

Council choices

Time for voters to make choices

Voters have seven candidates to choose from for the Oberlin City Council election on Tuesday, April 3, and County Clerk Marilyn Horn says she hopes to see at least 50 percent voter turnout in the city.

Polls will be open at 7 a.m. and close at 7 p.m. election day, although advance voting has already starting.

Candidates include three who have sat on the council before, a former teacher, a retired veterinarian, a former city employee and a college teacher who is a write-in. There are only three seats open, meaning that the top three vote-getters will be elected for four-year terms.

There are also three seats open on the Oberlin School

Board, but no competition for any of them. Only voters in the districts involved can cast ballots in those elections. Candidates for those posts and city offices in outlying towns will be profiled in next week's paper.

Stories by KIMBERLY BRANDT

Veterinarian looks at future

Jay Anderson says he threw his hat into the ring for the April 3 City Council election because he thinks Oberlin has a future and wants to help make decisions that will benefit the area.

Many of those decisions will be on the city's infrastructure, including the water project, he said. Dr. Anderson, a retired veterinarian, said he doesn't have an agenda, but he is interested in doing what is best for the area and helping make those "hard little decisions." He said he doesn't see the council as being involved in "micro-management," but looking to the future.

"What Oberlin will be tomorrow depends a lot on what we do today or what we don't do," he said.

One thing the council has done recently is approve hiring a fourth officer for the police department, which he said

will affect the future of the city. Dr. Anderson said this is an older community with many widows who need to feel safe, and he thinks an extra officer helps.

Dr. Anderson said the city needs to offer a competitive benefit package to hire and keep employees. Although he said he has always been self-employed, family members have told him how important having health insurance coverage is in making a job choice.

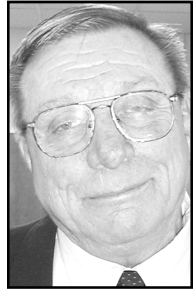
Whether the city will pay for health insurance for the employee and their family is something Dr. Anderson said he would need to look into more before making a decision.

Serving on a sub-committee of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., Dr. Anderson said, he sees the importance in bringing young families to the area. He said to do this, the community has to provide the facilities and a positive atmosphere.

He said he doesn't want to try to switch the area from an agriculture community but to look at different options to add to the economy.

As a retired veterinarian Dr. Anderson was involved with the board who helped put the addition on the library.

He is married to Ann and he has four children, Steve, Jill, Amy and Jane.



Jay Anderson

Teacher seeks to give back

Phil Erickson says he decided to run for the City Council in the April 3 election in an effort to give back to the community what he has received throughout his life.

Living in the area as a child and graduating from Decatur Community High School in 1953, Mr. Erickson said Oberlin is his home.

If he is elected, he said, he thinks the brick streets need to be maintained and repaired. He said he wants to get the streets and the sidewalks back in shape.

Mr. Erickson said the next step in the water project needs to be a purification system, and the council needs to start putting some money aside to pay for it.

Mr. Erickson said he would also like to see money being saved before the

city equipment goes bad. He said the city needs to have in mind what may need to be bought before the equipment breaks down.

Instead of a salary increase to help pay for employee's families insurance for the first year the city doesn't pay it, an option the council is looking at now, Mr. Erickson said he would like to see the city continue to offer insurance coverage.

He said employees should have the choice to take the benefit or not.

He has never been on a council before, he said, and it will be a new experience for him if he is elected. He said he doesn't have any "axes to grind."

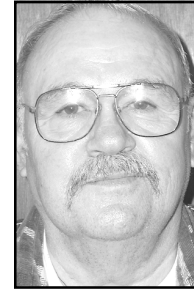
Mr. Erickson said he agreed with the

decision to hire a fourth police officer because the city needs 24-hour coverage to keep the crime out.

On council, he said, he will be open to talk with people and will seek public comment.

"I will try to represent the public the best I can," said Mr. Erickson. "I will try to listen to all the comments of all the electors."

Mr. Erickson taught science in Oberlin for eight years. He has also served on the museum and mental health boards here. He has three children, Ken, Kristine and Mary.



