

Group to look at options

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
The Oberlin City Council decided Thursday to set up an insurance committee of two employees, the mayor, city administrator and a council member to look at the city's options for health insurance in the face of a 44 percent rate hike.

Mayor Gary Walter said even though the committee will study the options and make a recommendation, the council has the final say.

The city has three insurance proposals to look at, including Blue Cross/Blue Shield, which will increase 44 percent this year; the state plan; and Fortis Health Insurance.

The city can afford the current policy with the increase, but councilmen have asked whether it is wise to spend that much money in a tight budget year. At past meetings, members of the council and administration have voiced concerns about the state's plan.

The third plan is from Fortis, which Councilman Stan McEvoy found on the Internet. Before presenting what he found, Mr. McEvoy said he wanted everyone to know that the policy is not through the insurance agency he works for. He said they do not sell group insurance; it is just a company he found searching the Internet and called for information.

Fortis, he said, was founded in 1892 and is a strong company. With higher deductibles, he said, the policy could save the city almost \$38,000 a year.

The coverage is pretty much the same as what city employees have now, he said.

The deductibles would be \$2,000 for a single person and \$4,000 for a family, he said. That is higher than what the city now has, which is \$500 for a single and \$1,500 for a family.

One idea would be for the city to pay half of the deductibles for the employees, said Mr. McEvoy. He said that could be done by giving each employee a credit card for half of the deductible that could be used for medical visits. For example a single person would have a card with \$1,000 on it. That way, when the person went in for an exam, they could pay with the card and it is done. The employee would then be responsible for the second half of the deductible.

Mr. McEvoy said one of the drawbacks would be who is in the firm's network and who isn't. Most of the hospitals in the network are in Kansas, so there could be problems when patients are sent to Kearney, Neb., or Denver.

He said children are covered to age 19, except for full-time students, who are covered to age 23. Mr. McEvoy said Fortis does not do monthly printouts unless requested.

Mayor Walter asked what direction the council wanted to go with the insurance. Councilman Ken Shobe said he would like to hear from the employees.

This isn't something, said Mr. McEvoy, that needs to be decided tonight. He said on group health, once the company has all the city's medical information, the Fortis plan could go up as much as 67 percent. Mr. McEvoy said the city isn't locked in even if quoted a firm number. He said the representative he had been working with said he normally was within 10 to 20 percent of what the actual price would be during preliminary work.

The council agreed to have the mayor appoint a committee and talk about insurance at a future meeting.

Time changes for program

The Heartland Share distribution time has been changed, effective this Saturday.

Pick-up will be between 8:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. at the ambulance barn. The truck will be in Oberlin around 8 a.m. for those wishing to help unload.



Speech students show off talents

PLAYING A DENTAL PATIENT, Anthony Marshall (above) was less than enthusiastic with the dentist, sister Andrea Marshall, who was about to operate without anesthetic. Dane Anderson (right) showed what madness was like in a sketch about the death of Edgar Allen Poe when members of the Decatur Community High speech team performed for the Oberlin Rotary Club last week.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes



Road crew busy with gravel

The Decatur County Road and Bridge Department has kept busy this winter with graveling projects around the county.

Supervisor Tim Stallman said at the county commission meeting Tuesday, Feb. 11, that the crew was just about done with a project on the Harlan/Roosevelt township line. At that time, there was about a half a mile of graveling left to finish.

The crew has been keeping up with townships as they call in for gravel, he said, and there is a request in Jennings for gravel.

Mr. Stallman said they are putting in some guard rails at the landfill to protect the fuel tanks and other areas.

The crew is also working on general maintenance and small repairs on the equipment. One of the gravel-hauling trucks needs a clutch and

one of the scrapers needs the rear main seal replaced.

Mr. Stallman said after trying for two years to get the "metal man," Eddie Martin out of Stockton, to come to the landfill, someone came out and picked up the pieces. He said there was over two semitrailer loads of metal.

Mr. Stallman said metal comes in steadily and is placed in three piles, one for wire, one for light goods and one for everything else.

The market is poor, he said, and it is hard to get rid of metal.

Mr. Stallman said he had three tarps made for the gravel trailers at Gorman Tarps. He said the price was good and the job was done well. He said there were some problems with the other tarps because they weren't wide enough. With adjustments to the tarps, the ones bought

in town were still cheaper than ordering, he said.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Heard the road department had received a payment from Vance Brothers for using the yard in Jennings, along with a signed contract. The firm is repaving K-383 from Jennings to Clayton this summer.

- Heard that Mr. Stallman still needs to talk with officers in Harlan Township about possible road closings.

- Heard everything went smoothly for the crew after the last snow the county received. Mr. Stallman said the crew first goes out and opens the hospital, airport and emergency routes, then when it stops snowing the crew goes back out and tries to get the rest of the roads open.

County back to drawing board on bid

The county noxious weed and road and bridge departments are back to the drawing board after a bid for a roadside spray truck the departments were going to share fell through.

