

Council looks at rates

The Oberlin City Council agreed Thursday that the city needs to raise \$100,000 from monthly fees to help pay for rebuilding the sewer plant, but didn't agree on how much to raise rates to get to that amount.

Whatever happens, it seems that the average homeowner's bill will go up, maybe more than double current rates.

At the meeting Thursday night the council saw charts show how to get to the average monthly increase needed to pay for a loan from either the state Revolving Loan Fund or the U.S. Department of Agriculture in two or three steps.

A state loan, for 20 years, would require an average residential rate of \$31. A federal loan for 40 years would require an average rate of \$26. The average bill now is \$13.51, city officials say.

The charts showed two increases for the state loan of \$8.50 per month each, this year and next, or an increase of \$5.67 per month each year for the next three years.

The chart for the federal loan showed an increase of \$6 for this year and next or a \$4 increase for this year and the next two years.

City Administrator Gary Shike said the council needs to first decide how much they want to raise by increasing rates before the plant is built. The money can be saved up to help pay for the new plant and keep the loan amount down.

Once the council decides that goal, said Mayor Ken Shobe, they'll know how much they need to borrow, and what the payments will be. That's where the formula comes in to determine what the increase will be.

Mr. Shike said the council also needs to decide which loan program to use.

Councilman Stan McEvoy said he supports the two-step approach because he likes the 20-year loan. The more money the city can come up with beforehand, the lower the loan will be, which will mean the users won't have to pay as much.

The council talked about holding down the costs for those who use less than the base amount of water for the sewer charge.

Mr. Stanley said the city should let the people who use the most water pay for cleaning it up. What if the city raises the minimum rate \$2 and reduces the gallon usage from 500 cubic feet, asked Mr. Stanley, to 300 cubic feet? That way those who use less water won't pay for what they don't use.

Is there any way to run a study to see what the small users use? asked Mr. McEvoy.

Mr. Shike said they could come up with an estimate.

It would be good to see the low end, said Mr. McEvoy.

Mayor Shobe said the council didn't have to make a decision at this meeting, but they needed a goal. There was a consensus that the city wanted to raise \$100,000.

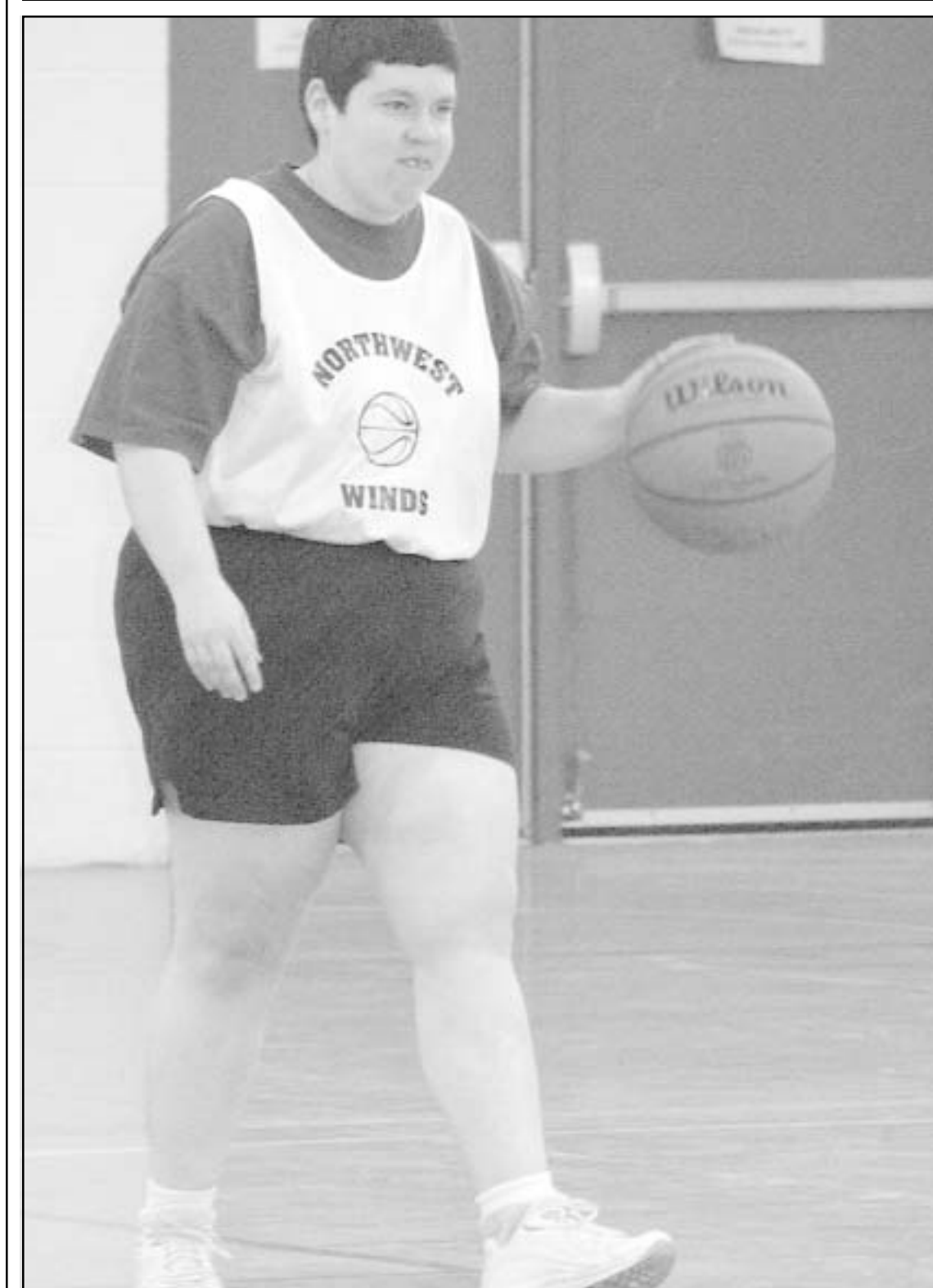
Mr. McEvoy said he would like to know how much people actually use for the next meeting so the council can make a decision.

