlin Herald*, and that's a big title. His big plan is to help businesses in northwest Kansas make money by using big, new technology.

Mr. Dehn (that's pronounced Den) has the credentials to do that. His background is in Internet technology. He was hired by Nor'West, which operates *The Herald* and five other area newspapers, in June to broaden sales opportunities for area businesses.

He has built a web-based directory for area businesses and plans

to install a new Internet search engine that will be unique to this area. Together, he said, the two will equip every business here to be able to compete for online sales in the world market.

It is the newest and latest technology in marketing, he said, and can be done for a minimal cost. Businesses can have pictures and information in their listings, live links to other pages, even a full website with its own unique name — all for minimal costs.

"History tells us that we lose our market advantage when we don't keep up with change," he said. "Think back to when the competition was just across the street ... then to when it was a few easy and quick miles down the road."

"Now, in the new market, it is only a click away on the computer.

For survival in today's market, business must take advantage of available technology to retain current customers and attract new ones."

A huge percentage of consumers shop online, he said, and that percentage is growing. Technology empowers a business to order the products a customer needs, and still give the assurance of shopping through a local business.

The web site [www.NWKansasOnline.com](http://www.NWKansasOnline.com) already lists all the businesses in northwest Kansas, he said, and he's waiting for the search engine to be programmed.

While the list is as complete as research could make it, he added, business owners should visit the site at [www.NWKansasOnline.com](http://www.NWKansasOnline.com) to make sure their business is listed correctly.

After you visit the site, he said, you can call him at 462-3963 to optimize your listing and add items for sale.

Business owners interested in getting key words in the new search engine should call, too, he said. This is the time to call to secure their key word.

For example, he said, if you have a furniture store and your key word is "furniture," it can be locked in and given a priority spot among other businesses that may be selling furniture. When the word "furniture" is typed in, that business' name will come up along with what other items the store has available. Local key word searches can be purchased for as little as \$100 per search word, Mr. Dehn said.

A business' name and products (See MAN on Page 5A)



**JOHN DEHN** talked about the new internet directory and a search engine website available at [NWKansasOnline.com](http://NWKansasOnline.com). Mr. Dehn works in Colby, but covers a larger area. — Herald staff photo by Vera Sloan

## \*Man has the advertising answers

(Continued from Page 1A)  
 can be listed for as little as \$4 per week. Businesses can secure a key word spot now and hold it for when the search engine launches in the next few months. Mr. Dehn said he plans to give classes on how to get set up on the web, how to operate the business listings and how the search engine will be an advantage for area business.

Business owners can take part in the sessions to learn how to operate online, he said. The search engine will be promoted before it is launched, just as the business directory is already being promoted in all six Nor'west Newspapers every week. This is new to this area, he said. It offers the power of print, the power of the Internet and the power of a search engine just for northwest

Kansas. The directory is available right now, he said. The search engine key words should be ready soon and will be available over the next two to three months. Businesses that act now to reserve their key words will have a huge advantage over all their competitors, he said. For information or questions, call Mr. Dehn at (785) 462-3963 or 462-1149.

## \*District hires engineer for heat plan

(Continued from Page 1A)  
 Mr. Connelly said he isn't sure about the costs because some rooms have two radiators, while others have only one. He recommended the project be done in the summer. He also suggested a digital "set-back" system to help reduce how much the heat runs at night. It will help reduce costs, he said. There are some steam lines that aren't insulated very well, said Mr. Connelly. Putting insulation in those areas is probably the most cost-effective thing the district can do because it will keep the heat in. There's a section of pipe that needs to be repaired, he said. Although it isn't leaking now, it has in the past and could again. Mr. Connelly recommended replacement of the boiler, which the board had approved earlier in the

meeting. The school really needs two boilers to heat it on cold days, he said, adding that the district might want to start putting money back so it can buy a second one. He talked about improving the ventilation to let the combustion air out of the boiler room. The last thing the district needs is to have too much carbon monoxide or other gases in the school, he said. After looking at the blueprints of the school, he said, it seems the original intent in the 1938 plan was to use the two big fans in the building for air movement and cooling. The idea was to bring the temperature down to where they wanted it and use the big fans in the school, attached to the ductwork, to blow the air into the classrooms. Two large air handlers on the roof would suck hot air out. Mr. Connelly

added that he wouldn't want to pay the gas bill to get the air cooled for that kind of system. The district could use the fans to add fresh air, but controls need to be added and the duct work needs to be looked at. Board member Dan Grafel asked if the air handlers were being used, noting that the district had the duct work cleaned out. Mr. Connelly said he isn't sure of what's on the roof to suck the air out. He said they need to check things out before the fans can be used. In December, the district paid \$14,071 to have the ducts cleaned so that the fans could be used on the recommendation of Superintendent Pat Cullen. The district spent a good amount of money to get those air ducts cleaned, said Mr. Grafel.

