

Absence policy changes at school

The Oberlin School Board approved changing the high school's policy on excuses and unexcused absences last Monday to specify how much time students have to make up work and allow them to make up work from unexcused absences.

Before, students who had an unexcused absence could not make up their work. They got zeros and had to come in for "Saturday school."

Principal Ben Jimenez said the new policy will simplify things. It will standardize how much time the students have to make up work, said Superintendent Duane Dorshorst. Instead of it being at the discretion of each teacher, they will all be doing the same thing.

As adopted, the policy says, "Students are responsible for make-up work when they are gone. They will have the day gone plus one for each day missed at a maximum of one week unless arrangements have been made with the school counselor or principal (ex. miss Friday, make up work due Tuesday, miss Friday and Monday, makeup work due Thursday). If the absence is unexcused, make up work is accepted on a plus-on-day timeline regardless of days missed (ex. miss one day, get one day, miss three days and get one day) for full credit. Any unexcused work past the deadline for unexcused is a zero. Work will

not be furnished unless requested by the office or if the student has a make-up slip which will identify excused or unexcused. Students gone for athletic/activity events need to get homework prior to leaving and work must be completed on schedule with the class or permission from the teacher to have extra days is required."

Board member Dan Nedland said he didn't think the policy totally addresses all the problems in the handbook.

It does, however, replace the part which says unexcused absences get a zero, said Superintendent Duane Dorshorst. It also replaces Saturday school, said Mr. Jimenez, and gets rid of the part that allowed the time for make-up work to be determined by each teacher.

Saturday school was used for making up absences, but it wasn't working, said Mr. Jimenez.

This is better than four conflicting policies in the current handbook, said Mr. Nedland, but there needs to be some clarification on what is excused and what's unexcused. The policy needs to be clear to the kids and the staff, he said.

There are some things that need to be changed in the handbook, said Mr. Jimenez. It can't state that unexcused absences are an automatic zero.

The board approved the policy.

Roads to close near Norton border

The Decatur County commissioners approved closing several roads in Lincoln Township and designating others for minimum maintenance at their meeting last Tuesday.

Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman; Dave Stapp, who serves on the Lincoln Township board; and two representatives from the Norton County Road and Bridge Department attended a hearing on the road requests.

Susan Rohleder objected to closing a quarter-mile stretch of a lane between Sections 8 and 9 of the township. That will become minimum maintenance instead, commissioners decided.

Mr. Stallman said parts of Lanes T, T.5, V, W, W.5 and X, and Roads 2400, 2600, 2850, 2900 and the Norton Road were closed. Parts of Lanes U, V, W and X and 2600th Road were changed to minimum maintenance.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved a motion to allow one of the road and bridge crew members to take off Tuesday, Nov. 22, although he needs to use his time by that Monday in order to continue accumulating days.
- Held a five-minute closed ses-

sion for nonelected personnel with the commissioners clerk, county attorney and weed-control director. There was no action taken afterward.

• Talked about changing the hospital board to two at-large positions and then one member from each commissioner district.

• Talked about the possibly holding two checks to area businesses, one at the business owners' request, to offset taxes owed. The other check, for \$25,887, was paid to the business after the owner came in later to pay his taxes.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch looked up the procedure and told commissioners state law says that if someone owes the county money, the clerk is required to offset it from any amount the county owes the person.

It's written that way to take the guesswork out of it, said Mr. Hirsch.

• Talked with Chief Dispatcher Marilyn Mack, who said R&S Digital hasn't been here to update the county addresses in the 911 computer. The company hasn't turned in an invoice for the agreed-on \$2,500 maintenance fee and hasn't done the work either, she said.

Fun at recess



ON THE PLAYGROUND at Oberlin Elementary School this Monday, Wyatt Pearson and Corbin Wessel ran back to a group of guys they were playing soccer with, Corbin carrying a ball.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

City employees to get script

The Oberlin City Council approved giving Santa Bucks to the part-time and full-time workers as a Christmas bonus again this year.

Full-time city employees will get \$250 in Santa Bucks, which are sold by the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, and have to be spent at member businesses.

The council approved \$100 in Santa Bucks for part-time workers, including those who work 20 hours or less, council members and fire fighters.

This helps out the town, said Administrator Karen Larson at the meeting Thursday, Nov. 3, since the Santa Bucks have to be spent here.

