

Council looks at sewer rates from other towns

The Oberlin City Council asked the city administrator Tuesday to plug some new numbers into the formula which figures out the sewer rate for the city so they can pay for a renovation project at the waste water plant.

At a recent meeting, the council started the discussion on the sewer rates, but wanted to see what people in other area communities pay first.

Oberlin residents pay \$1.27 per 100 cubic feet, with the minimum bill being \$6.35 per month. On average, a customer pays \$8.75 a month for sewer here, said City Administrator Gary Shike.

Although measured differently in Atwood, the minimum bill is \$10.25, in Colby \$4.56, in Norton \$4, in Oakley \$7.50, in Hoxie \$3, in St. Francis \$13.50, in Hill City \$9 and in Goodland \$7.40, Mr. Shike said.

He said when renovations at the waste plant start, the city will probably be forced into a different formula and at that point, they would probably raise the rate. He suggested they stay with the formula they have now but have a reserve/replacement account so they could save some money. This way, he said, they wouldn't have to zero the account out at the end of every year.

Councilman Ken Shobe said he thought by law they had to zero the account out. Mr. Shike said the city has to with the electric and water, but not with sewer.

The city would have to rewrite the resolution for the sewer plant to allow them to have a reserve/replacement account, he said.

Councilman Jerry Fidele suggested that City Attorney Steve Hirsch work on re-writing it, including new numbers in the formula.

Normally the sewer rates aren't set until April or May, said Mr. Shike. Before setting the rates, the city measures customers winter water usage to get an estimate of sewer use. Basically, the city needs to see how much they want to set aside in a year, said Mr. Shobe. Mr. Fidele asked the expected

Council Round-up

At its meeting Tuesday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Asked the city administrator to plug some new numbers into the sewer rate formula to see what people would have to pay to finance a \$2 million renovation at the waste water plant. Story to left.

- Heard they have a few options at the waste plant, but only have until December 2005 to meet the new requirements set by the state. Story to come.

- Heard that the city's health insurance plan with Blue Cross/Blue Shield will jump 44 percent this year. The council may decide to go with a state plan. Story to come.

- Decided to give Sunflower Cinema \$100 a month towards its city bill. Story to come.

- Agreed not to pay an animal control officer to patrol any more after a six-month trial period brought only three extra dogs on off the streets. Story on Page 1A.

- Heard the water crew measured the level of water in the wells and the level is down two feet from where it was last year at this time. Story to come.

cost of the project. Engineer Thaniel Monaco, with Miller and Associates, said the project could cost around \$2 million.

Mr. Fidele said they could plan on a price of \$3 million and then work backwards from there. They would figure what the city needs each year to retire that debt in 30 years, and from there the city could set the rates.

Although the council didn't decide anything about the rates, Mr. Shobe said they do know that they aren't going to lower than what the average residents pay.

Mayor Gary Walter said at this time, though, they are just gathering information.

Ambulance crew looks for new cardiac monitor

Ambulance Director Patrick Pomeroy told Decatur County commissioners Tuesday morning he has started to look for a cardiac monitor to purchase with grant money from the Modern Woodmen of America.

Mr. Pomeroy said he had a problem with one of the monitors this week. The first thing that goes out on the machines is the battery, he said, so he will borrow a battery from Jennings and see if it works. He said they are using an older machine as a back up now.

The Ambulance Department has a little over \$2,000 from the Modern Woodmen, said Mr. Pomeroy.

The director said he was looking to see how much cash he would have at the end of the year, but hopes it will be around \$12,000. County Clerk Marilyn Horn said that he will get money in February from what people have paid on their taxes. She said she didn't know how much it would be to start the new year.

Mr. Pomeroy said he had found several monitors. They run around \$17,000 for the deluxe model and go down in price from there. He said he could get a monitor and then add the blood pressure and other options for around \$10,000.

In other business, the commissioners:

County Countdown

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Looked at a diagram of the Oberlin Speedway at the fair grounds to find out where a privacy fence would be built. Story to come.

- Heard the ambulance department plans to use some grant money to purchase another cardiac monitor. Story to left

- Held their annual "changing of the drawers" after electing Commissioner Pat Glenn as chairwoman. Story to come.

- Talked with Sheriff Ken Badsky who will be manning the office alone for the next few months. Story on Page 1A.

- Heard that the Jennings ambulance had 26 calls last year and 23 in 2001.

- Heard the service already has made nine calls this year.

