

Evaluation leans toward a new pool

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

The Oberlin City Council learned Thursday that its consultants, Water's Edge Aquatic Design of Lenexa, don't recommend renovation of the existing swimming pool.

City Administrator Gary Shike said Michael Fisher, a pool engineer with the firm, told the council that, because of the settling and cracking of the old pool, he didn't recommend renovation. He said it was possible the city could fix the east wall to get by for a few years, but it would be a

short-term fix.

The council didn't discuss fixing the wall, but the city will have to do something unless the pool committee has enough money to build a new one by summer.

Mr. Shike said a hollow area behind the east wall needs to be filled in. The pool also needs a new heater.

The council would like to talk with the pool commission, but its spokesman, Anna Shaw, was out of town on Thursday.

The engineers' report pointed out many safety concerns with the existing pool,

which was built in 1956 and renovated in 1965. The city had to repair leaks before the pool could open last summer.

The list included areas of the pool that are slipping, hazards with the bathhouse floor and areas in the pool with numerous coats of paint. There are areas for algae growth, areas where patrons feet could get cut, toes stubbed or places people could be burned.

The current deep end is 10 feet, 6 inches where standards for diving are anywhere from 11 feet, 6 inches to 12 feet.

The report said that the way patrons enter

the small pools could be unsafe, the pool wall intake is connected to the suction pipe of the heater and the recirculation system doesn't provide adequate water turnover.

If the city decides not to do anything then the life expectancy is less than five years.

One renovation option would be to fix the safety issues at the pool. If the city wanted to pursue this option, he said, the firm would need to check a few things out, engineering plans would be needed and contractors could bid on the project.

The cost would be \$700,000 with life

expectancy of 15 years or less. The completion date would be summer of 2006.

Another plan would take care of the safety issues, provide competitive swimming, make the pool comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act and add safety features. It would cost around \$1.2 million with completion in the summer of 2006, but life expectancy still would be 15 years or less.

A new outdoor pool would cost the same, with completion in the summer of 2006 and life expectancy of up to 40 years, more than (See POOL on Page 12A)



TWO VEHICLES (above) wound up in the creek bed north of Norcat on Thursday night after the drivers tried to cross a bridge that had collapsed. The pickup landed on its wheels and the Suburban landed upside down in the box of the truck.

Both were still in the creek Friday morning. Ambulance Director Patrick Pomeroy and Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman (below) talked at the scene of the accident.

— Photos by Tom Brannan and Steve Haynes

Two trucks end up in Sappa Creek after bridge falls

By **STEVE HAYNES** and **CAROLYN PLOTTS**

Two vehicles wound up in Sappa Creek after a bridge collapsed Thursday night near the Norton/Decatur county line, and one driver was taken to the Norton County Hospital.

Decatur County dispatch received a call at 9:25 p.m. to report the collapse of a bridge over the Sappa Creek, 10 miles north of U.S. 36 and about a quarter mile west of the county line on a township road.

The truck, with Decatur County plates, was westbound on the 57-foot-long wooden bridge. It dropped into the creek bed and crashed into the west abutment.

The bridge is at the foot of a short hill west of the county line. The truck fell about 20 feet to the

creek below.

Barry Richards, a part-time deputy with the Decatur County Sheriff's Department, said the first vehicle, a 1992 Ford F-150 pick-up truck driven by Kenny Cozad of Norcat, went into the creek around 8 p.m. Mr. Cozad was able to climb out of the creek and walk to a nearby farm. He was taken to Norton County Hospital.

Deputy Richards said he wasn't sure if the bridge collapsed before Mr. Cozad got there, or if it happened when he was driving across the span. (Mr. Cozad said later he thought it was partly collapsed when he got there, and his truck pushed it on down.)

Although the farmer drove back out to the bridge to try to stop anyone else who was coming down the road, he was too late.



A 1993 Chevy Suburban belonging to Greg Sumner of Norcat was already in the creek. Sumner was with two hired hands from South Africa, and one of them was driving. (See BRIDGE on Page 12A)

Fall hunting guide inside today's paper

Inside today's edition of *The Oberlin Herald* is the fall Hunting Guide put together by Nor'West Newspapers.

The guide covers everything from bird and deer numbers to what to make with the meat after the hunt is over. The edition lets people know where they can go for walk-in hunting, where they can buy a license and state rules hunters need to know before going out.

With over 100 businesses represented in advertisements, there is a little something for everyone interested in the outdoors.



General election will be done without machines

Decatur County voters will find things pretty much as usual when they go to the polls next week.

There have been a lot of rumors — the county will be using new voting machines, people will have to come to The Gateway to vote — but things are going to happen just like they have in the past, with paper ballots and six polling places.

State officials have been talking about voting machines, but that isn't going to happen just yet. Some counties already have machines and some have gone to a consolidated polling place, but that is not required. There aren't any counties, except maybe one, that are using the touch screen, some may be using machines to count ballots.