Phil Erickson

Former member wants seat

What is best for Oberlin is what Judy Cathcart said she wants to focus on if elected on April 3 for a four year term on City Council.

Mrs. Cathcart, who served a term on the council from 1991-1995 and then was defeated as a write-in, said she decided to run again because she wants to help Oberlin prepare for the future. By attending almost every council meeting the last few years and asking questions, she said, she feels prepared for the task.

"I feel out of all the candidates, I am the most informed," said Mrs. Cathcart. "I have attended almost all of the council meetings for the last two years on my own time. I have taken notes and asked questions when they have allowed me to."

She said she has kept up-to-date on the water project, city employee health insurance, whether to hire a fourth police officer, buying equipment and other ins and outs of city government.

"I think the water project is something which should have been started a long time ago," said Mrs. Cathcart. "I

think the council is taking appropriate steps to where we need to be to fall into accordance with the federal regulations and where we need to be in the future."

Mrs. Cathcart said she would like to set up an account in the city budget to put money aside to buy equipment. She said she would like to see money build in that account so the city can cover expenditures for equipment without having to pull money from benefits or transfer from the electrical fund.

Recently, the council decided to hire a fourth police officer after one left. Mrs. Cathcart said she could see both sides, keeping just three officers or hiring another one. She said by keeping just three, the city would be paying more in overtime. Mrs. Cathcart said in the long run, it wouldn't be financially sound. The job could probably be done by three, but officers would be stressed and burn out easily.

As the only woman on the ballot, Mrs. Cathcart said she could add a different view to the council.

"I thrive on being active in the community and having goals set and met," she said. "People need to go into this with a sense of community."

Mrs. Cathcart has a daughter Stephanie, 23, and a step-daughter Sarah, 20. Her husband Bill runs the county trash service and is the Decatur County Rural Fire Chief and Oberlin Fire Chief.

Mrs. Cathcart has been a member of the Oberlin Business and Professional Women for 10 years, spending two years as president. She is the vice president of the Oberlin-Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, involved with St. John's Lutheran Church, and a member of the Decatur County Stand Against Violence and Oberlin Business Alliance. She also works at Duckwalls and Sappa Valley



Judy Cathcart

Man says he can improve city

Richard Russ says he decided to run in the April 3 election because he thinks he can help improve the city, using an ability to think through problems and four years' experience on the council from 1993-1997.

He served one term, and since has run for mayor twice, losing both times to Charles Frickey.

Mr. Russ said during the four years he sat on council, he made some mistakes, but he hopes to take those and learn from them.

He disagrees with many decisions made by the last council, and said he would change the city's direction for the last couple of years.

Mr. Russ said the plan for blending water is a mistake. He would stop the project, he said, and use his drilling experience to look at a new way to drill a well and to encase it, so ground water wouldn't contaminate the city supply.

By doing this, he said, the city would prevent the nitrates from con-

taminating its water instead of treating them. Mr. Russ said he would also check with different engineers and geologists on the project.

Mr. Russ said he didn't think a fourth officer was needed by the police department, though the council decided recently to replace an officer who left.

"We are a small community," he said. "We aren't growing and need to start cutting corners money wise."

He said the last time he sat on the council, he was sure people knew he didn't favor the fourth officer or a new police car and he still doesn't.

Mr. Russ said he doesn't know if it would be cost effective, but he would like to look into moving the city offices out of The Gateway and back downtown.

He said he would look at moving the police back to the old site at the inter-

section of U.S. 36 and U.S. 83.

Another area he said needs further research is city employee health insurance. Mr. Russ said he wasn't aware the city paid the whole package for the family and thinks that is the only employer around here which does that.

"I think that I can do the job," said Mr. Russ. "I have no personal agendas. What I do will be for the benefit of the community."

Mr. Russ and his wife Clara have seven grown children, Della, Edward, Julie, Starla, Jane, Chuck and Ruth. He and his wife are members of the United Church of Oberlin and he is a member of the American Legion. For the last 12 years Mr. Russ has driven a school bus three times a day.