The council approved getting price quotes to replace one of the older heater/air conditioners on the roof at The Gateway, the unit for the arena. Mrs. Larson said the unit is "eating metal up and spitting it out." It's one of the original units, she said. After checking into prices,

she thought it would cost around \$25,000 to \$30,000 to replace.

The council agreed to get the needed three price quotes to replace the unit. Mrs. Larson said it would be done using money from the Bremer bequest. The money was left to the city to spend on The Gateway by Fred and Henrietta Bremer several years ago.

Mrs. Larson said she is going to apply for a grant, but didn't specify how much, for some picnic tables and benches made out of recycled materials. She said if the city gets the grant, it can buy five tables and four benches to be placed around town. The cost to the city would be around \$3,800.

Dr. Steve Albert said he would pay for one at the south roadside park, said Mrs. Larson, and others might want to donate. She added that they might want to put some benches outside at The Gateway.

In other business, the council:

- Heard that the Garden Lovers Club had decided to help take care of flowers in Centennial, City and South parks and at the library. The

group divided into four teams, she said, and each has a chairman. They will contact city sexton Jeremy Tally to ask for his expertise. She said the city appreciates the group's help.

• Heard that Mrs. Larson is working on the table tents for the upcoming Pheasants Forever Banquet on Friday.

• Heard that the grant application for street repaving is done.

• Heard the water department is getting ready for winter. The crew will read water meters around the middle of November, then not again until spring. The winter reading is used each year to set people's sewer bills, so any outdoor use after that could be costly.

• Heard that since a story and a coupon appeared in the newspaper, the city has received a little over \$300 in donations for the new electronic directory at the cemetery.

• Held a closed session for 15 minutes for nonelected personnel with the council, acting mayor, administrator and city attorney. There was no action taken afterward.

County will get grader

The Decatur County commissioners voted to buy a 2004 motor grader at a meeting at the beginning of the month.

The used Caterpillar 140H grader will cost \$150,500 with the trade-in of a 1984 Caterpillar grader. Commissioner Ralph Unger said the machine, bought from Foley Tractor out of Colby, has a two-year warranty, a two-year drive-train warranty and just under 4,000 hours on it.

Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman said he needed to buy a split load of off-road diesel and unleaded fuel, which the commissioners approved.

The commissioners also approved buying up to \$10,000 worth of four-foot, five-foot and six-foot culverts. The commissioners had already approved the purchase of an eight-foot culvert and Mr. Stallman said he wanted to take advantage of lower freight charges and get some other sizes.

In other business, the commissioners:

• Held a 15-minute closed session for nonelected personnel with Mr. Stallman, the county attorney, clerk and commissioners. There was no action taken.

• Authorized Mr. Stallman sending the 1995 John Deere scraper to North Platte for a transmission overhaul and other work.

• Agreed to support Commissioner Stan McEvoy, who filed for re-election with the Kansas Counties Association as a director to represent northwest Kansas.

• Talked with Treasurer Jean Hale, who brought in a stack of unpaid taxes, mostly on real estate, to give to County Attorney Steve Hirsch. She said some of the people probably will come in before January and pay.

Food drive starts Friday at store here

Don't forget the food drive at Stanley Hardware while out shopping this Christmas season.

The drive doesn't normally start until just after Thanksgiving, but Joe Stanley, owner of the hardware store, said he's already collected a few items.

This is the 12th year for the drive, which started in 1999. Each year, Mr. Stanley has set the goal of 2,000 items that are then taken to the Decatur County Food Pantry in the basement of the United Church.

In the past, the store has received donations from individuals, some groups and some of the classes at Oberlin Elementary School.

Mr. Stanley said he holds the food drive each year because he thinks it helps fill a need.

College president talks in Colby

By KEVIN BOTTRELL
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Fort Hays State University President Ed Hammond stopped in Colby to talk about the upcoming legislative session in January and the effect it could have on higher education.

Dr. Hammond was on a five-day tour of the state, from east to west, talking to newspapers, clubs and citizens. During the stop Nov. 11, he said he is particularly concerned about the upcoming session because it will come after some major federal budget decisions. If the "debt supercommittee" doesn't come up with a deal for \$1.5 trillion in spending cuts by Thanksgiving, he said, the government will have to make across the board cuts to reach that amount. Dr. Hammond said that scenario could lead to reductions for higher education, some from unlikely areas.