County Clerk Marilyn Horn, who also is the county election officer, said she has been serving on a committee with other county clerks and state officials who enforce the Americans With Disabilities Act to set the calendar for when the ma-

chines will be in use. She said the current plan is that the machines, designed to help people with disabilities vote more easily, will be in use across Kansas by the spring city/school election in 2006. Decatur County doesn't have an election then, though, because our city and school elections are held in the odd-numbered years.

The first election the machines will be used for here, Mrs. Horn said, will be the primary for county officials, governor, township clerks and precinct people in August 2006.

The machines can only serve 180 to 200 people on election day, Mrs. Horn said, and there are 2,400 registered voters in the county. Mrs. Horn said she isn't sure if the county will still be able to use paper ballots along with the touch screen machines or the county will have to buy more machines to help with the excess voters.

If someone comes in now and has (See POLLING on Page 6A)

Most officials here running unopposed

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

Decatur County voters will head to the polls Tuesday to decide who will be serving for the next four years in county offices.

Almost all of the candidates for re-election are unopposed and have been since the primary at the beginning of August.

The only county race in the primary was between Ralph Unger, the long-time incumbent, and Phillip Lahman, for the District 2 commissioner seat. Mr. Unger received 170 votes to Mr. Lahman's 99.

Mr. Unger has made it his career serving in the commissioner seat with 32 years under his belt. When Mr. Unger first was elected things were a lot different. Over the years he has been part of helping the county get a landfill, ambulance service and an emergency preparedness director.

He is unopposed for the general election.

Other candidates for county office include:

• Doyle Brown, a Republican, for the District 3 commissioner seat. Mr. Brown has served as a commissioner 12 years. He says he wants to keep the county viable for the 21st century.

• Jean Hale, also a Republican, is seeking re-election as treasurer af-

ter one term. Mrs. Hale said she wanted to continue being involved in county government.

• Steve Hirsch, another Republican, is looking to return to the county attorney's job he has held for 16 years. Mr. Hirsch also serves as city attorney in Oberlin, Dresden, Jennings and Norcat.

• John Bremer, a Republican, is seeking re-election to the magistrate judge position for Decatur County. Mr. Bremer has been the judge here for three decades.

• Marilyn Horn, another Republican, wants to return as county clerk after 18 years of service. She said in the next four years, she would like to get someone who is knowledgeable in data processing in the building.

• Judy Gaimer, the only Democrat, is seeking re-election as registrar of deeds. She is finishing her first term, which she says has allowed her to learn the ins and outs of the job.

The only contest involves a write-in campaign against Sheriff Ken Badsky, who is running for re-election after 20 years in office.

He was unopposed in the primary, but faces Derrick Bolliger, a former city police officer and reserve deputy, who has mounted a write-in campaign.

Time to fall back

It's been getting dark earlier in the evenings, but it will seem a lot darker, a lot earlier on Sunday as the clocks are turned back an hour when Daylight Savings Time comes to an end.

Clocks are supposed to be turned back at 2 a.m. Sunday morning, but most of us will either set the clocks back Saturday night before going to bed.

Just don't forget, or you'll miss that extra hour of sleep.



Ranch may get new school

Classes at Sappa Valley Youth Ranch may get to move out of a one-room schoolhouse setting and expand into a second modular building.

Superintendent Kelly Glodt said he is working on a deal with the Minneola School District, 20 miles south of Dodge City.

The district has 250 kids and they

just passed a bond issue to build a new school, he said.

The district has a modular unit it would like to get rid of which Oberlin could use at the ranch.

The board said if Mr. Glodt could get the modular using only ranch money and none of the budget for the kids in town, they would give their blessing.

The modular now used for classes at the ranch doesn't have a bathroom or running water.

The staff educates anywhere from 30 to 36 kids in the building. It has only two rooms, but they split the kids into three sections.

The new modular would give the staff two more rooms and has two bathrooms in it, Mr. Glodt said.

Spook parade will be held Friday

Kids of all ages have been thinking since the beginning of October about one day, and more importantly, how they will dress for that day.

Now, Halloween is here, with costumes, pumpkins and lots of candy.

Since the holiday falls on a Sunday this year, the Oberlin Business Alliance will be holding its annual

Trick or Trunk on Friday.

The parade will begin at 4 p.m. at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center.

Kids will walk from the center south along Main Street to The Bank, after which they are free to go trick or treating at downtown businesses.

Owners and workers at Oberlin businesses can dress up for the day

as well. If you're going to be in costume, call manager Glenva Nichols at the Chamber of Commerce, 475-3441, so judges can be sent to your store or office.

There will be prizes for first, second and third place in the adult costume contest.

Cedar Living Center has invited all the kids in to visit and trick or treat after the parade.

* Pool study shows new one is needed

(Continued from Page 1A) twice as long. The project would need to start in July or August, which would mean no swim season, or a short one, next summer. That would mean complete tear out of the existing pools.

