

Tuesday is time to cast your ballot

You may not have heard, but next Tuesday – believe it or not – is Election Day.

Americans all over the country will be casting their ballots and watching the news as the results crawl in, and in Decatur County, we'll have three races to watch for.

For the presidency, residents will be tuned in to see if Democrat Barack Obama maintains his position against the Republican candidate, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney.

Running for state senator in the 40th District are Democrat Allen Schmidt of Hays and Republican Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell. The two, both incumbent senators, were

thrown together in the district when federal judges drew new district lines.

On the county level, Democrat Brad Long is running against Republican Brad Marcuson and write-in candidate Robert Jones for the job of commissioner for the 3rd District.

Voters also have three ballot questions to decide:

Whether or not the county should allow corporate dairies to run a business here. Because of a previous vote, corporate dairies aren't allowed, although family-owned dairies could be.

While the question is written in legal jargon, a yes vote is to allow

the corporate dairies and a no vote is against the idea.

The second local question is about approving a sales-tax increase to pay for a new swimming pool in Oberlin. The question is again written in legal jargon, but basically asks if the voter is in favor of a 1.5 percent sales tax increase to pay for a new pool.

A yes vote is in favor of the pool and a no vote is against it.

The last question is a statewide constitutional amendment that would allow the Legislature to classify boats, jet skis and other watercraft separately for purposes of property-tax valuation. The (See CAST on Page 10A)

An Editorial

New pool needed for town to grow

Anyone who thinks a swimming pool is a luxury has not watched our children walking to the pool each day, towels slung over their shoulders, flip-flops slapping the hot, dusty pavement.

The pool is the place for kids on summer days.

Anyone who thinks no pool at all is an alternative has not talked with young families looking for a place to raise kids, or with business owners looking for a place to move. Having a decent pool should be an economic development priority.

Anyone who thinks the existing pool can be patched up at an acceptable price to last another 60 years hasn't spent much time down there.

The pool wastes a couple million gallons of water each summer because of leaks and because the two smaller pools are not connected to the filtration system. They must be drained and refilled with water from the main pool each morning.

The filtration system we have can hardly keep up with the big pool, let alone the filthy water from the kiddie pools. And the constant refilling means the pool always starts the day cold and the heater runs more than it should, wasting money and gas.

A renovation would mean major work on the bathhouse and pool area to make them comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act regulations on handicapped access. Renovation would not be cheap, in short, and even then, we'd not have a great pool, just an old one that had been patched up.

The city's Pool Committee has come up with a sound plan.

The proposed pool will cost a little over \$2 million, (See POOL on Page 10A)

Senators debate issues

By KEVIN BOTTRELL

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State Senators Ralph Ostmeyer and Allen Schmidt debated topics ranging from water policy to the state retirement system in a live appearance Wednesday night on Smoky Hills Public Television.

If you missed it, the debate will run again as part of an election marathon starting at 1 p.m. Sunday.

Moderator Chapman Rackaway, associate professor of political science at Fort Hays State University, asked the candidates about water policy, since Gov. Sam Brownback has brought the issue to the forefront in the past several years.

"For my 18 years, all we've done is talk," Sen. Ostmeyer said. "The past two years is the first time we've had a governor that's said water is going to be an issue in the campaign."

Sen. Ostmeyer said the state has made good strides, especially with the Local Enhanced Management Area concept, which allows landowners to have more of a hand in developing a conservation plan.

"It's working in the Sheridan County 6 (area)," he said. "Now, we have to sell it to the public. Expand it. We all have to buy into it for kids and grandkids."

Sen. Schmidt agreed on the need to preserve water for future generations, especially since the "bedrock" industries in northwest Kansas, ag-

(See DEBATE on Page 10A)



SQUINTING IN THE SUN, Justin Byarlay of Mid-States Energy Works out of Salina surveyed part of the city's main electrical substation, which was being prepped Monday for installation of a refurbished transformer. - Herald staff photo by Stephanie DeCamp

Equipment installation causes power outages

By STEPHANIE DECAMP

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The City of Oberlin experienced a flurry of power outages Monday, as city workers switched the city's power over to new equipment so the city's refurbished transformer could be installed on Tuesday.

City officials said the outages hadn't been expected, so they made no announcement of the work.

"I didn't really expect any (outages) today," said City Foreman Dan Castle. "We ran into a rocky road there. It's been a long, hard day, but we had all the professionals here, so we went ahead (with the preparation work)."