The Decatur County commissioners accepted the \$18,000 bid at their meeting Tuesday, Feb. 11. The bid from Truck Town included a new transmission.

At the commissioners' next meeting, Noxious Weed Director Gaylen Huntley said the transmission was actually going to cost an extra \$3,000.

The original transmission that was bid was too small for the truck, owner Kirk Young explained later, so the \$3,000 difference was for a larger transmission. The transmission was not coming from Truck Town but a separate company, he said.

Mr. Huntley said he tried to call all of the commissioners when he found out about the price difference but couldn't get in touch with Doyle Brown.

He said he is going to start the bid process over.

Mr. Unger said he called the Decatur County Farm Bureau about three bag phones the county found recently. He said the farm bureau is still part of a project where the phones are reprogrammed to call 911 and then distributed to people who are in violent situations.

The commissioners agreed to give the phones to the Farm Bureau

for the program.

In other business, commissioners:

- Appointed Greg Grafel as Finley Township clerk.

- Held a 10-minute closed session for non elected personnel.

- Agreed at their last meeting for Vickie Bailey to be appointed to the county Health Foundation.

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Ambulance service tests new monitor

By KIMBERLY BRANDT
Sticky, round circles placed on the left side of County Commissioner Doyle Brown's body held leads to check his heart, while a blood pressure cuff around one arm and a white oxygen sensor over one fingertip checked vital signs.

It wasn't a medical emergency. Mr. Brown was the guinea pig at a commission meeting last Tuesday for a new Zoll M Series cardiac monitor purchased by the ambulance department.

Ambulance Director Patrick Pomeroy hooked Mr. Brown (who is an ambulance volunteer in Jennings) to the machine. In about a minute, he said, he can have a person's heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen level from the monitor. He said he can also enter the patient's name and identification number into the machine.

The monitor prints a strip with all the vital information on it, said Mr. Pomeroy. It can plug into any ambulance so it doesn't have to operate on batteries.

This monitor, he said, is going to save lives.

He said he plans to demonstrate the machine for the Modern Woodmen of America who gave around \$2,000 towards purchasing it.

Mr. Pomeroy said the ambulance volunteers would have a training session that night to learn how to use the machine.

Mr. Pomeroy said he went to the emergency medical service "Capital Day" last week in Topeka. He said he tried to contact Rep. John Faber but he never could get in touch with him. He said he did have a chance to chat with Sen. Stan Clark.

So far, said Mr. Pomeroy, the department hasn't received any bids for a new ambulance.

Commissioner Pat Glenn inquired if he asked for bids to be back by a certain date, and he said he didn't. Commissioners suggested he send letters out stating the bids need to be in to the clerk's office no later than 5 p.m. Monday, March 10.

Mr. Pomeroy said he received a \$684 mini grant from the Regional

County round-up

At their meetings last Tuesday and March 11, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Heard a request to increase fees to raise money for the Local Environmental Protection Group because the agency may not be getting its money from the state. Story on Page 10A.

- Heard that the bid they had agreed to for a roadside spray truck fell through because the price went up \$3,000. Story below left.

- Tested a Zoll M Series Cardiac Monitor the ambulance department just received. Story to left
- Talked about gravel projects the road and bridge department has been working on. Story below left.

- Decided to give the last \$1,000 for the privacy fence at race track if the rest can be raised from donors. Story below.

Prevention Center for the meth lab task force. Jerry Chambers of the Regional Prevention Center, who is the head of the task force in this area, has been called for active duty with the National Guard, so the money was sent to Mr. Pomeroy.

Commissioner Brown asked how the money will be used. Mr. Pomeroy it will be used for training and public awareness about meth, including advertising for events.

Mrs. Glenn asked if there are quite a few meth labs in the county. Mr. Pomeroy said he didn't want meth use to get out of control, and the way to head it off is through prevention.

Mr. Pomeroy said he would be talking to Sheriff Ken Badsky and the Farm Bureau about joining forces for training.

He told commissioners that Medicare had rejected eight ambulance claims. Mr. Pomeroy said he is gathering information and filling out the forms for a hearing on them.

County will give money for track

The Decatur County commissioners pledged \$1,000 to help build an outer security fence at the Oberlin Speedway.

The catch is that the committee trying to finish the track has to raise the rest of the money before the county will pitch in the \$1,000.

Jack Metcalf, who is one of the group working on completing the track, has been at several recent meetings asking if the county would be giving any money to complete the project.

On Feb. 11, he said he needed to know if the county would be able to give anything before he starts to ap-

proach other groups, including the city.

Personally, said Commissioner Doyle Brown, he would like to see the county give \$2,000 or \$3,000.

Can the county do \$1,000? asked Mr. Metcalf. The commissioners waited until he left.

Mr. Brown said he would like to see the county give \$1,000. Commissioner Ralph Unger said he felt the same way. If the committee raises the money, he suggested then the county could give the last \$1,000. Maybe that will help encourage the completion of the track, he said.

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