Richard Russ

Retired officer seeks position as write-in

Ken Shobe declared that he is running for Oberlin City Council as a write-in candidate just last week, but he says that he will be out "pounding the pavement," campaigning for votes for the April 3 election.

Mr. Shobe, an Air Force officer and pilot for over 20 years, attended his first city council meeting on Thursday night. He said he still has a lot to learn, including procedural information.

At the meeting, the council discussed rebuilding sidewalks in the city, which Mr. Shobe said is something that needs to be done.

"I think with the older population of Oberlin we need to get our sidewalks up to par," he said. "The city needs to maintain our downtown."

Another topic was nitrates in the water at Sappa Valley Youth Ranch. Mr. Shobe said he isn't well informed on the water project, but said he will research it.

Living on the hill on the west side of the city, he said he experiences low water pressure and sees the nearby apartments slowly turn brown because of the minerals in the city water. Both of these problems need to be fixed, he said.

He grew up here, and he said he wants

to keep Oberlin a City of Pride. Although that image hasn't deteriorated, it hasn't been improved on, and all people in the city need to work on keeping the city a source of pride.

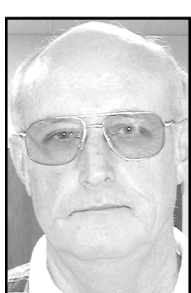
"We need to keep the stores going which we have and support local business," said Mr. Shobe.

To help keep Oberlin growing and bring in young families, Mr. Shobe said we need to look at the quality schools we have here and try to support local resources.

He said he doesn't think the city can support a major new business, but can start growing by looking toward our own people. Success can come from home grown businesses, he said, like Custom Trophy and Spring Creek Castings.

Although Mr. Shobe said he has a lot to learn about council, he said he feels he can add to the government body and is ready to learn.

Mr. Shobe now teaches computer science at McCook Community College. He and his wife Janice have a son, Mark, 22, who lives in Oberlin.



Ken Shobe

Councilman wants another four years

Sitting on the City Council for the last four years has helped Stan McEvoy learn the ins and outs of the city government and given him the experience for another four years, which is why he says he is seeking office in the April 3 election.

Mr. McEvoy said he doesn't see any big changes in the way things are handled by the city. There will always be different opinions, he said, but that is the way that council is supposed to work. Things have been working the way they should, he said, and everything has settled down compared to four years ago when he started on the council.

Recently the council has been discussing possible changes in employee health care coverage. Now the city pays for each employee and their family. Mr. McEvoy was on a sub-committee to look at options.

"I feel strong that with the increase in health care costs, which keep skyrocketing, the city needs to move ahead on this," he said.

His suggestion has been to pay the employee's portion of the health coverage and half of the families and then do a one-time salary increase to pay for the initial year the family will pay

for the plan. Mr. McEvoy said changes probably wouldn't go into effect until the first of the year because the council is working on whether the money for the raise can be put in a "cafeteria" fund for employees.

Although he said it is early to say how the sidewalks downtown should be taken care of, he thinks something needs to be done.

"The downtown sidewalks are deteriorating," said Mr. McEvoy. "We need to do something about them, maybe a cost share with businesses to help replace them."

Over the last four years, he said, he has done some things on council which weren't popular but needed to be done to keep the city functioning.

"We are getting ready to have three seats up for election and two of those aren't running," said Mr. McEvoy. "I think it is important to put people back in office who understand what is going on. It is important to have continuity."

Mr. McEvoy married his wife Lisa in November. He is a member of the Oberlin Convention and Visitors Bureau board, the Lions Club and the Oberlin Jaycees.



Stan McEvoy

Former lineman knows city jobs

After 13 years working on the city line crew, Jim Soderlund has put in his two weeks and is seeking a seat on the city council in the April 3 election.

"I'm not happy with the way the council has been running things," he said. "I think the city should be run differently."

Basically, he said, the council needs to turn the city back over to the people who run the departments and get rid of the "micro-management" some council members have pushed.