Mr. Connelly and he thinks the idea will work, but not until it's looked into a little more. Dr. Cullen asked what needs to be done to make the air handlers work. Modifications need to be made to the main duct line over the second floor, said Mr. Connelly, as well as looking at what's the roof. The group talked about the hot water heat on the other side of the building, but Mr. Connelly said he hadn't looked at that. Member Dan Nedland asked if Mr. Connelly could get the district a price to complete his recommendations and information to send out for bids. Mr. Connelly said it would take a couple of months. Best guess for the cost would be between \$5,500 and \$6,500, he said.

## High school to install boiler purchased in 2007

The Oberlin School Board approved installing a new boiler which the district purchased in 2007 at the high school. Brad Moxter, with American Boiler, said the boiler has already been paid for and the company has been storing it. The total cost was \$49,989 with \$26,138 of that for the boiler and the rest for labor, piping and the actual installation. Mr. Moxter said the

district just needs to pay the balance of \$23,851. He said he will keep the price at the original bid. There were some concerns in the report by Jay Connelly, an engineer who inspected the replacement of a condensation line, about combustion with the boiler because of a gas smell in the area. Mr. Moxter said he will make sure there is good clean combustion with the new boiler.

There are two boilers in the school now, he added. Initially, he recommend replacing the one on the west. What about the old boiler? asked member Monte Moore. The second one is a little redundant to keep, said Mr. Moxter, but in case of a blow, it's nice to have a secondary one. He said he would recommend replacing it down the road. Mr. Moxter said he would rather

wait until heating season is over before he installs the boiler, probably in March. He said he didn't see a problem with doing it while school is still in session. The board approved paying the difference to have the boiler installed, with the company removing the one that's being replaced.

## Board approves 2009-2010 school calendar

The Oberlin School Board conditionally approved the proposed school calendar for the 2009-2010 year at its meeting last Monday, reserving the right to make any changes agreed to in teacher contract talks. Member Dan Nedland said the board would need to approve the calendar tentatively or on a conditional basis because it's covered by the teacher contract. He said the number of work days is included

in the teacher contract, which isn't yet agreed on. Mr. Nedland said the Kansas Association of School Boards suggested they tentatively or conditionally approve until the end of negotiations. The calendar, he said, includes four teacher work days, while the agreement now includes only three. This is a much better calendar than this year, said Mr. Nedland. This year, school started on a Fri-

day, but next year it will start on Monday, Aug. 17. The students will be off for Thanksgiving from Wednesday, Nov. 25, through the end of the week, Christmas break starts on Wednesday, Dec. 23, and the students don't go back until Monday, Jan. 4. Spring break is the week of Monday, March 15, week and the last day of school is Wednesday, May 26. If the teachers' agreement says three work days, said member Barb

Olson, when did the district start doing four. Principal Charlie Haag said the district has had four as long as he's been there.

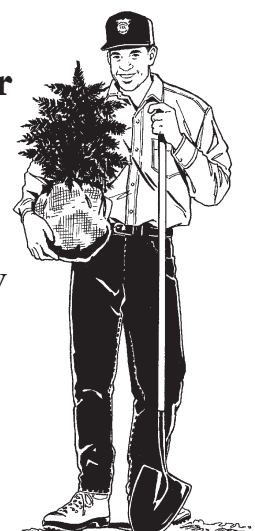
## \*Rabid skunk shot outside Norcatour

(Continued from Page 1A)  
 has been a wild animal in the area with rabies, she said. Pets including dogs, cats and ferrets need to be vaccinated. Information from Ms. Gamblin suggests considering vaccinating any valuable livestock or horses. If the dog, belonging to June Jolly, had been vaccinated, it might have been saved, the director said. Ms. Gamblin said people should be alert for wildlife acting strangely, which might indicate a sick animal. She suggested people not leaving pet food outside, storing garbage

appropriately and not letting pets wander. "As the weather gets nicer, people are going to be outside more, and they just need to be aware of what's going on," she said.