If no deal is agreed to, he said, the Department of Defense could get cut by as much as \$600 million. Dr. Hammond said Fort Hays has already received notice from the Marine Corps that it may cut education benefits by 75 percent. This poses problems, he said, since many students are veterans who have tuition paid for by the military. Dr. Hammond said about 12 percent of the credit hours being taken online right now are being paid for by the Defense Department.

Budget cuts could also affect Pell grants and other need-based aid, he said, and hurt in other ways. If the federal government decides to take away highway improvement money, for example, states may have to pick up the bill and transfer money from higher education.

He said, "We'll know before the legislative session starts."

This year, Dr. Hammond said, he plans to go to the Legislature to ask for several increases. He will ask the Legislature to fully pay for the Kansas Academy of Math and Science, a program where high school juniors and seniors spend their last two years at Fort Hays taking advanced math and science classes and doing research. When they graduate, they will have 68 college credits.

Dr. Hammond said the academy was only given enough money last year to support half the number of students it could have, and next year he will ask for enough money to have a full 40 students.

Despite worries, Dr. Hammond said he remains optimistic about his university. Enrollment has reached 13,000, both online and in person, he said, adding that the university's goal is 20,000 by 2020.

Enrollment across the Regents system only grew by 856 from 2010, he said, and Fort Hays grew by 919. Dr. Hammond said there are more students taking online courses than ever — about 4,500 — and his goal is to double that in 10 years.

Dr. Hammond said he has been talking about higher education as an economic issue. A study by Goss and Associates on the economic impact of the Kansas Regents University System says the system as a whole has an impact of \$7.3 billion per year. This includes \$3.4 billion in wages paid out and \$485 million in tax collections. The study lists Colby Community College's impact at \$36 million and Fort Hays State's at \$256 million.

Among Kansas residents, he noted, those with no high school

degrees have an unemployment rate of 22 percent. Those with high school degrees are experiencing 14 percent unemployment, while for those with college degrees, the rate is only 5 percent. Dr. Hammond said college graduates make \$22,000 more a year on average and pay \$6,000 more in state taxes.

Dr. Hammond said he is worried about access to higher education, especially with increasing tuition and fees at many of the state's universities. Fort Hays has managed to keep tuition low, he said, because it has cut costs. Fort Hays charges about \$105 per credit hour, 20 percent less than two comparable institutions, Pittsburg State and Emporia State.

Dr. Hammond said he has two main strategies for keeping costs low: The first is efficiency. The university moved to a four-day work week, redid many staff contracts and moved its entire summer semester to online-only.

Fort Hays has its own generators, Dr. Hammond said, which it uses to offset peak power demand in August and September, helping save on energy bills year around.

The university is beginning a wind turbine project. Dr. Hammond said the college plans to build two 2.1-megawatt turbines just outside the Hays city limits that, when completed, could power the entire campus.

The second financial boost comes from the university's China program, a branch of Fort Hays offering classes in Xinzheng, China. It has about 3,600 students and 51 faculty and is making money. Dr. Hammond said he is able to put about \$4 million a year from the China program into keeping tuition low.

Rawlins County Health Center

RAWLINS COUNTY HEALTH CENTER COMMUNITY CALENDAR

707 Grant Atwood, KS 67730
(785) 626-3211

Bringing Specialized Healthcare To Your Community

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Dr. Reeves Podiatry	2 Dr. Reeves Podiatry	3
4	5 Dr. Rubinowitz Oncology	6 Dr. Frederick C. Miller Cardiology	7	8	9	10
	Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab		Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab Diabetic Clinic	MRI's	Cardiac Rehab	
11	12	13	14 Dr. Frankum Surgery	15	16 Dr. Curtis Cardiology	17
	Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab	DEXA Bone Density	Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab Diabetic Clinic	MRI's	Nuclear Medicine Cardiac Rehab	
18	19	20 Dr. Frederick C. Miller Cardiology	21	22 Dr. Reeves Podiatry	23 Dr. Reeves Podiatry	24
	Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab	Mammograms	Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab Diabetic Clinic	MRI'S	Cardiac Rehab	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
	Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab		Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab Diabetic Clinic	MRI'S	Nuclear Medicine Cardiac Rehab	

December 2011

TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH A VISITING PHYSICIAN, PLEASE CALL (785) 626-3211 Cheryl Banister, RN Specialty Clinic Director