Mr. Soderlund said his inside knowledge of how the city runs, including the everyday activities, makes him the best candidate for the job. When he was hired, he said, he was offered a benefit package with the job, the same package others have been offered. Recently the council has looked at reducing that health care package to save money.

"If we need to save money, we shouldn't take it from the employees," he said.

If elected, Mr. Soderlund said, cutbacks in employee health insurance need to be reconsidered. He said the city is already saving money because they have a smaller employee base

than when he started.

Although he hasn't served on the council before, he said he watches the meetings on television and has followed some of the projects, including the water improvements.

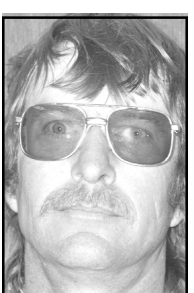
Mr. Soderlund said the city needs quality drinking water. The council has done a good job so far, but he said the work needs to be continued.

Mr. Soderlund said the council was right in allowing the police chief to hire a fourth officer. With the youth ranch, he said, a fourth officer is needed, but he doesn't feel the department needs new cars every year.

There are other departments in the city which need equipment replaced. Mr. Soderlund said when he first started with the city, the council saved money to buy equipment and that needs to be done again.

If elected, he said, although he has a general view of how the city operates, he needs to learn the finer details of the council, but he said that shouldn't be a problem.

Mr. Soderlund and his wife Penny have three children, Jessica, Jamie and Jean Marie. He is a volunteer and assistant chief with the Decatur County Fire Department.



Jim Soderlund

School board to take bids on improvements at high school

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The Oberlin School Board decided last Monday night to get bids for several improvement projects at Decatur Community High School which will use the first \$100,000 set aside from the capital outlay fund.

Superintendent Duane Steele asked the board to approved each project separately to allow more people the opportunity to bid. The board agreed to approve each one to allow bids.

Projects bids will be accepted:

- to remodel the main varsity locker room.
- to remodel the auditorium so it is handicapped accessible and meets the requirements from the American Disabilities Act.
- to tile the second floor of the school.
- to buy a new lawnmower, since the school is renting land

for practice fields and will have more grass to take care of.

- to remodel two restrooms across from the cafeteria, including new fixtures and drain work.

In a meeting which lasted a little over an hour, Superintendent Steele said the district has filled out all the forms needed for the upcoming bond issue. He said Steve Shogren, bond salesman, will be at the district office at 6:30 p.m. today. After the Kids Committee, which will help sell the bond issue, meets, money will be raised to help supply materials for the election. He said district money can't be used.

Superintendent Steele said the board needs to remember that the school television station or the Dictator can't be used to persuade people to vote yes on the bond issue. He said they can be used to persuade people to vote, as long as they don't tell them how to vote.

Board President Barb Olson asked if Mr. Shogren could

provide information for the board members on what their role is and how to answer questions.

Board members had the chance to meet one of the newest members of the district staff technology director, Jess Randel. Mr. Randel said he devised a program where any teacher in the district can send their technical problem to him over the computer and he can print out a ticket and prioritize what needs to be done first. This way, he said, teachers aren't calling the district office all the time looking for him.

He said the school computer systems look good, although some equipment needs to be replaced.

The board asked about wireless technology, which Mr. Randel said is something the district will look at but suggests it waits at least a year so all the bugs are worked out of the systems. Until then, the plan is to continue buying portable computers which can be used with a wireless system,

said Superintendent Steele.

In other business, board members:

- Decided the employee recognition dinner will be at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 17, at The Gateway.
- Held a closed session for 15 and 10 minutes for negotiations. After coming out, the board decided Mrs. Olson would be chief of the negotiating team with member Chris Bailey, and Jeannie Martin as the alternative.
- Reminded members of a special meeting at 7:30 p.m. Monday for recommendations for re-employment of certified personnel.
- Hear that the preliminary numbers for the 2001-2002 kindergarten class is 37.
- Agreed to let depository bids since their agreement with Commercial Federal Bank will expire at the end of June.
- Held a 20-minute closed session for personnel.