- Learned that Mr. Pomeroy is teaching emergency medical technician classes in Norton for his training, which he said is going well.



NORCATUR FIREMEN made around 250 pizzas Saturday at the Norcatour City Building. The men used an assembly-line method, starting the pizza at one end of the counter and sending it down the line where each man added a different ingredient.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

Firemen top pizzas for fund

The men stood on either side of the counter, putting handfuls of mushrooms, sausage, pepperoni, onions and cheese on the round bread.

It was the annual Norcatour Firemen's pizza day. Chief Carl Lyon said the department has made and sold the pizzas as a fund-raiser for three years, although they skipped last year.

The men ask for a donation, he said, and the money goes for updating equipment in the department.

Usually, said Chief Lyon, the firemen make the pizzas on the bye week for football playoffs, but there wasn't a bye week this year so they decided they would work on Saturday.

The 12 men volunteers started to make pizzas about noon on Saturday, and Chief Lyon said he expected them to still be making them into the early evening.

Customers ordered 250 of their homemade pies. Chief Lyon said most of the orders came in ahead of time, but they did get a lot of last-

minute orders this year.

He said the men deliver the pizzas around the area. He said a lot of the pizza goes in Norcatour, but some go to Oberlin and they make a run into Norton. Several workers at the prison there ordered pizzas, and the chief said he would try to deliver them for their break.

The department said they get good deals on the makings for the pizza, working with the Meat Market in Oberlin, Pizza Hut and Jamboree Foods in Norton and Sehnert's Bakery in McCook.

Server causes severe delays in mail

Customers of the [nwkansas.com](http://www.nwkansas.com) Internet service probably noticed over the weekend that e-mail service slowed to a crawl.

The [nwkansas.com](http://www.nwkansas.com) server bogged down, running as much as two days behind in delivering mail.

Efforts to fix the problems began Friday. Tom Betz, director of Internet services, and Evan Barnum, systems administrator, spent most of the day and part of the night Saturday trying to pinpoint the cause.

The system was stashing mail in its database files, but fell woefully behind in dishing it out.

It took until Sunday to isolate an apparently faulty disk drive on the main server.

After the drive was isolated, it took most of the day Sunday for the server to catch up. By midnight, though, it was no more than an hour

behind.

Over the weekend, customers say some messages came in at odd times, often a day or two late. Some messages were doubled up. Others may not have come through at all.


Steve Haynes, president of Nor'West Newspapers, said at least twice in the process, the server turned on itself and began rejecting the stored e-mails. Senders then got a message saying the address was not known, even though it was valid.

"We know this may cause our customers some problems," Mr. Haynes said. "For the most part, the sender just resent the message, so the mail was not lost. If it was unwanted spam, though, it likely won't come back."

As of Monday, the mail server was working as intended, with no delay. Mr. Barnum said there might

be a few short outages later in the week as he replaced the faulty drive and reconfigures the server.

Customers who are still having problems should call Mr. Betz at 785-877-2338.



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District will hold meeting

The Decatur County Conservation District will hold its annual meeting beginning with a supper at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 3, at The Gateway, courtesy of the Decatur County Bankers' Association.

The Kansas Bankers Awards for conservation, windbreak and wildlife will be presented, and winners of the conservation poster contest will be announced.

An election for two three-year terms on the district board will take place during the meeting.

Nominees include Vernon Ketterl and Amanda Grafel, for the area northwest of Oberlin, and Len Randolph and Carl Wahlmeier, Jennings area. Mr. Ketterl and Mike McKenna are finishing terms, but Mr. McKenna has decided not to seek re-election.

Current board members are Lawrence Jennings, chairman; Mr. Ketterl, vice-chairman; Mr. McKenna, treasurer; and Dave Wilson and Ron Bryan.

Make meal reservations by Friday with Diana Solko at the district office, (785) 475-3131, extension 101.

Paint job is ruined

Officers were called to Decatur Community High School around 5:30 p.m. Saturday night when a truck was found damaged.

The 1997 Chevy pickup belonging to Adam Steinmetz was parked in the lot at the high school. When he left the school, Mr. Steinmetz said he found the paint job on the truck ruined. The truck had been scratched with something.

Police Chief Wade Lockhart said there is an estimated \$1,200 of damage. Someone also took a cell phone from inside the truck and threw it against the vehicle. There was an estimated \$75 worth of damage to the phone.

The criminal damage charge is a felony, the chief said, since more than \$500 worth of damage was done. No one has been arrested.

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