**It is not too early to plan and place your TREE ORDERS.**

Please call the Decatur County Conservation District Office at 785-475-3131 Ext. 101 OR stop by our office, located on South U.S. Hwy. 83 in Oberlin, Kansas.



# \*Project needs donations to be finished

(Continued from Page 1A)  
 be paid, he said, including one to the architect for \$2,417 and \$200 for the lot south of the center that was deeded to the county. Mr. Lohofener said he would use some money from the corporation to cover those bills, since that organization is holding a little over \$140,000 that's been donated for the state tax credit program.

At the beginning of March, said Mr. Lohofener, Sappa Valley Construction will need some money. He asked about the general obligation bonds the county will issue.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch said that transaction won't close until Thursday, March 19. With the Golden Age Center being a county building, said Mr. Unger, that part will have to be nonsmoking. Mr. Lohofener said he thought the whole building will be nonsmoking. He said he will have to address that with the corporation's board.

The concern is if there's smoking allowed in the building, is it sending the right message to kids? said Mr. Unger.

At the end, the county will own 100 percent of the real property, including the building, said Mr. Lohofener, subject to a condo agreement. Mr. Hirsch said he thought the agreement was that the county was going to deed everything but the Golden Age Center back to the corporation and theater board.

That can be done, said Mr. Lohofener, but he thought 100 percent of the real property was going to be owned by the county.

What about a name for the building? asked Commissioner Gene Gallentine. There's been lots of discussion on whether to have a naming contest or something like that, but there hasn't been any decision made, said Mr. Lohofener. The paperwork for the grants, loan and other things have called it the Golden Age/recreation center. He said he's not sure if that's what the name will be or should be in the end.

In other business, the commissioners:

## County roundup

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Talked about contributions for the new Golden Age Center, bowling alley and Sunflower Cinema with the volunteer organizer to check on whether a couple of the contributions may have been counted twice. Story on Front Page.

- Asked the county attorney if the commissioners have any say in a voucher to reimburse mileage to the sheriff for an out-of-town meeting. Story on Page 3A.

- Approved locking in 40 percent of the county's estimated gas use from November to next March. Story on Page 3A.

- Agreed to trade for dirt with a landowner south of town in exchange for letting the county cover a hole it will use to dump demolition concrete in. Story Front Page.

- Talked with Jerry Lohofener, who asked if they wanted the Masonic Lodge to have a cornerstone ceremony for the new building. Mr. Unger said he thought the commissioners should discuss that when all three were at the meeting. Commissioner Stan McEvoy was in Topeka for the day.

- Received a call from Helen Gee, manager of the senior meal site, to say the door on the former cafe across the street rented to house the Golden Age Center was broken. County Attorney Steve Hirsch said he would call her.

- Clerk Colleen Geishler said they called on Friday because there was an electrical problem and they wanted Bob Berls, courthouse custodian, to come fix it. She said she told them no because the building is rented, and the commissioners agreed.

## \*County approves dirt, work trade

(Continued from Page 1A)  
 county to have to haul in more.

If the commissioners decide the county doesn't want to do the trade, said Mr. Stallman, then the crew can probably still haul the clean rubble to the hole because Mr. Kathka wants it filled in.

Hauling the rubble south of town, said Mr. Stallman, will save landfill space, time, labor and fuel. It's worth it, he said.

The three little dump trucks parked south of the Golden Age Center are the only three the county owns and there would be a lot of lag time if someone had to drive to the landfill six miles east of town every time, instead of just down the road.

"Will there be volunteers helping do the demolition work?" asked Commissioner Gene Gallentine. Mr. Stallman said he thought the

volunteers were going to just do the salvage work beforehand. For demolition, he said, it will be the county crew, Kevin Brown of Sappa Valley Construction and contractors Mick Barth and Dave Bose running the machines. Mr. Stallman said Mr. Bose's brother might help, too.

Demolition is scheduled to start on Tuesday, he added.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved repairing the hydraulic pump on a 1988 backhoe. Mr. Stallman didn't know the cost.

- Talked about an upcoming regional meeting in Hays on landfills. Mr. Stallman asked if any of the commissioners want to go.

- Heard that the Hazardous Household Waste collection will be from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday, April 25, at the county shop.

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