"Tomorrow should go smoothly," he said laughing, the emphasis on the word 'should.' "I don't see any more unforeseeable interruptions."

Decatur County dispatch got a warning Monday morning that there could be outages, said city administrative assistant Steve Zodrow, but the town was, for the most part, left in the dark for parts of the day. Even the city offices at The Gateway had no power, though the lights in the building were on.

Flickers of power were felt throughout the Oberlin area. Both the Decatur County Hospital and Decatur

Community High School reported a loss of power, and no prior warning.

"Ours didn't last more than an hour or so," said Principal Ben Jimenez. "It wasn't anything we couldn't handle."

The Decatur County Hospital and Family Practice Clinic, however, had a longer interruption and the clinic had no telephone service.

"It was out for an hour at first," said interim Administrator Charlie Myers. "and then a good two, two and a half hours. We do have a generator, though, so no emergency services were interrupted. But our business offices were closed most of the day."

The refurbished transformer should be installed without a hitch to services, said Bruce Marigh, who works for Mid-States Energy Works out of Salina. But this won't mean the project is over, he said. The work will take another couple of months.

The substation was damaged in a fire Dec. 19 after a raccoon entered the building and started a fire. "Sparky," as he has since been named, caused hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of damage, and there is still no set date for when the repairs will be all done.

Spook parade to change

This year's Spook Parade will be slightly different, as kids will be parading first and getting candy second, instead of going from business to business trick-or-treating like they usually do.

The kids will have a costume contest at the Good Samaritan Center then parade down Penn Avenue at 4 p.m. Only after reaching the end of the parade route, by the fire engine, will they get their candy.

The Oberlin Business Alliance decided on these changes at its meeting Oct. 3.

"We're trying to make it so it's not so chaotic," said alliance member Kurt Vollertsen at the meeting, "so that there will actually be a parade and not just a bunch of kids running around everywhere."

Instead of having businesses give candy away at the door, they should drop it off at the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, where volunteers will divide the spoils into bags. Members of the group Paint Oberlin Patriotic will be handing out the bags after the parade.

Coming up next is the alliance's Business-to-Business Tour, starting at 1 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 11. On the tour, people can get a sneak preview at what the businesses have to offer for the holidays.

Heading off to state



THE DECATUR COMMUNITY HIGH cross county team paraded through town as the girls left for the state meet in Wamego on Friday, following a fire truck full of cheerleaders and supporters. Darbi Rouse (front) and Caitie Shields waved out the windows of the van on Penn Avenue. The girls took fourth place in the state meet. See story on Page 8A.

- Herald photo by Susan May

Group sees areas that need more help

The turnout may have been a little light, but the Decatur Tomorrow "community conversation" last Monday identified three problem areas for the county and laid the groundwork for three action teams to take them on.

About 35 people came to the meeting, mediated by Terry Woodbury, whose nonprofit Public Square Communities works with towns across the state.

"I came to my first meeting here in Oberlin seven years ago," Mr. Woodbury said at the beginning of the meeting. "There were 50 houses for sale and some real problems."

Mr. Woodbury said that while reviewing his notes from then and now, he realized that Decatur County and Oberlin had gone from a community losing ground to one

having growing pains, which is a good thing. More young people are living here, he said, and a lot of those houses have filled up, but now the area is struggling to accommodate the new people and trying to revamp its appearance to draw still more.

Danielle Leitner, a member of the city's pool committee who was at the conversation, said the group came up with three areas to focus on for improvements: websites and communications, medical services and new jobs.

"We nominated people who might want to volunteer on the subjects," she said. "There wasn't much goal setting, more going in-depth about what needs to improve in those areas."

Mrs. Leitner said she and her

(See GROUP on Page 10A)

Time to change Sunday

Don't forget to set your clocks back one hour before you go to bed this Saturday, or you may find yourself early for church on Sunday.

The seasonal time change this week marks a return to standard time from Daylight Saving Time, which starts the second Sunday of March every year. The official change comes at 2 a.m. Sunday, but most people just set their clocks before going to bed.

"Spring forward, Fall back," is a

common saying used to remember the twice-yearly event, which depending on your opinion, is either a wise conservation of energy or perfectly useless. Either way, it marks a change in clocks in order to take advantage of the changing amount of available sunlight as the tilted earth revolves around the sun.