Jennings man charged with sodomy counts

A 37-year-old Jennings man has been charged with eight counts of aggravated criminal sodomy, which is a level 2 person felony.

Stanley Shimek, who was a school janitor in Jennings, went before Judge John Bremer for his first appearance on Friday, Feb. 13. He is being held in the Decatur County Jail on a \$100,000 bond.

Court records say that the counts are for feloniously and intentionally engaging in sodomy with a child



Players have fun at game

AT THE NORTHWEST WINDS basketball game Saturday, Cheryl Hartzog, Jessica Soderlund, Scott Holub and Linda Kline cheered their team on during half time. Penny Montoya (left) dribbled the ball towards the basket. The Winds played men from the Oberlin and Jennings Fire Departments. The two teams play each other every year at The Gateway. This year there were more than 20 fans there to cheer on the players.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

Sessions to teach gardening techniques

Want to learn more about gardening? Catch Gardenmania.

The Decatur County Master Gardeners are planning six informa-

tional lunches in a program called Gardenmania, starting Thursday at the Extension Office.

Sandy Fair, one of the county's seven Master Gardeners, said the idea is to teach people about gardening, using information from Kansas State University. She said each Master Gardener has to contribute community education hours each year.

Those in their first year, like Dr. Steve LaBash, have to do 40 hours. After that it is 20 hours a year until the gardener has been in the program

for three years, then 10 hours a year. Mrs. Fair said everyone, except Dr. LaBash, only has to do 10 hours this year. The first session of Gardenmania kicks off at noon Thursday, with Dr. LaBash presenting a program on xeriscaping.

There is no charge and those attending are encouraged to bring a brown bag lunch.

There will be a talk every Thursday at noon through April 1:

- Seed selection by Connie Simonsson on March 4.
- Flower seed design by Shirley Shields on March 11.
- Edible soybeans by Diane Frickey on March 18.
- Drip irrigation by Gaylord Shields on March 25.
- The April 1 talk will be by Millie Fisher, a guest speaker.

Foreman asks for tree fund

The Oberlin City Foreman asked the council to start a memorial fund to set money aside to replace the dead and dying trees at the cemetery.

What City Foreman Dan Castle learned was that there already is a memorial fund set up in the cemetery fund and there is some money in it.

Mr. Castle said most the elm trees are dead and the ash trees are either dead or taking a beating. The trees, he said, are probably 60 to 80 years old.

There are around 30 trees surrounding the Last Indian Raid memorial, said Mr. Castle, and all of them probably need to be replaced. He said there will be a man from Kansas State University coming out to categorize the trees in March.

Mr. Castle said he believes they should put trees of some size in the place of the trees that will be taken out. That will cost about \$500 a tree.

Mr. Castle said he would like to see a memorial fund set up for donations to help make the cemetery look better. He said he doesn't think people are aware that the cemetery doesn't have any money for such things, although the city has made a good attempt to put money towards a wall.

Mayor Ken Shobe said the city has a memorial fund set up already for the cemetery. It has \$25,000 in it, he added.

Councilman Jay Anderson asked if there would be a plaque on the trees people purchase. Mr. Castle said they plan to fasten a plaque on the wall near the tree or shrubs someone purchased.

City Clerk Deanna Castle said some of that money was set aside for the wall. She said if she remembers correctly \$20,000 will come out of the memorial fund and \$10,000 will come from general.

That leaves \$5,000 in the memorial fund.

Mayor Shobe said he thought the city could purchase around five to 10 trees. Mrs. Castle said they will have to set up a line item in the memorial fund for trees.

Anyone who wants to donate money to replace the trees should call the city at 475-2217.

Shelter extends groups

Northwest Kansas Family Shelter plans to extend Domestic Violence Support Groups, starting in March, to better serve victims in the 18 counties of northwest Kansas.

The groups are offered at no cost to all participants and cover issues relating to all aspects of domestic violence situations.

Support groups available on March 2 include: Women's: Tuesday, 9-10 a.m.; Wednesday, 5:30-6:30 p.m. Men's: Tuesday, noon to 1 p.m. Call (800) 794-4624 for location and child-care information. For youth support groups, call Donna Munsch at (800) 794-4624 or (785) 625-3055.

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