To build an indoor facility, Mr. Fisher said, would cost an estimated \$3.9 to \$4.3 million, which would include a recreational pool with a play structure, spray features, waterslide, current channel, water bench and toddler slide. A therapy pool would feature walking ropes, handicapped lift, hand bars, ther-

apeutic seat and current stream. A lap pool would have four 25 yard race lanes, handicap ramp and water basketball goal.

A spa pool and 15,000 square foot building, including bathrooms, administrative rooms and mechanical rooms, would be part of the project.

To put in a stand-alone or attached indoor therapy pool to the existing bathhouse building would cost around \$1.3 to \$1.6 million.

Mr. Shike said the pool committee received a copy of the evaluation.

* Bridge collapse claims two autos

(Continued from Page 1A) ing. The vehicle was going east.

The Suburban dove into the bed of the pickup, flipped and ended up on its top.

Responding from Decatur County were two ambulances, a sheriff's deputy, several first responders, the ambulance director and Road Supervisor Tim Stallman.

Deputy Richards said they aren't sure what happened to the bridge, but assume that someone drove a heavy grain truck across it and that weakened the supports. He turned the case over to Undersheriff Michael French.

Mr. Stallman said his office had not received a report of damage to the bridge. He said the law requires all bridges maintained by the county be inspected at least once every two years by a professional engineer. The 57-foot timber bridge was rated to carry just 6 tons on two axles and a maximum of 13 tons for five. The load-limit signs wound up in the creek with the two vehicles.

Mr. Stallman called out county workers to place three sets of warning barricades on both approaches to the bridge. He figured that would be enough to keep anyone else from landing in the creek.

He said the county has 117 "off-system" bridges on township roads and about 400 total bridges. It's not unusual to have one damaged during harvest, he said, when loaded

grain trucks weighing 20 tons or more try to cross them.

Two of the bridge's three spans fell into the creek. Mr. Stallman said it looked like the bridge stringers and deck were OK, but the westerly pier may have failed. Each of the two piers is made up of five uprights, similar to telephone poles, driven into the ground.

If one or more of the uprights failed, he said, the bridge could have snapped under the relatively light weight of the pickup.

At night, he said, the gap where the bridge had been would be all but invisible to an approaching driver until it was too late to stop.

Bringing down the house



AFTER LUNCH Friday, Douglas Cass with Cass Excavating of Hoxie, used a loader to tear down Edna Mott's house, which was damaged by fire last May. — Herald staff photo by Karla Jones

Injured drivers recall driving into creek bed

By CAROLYN PLOTTS

It started out as a routine evening for Lyle residents Kenny Cozad and Greg Sumner, but ended with a hair-raising ride to the bottom of Sappa Creek for each, two vehicles totaled and both men in the emergency room.

About 8:30 p.m. Thursday evening, Mr. Cozad said, he was on his way to feed his cattle and horses. He was near the Norton/Decatur county line, heading west on a Decatur township road a mile north and 1 3/4 mile east of Lyle, when he approached a wooden bridge at the

foot of a short hill. He said he realized too late that the bridge was partly collapsed. Before he could react, his 1992 Ford F-150 pickup plunged nose-first into creek bed, hitting the west bridge abutment.

"That's about the scariest thing that's ever happened to me," Mr. Cozad said.

He said he was thrown against the dash, losing two teeth and suffering cuts requiring 25 stitches to close.

Mr. Cozad said he never lost consciousness. He crawled out the passenger window, then despite his injuries, walked to a nearby farmstead

where he called for help. His former wife, Jeana Cozad, alerted emergency crews in Decatur County.

Oberlin dispatch received the call at 9:25 p.m., but before help could get to the scene, a 1994 Chevrolet Suburban driven by Greg Sumner, also of the Lyle area, did a nose-dive off the bridge and landed in the bed of the pickup. Passengers in the Sumner vehicle were two of Mr. Sumner's employees, Chris Bekker and Paul Vanvuuren, from South Africa. No one was injured, although Mr. Sumner said he was bruised front and back and "stiff and

sore all over."

"That was quite a surprise," he said. "I imagine I'll be a better defensive driver now, except nobody will ride with me."

Both drivers expressed the opinion that the amount of dirt on the deck of the 57-foot bridge, coupled with recent rainfall, could have contributed to the collapse.

Two Oberlin ambulances went home empty, but Mr. Cozad and Mr. Sumner were taken to Norton County Hospital in private vehicles. Neither man was kept overnight, although, Mr. Cozad has not been re-

leased by his doctor to return to work.

"I have two black eyes," he said, "two missing teeth, stitches and a big knot on my head. My little boy, Shane, 4, was scared of me at first. But when he heard my voice, he knew it was me."

Mr. Sumner saw his doctor in Holdrege, Neb., the next day and had an electrocardiogram test.

"I'm just glad I'm here," Mr. Cozad said, and Mr. Sumner echoed that comment.

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