

Oberlin council asks for figures to replace roads

Members want to know the cost to tear up city roads and replace

The Oberlin City Council asked the city foreman to get some numbers together about replacing streets, with some members asking if the city crew could do it with some extra manpower.

Last week, the crew, city administrator and Councilman Jay Anderson looked at an Asphalt Zipper, which tears up asphalt. Its price tag is \$67,950.

Dr. Anderson asked City Foreman Dan Castle how he is going to fix the crowns in the road and if the machine could do it. Mr. Castle said he was thinking the machine, if purchased, would be more for the edges of the streets than the crowns.

Something needs to be done with the streets, said Dr. Anderson.

The crew could do one block at a time, said Councilman Ray Ward. First they would need to take the asphalt out, lower the clay, oil it and chip seal it. The city has a truck that chips could be put in.

"The streets in town are getting bad," said Mr. Ward, "and we aren't doing anything about it."

The city would have to hire a lot of people to do that, said Mr. Castle. It can't be done with three.

"Find out what it would cost, said Dr. Anderson. You are the expert." Mr. Castle said he wasn't the expert and he didn't have a solution. He said he would get some numbers together.

The project is worth a little more examination, said Dr. Anderson.

City Administrator Gary Shike said representatives with Penco Engineering told him an asphalt recycler will fall through the city streets.

"I want to know the process of how it would all work," said Dr. Anderson. "We need to find that out."

Mayor Ken Shobe said they could get some information from Penco. See if they have some suggestions about what might work. The city doesn't have asphalt expertise, he said, and the city doesn't have the manpower.

Mr. Ward said they need to contact the manufacturer to see if any other towns are milling streets with the machines and chip sealing them.

How soon can the city get the information? asked Dr. Anderson. Mr. Castle said he would work on it.

In other business, the council:

- Heard the city is sending out around 40 mowing notices for front and back yards in the city that need to be mowed. The first batch of registered letters went out on Friday. City Administrator Gary Shike said the good thing about the ordinance is that the city only has to notify the people once a year. If the landowners don't mow the lot, the city can do it and put the bill on their property taxes. First, said Mr. Shike, the city sends out the notice registered mail. After 10 days if the city hasn't heard anything and the property hasn't been mowed the city will hire someone to do it and then the owner is billed. If the bill isn't paid then it is put on the property taxes.

The council discussed getting the Chambers home on Hall Street cleaned up before Memorial Day. They discussed opening the work up for bids, but didn't make a decision.

The city will ask for bids from contractors to mow the yards that are left.

In other action, the council:

- Heard the freeze recently took care of everything budding and in bloom at the cemetery. City Foreman Dan Castle said it also made the grass around the memorial brown top.

- Heard the wall at the east end of the swimming pool has been fixed. The crew is currently painting the pool to get ready for opening it the end of May. The boiler hasn't come yet.

- Reappointed Steve Hirsch as city attorney.

- Tabled discussion on the pool contract with Water's Edge Aquatics since the pool committee had some questions to get answered first.

- Canceled the Thursday, May 19, meeting since several members are going to be out of town.

- Heard that the Kansas Municipal Energy Association will have a power supply meeting in Colby on Thursday that Mr. Shike and Councilman Joe Stanley plan to attend.

Two bridges placed on five-year plan

Decatur County commissioners agreed to get the county's bridge system back into the federal and state five-year plan so they can take advantage of federal money to work on at least two bridges in Oberlin Township.

Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman presented forms on the state's five year plan. He and Jerold DeBoer of Penco Engineering looked at the bridges and found two that will need work in the next few years.

The two bridges are not part of the replacement project with Husker Steel, he said.

They are located three-quarter mile west and one and a half miles south from the township bridge south of town. Mr. Stallman said the bridges have a capacity of seven ton or less. They probably won't be started until 2008, he said.

With the federal program, the county pays for 20 percent of the project and the federal and state governments pay 80 percent. The county pays all of the pre-engineering costs and the cost to move any utilities.

Mr. Stallman said with bridges that are 50 feet and longer, he would prefer to have the work done this way since they need more engineering work.

He said he is glad that Husker Steel is coming in to replace some of the smaller ones.

The commissioners told Mr. Stallman to do the forms to get in the five-year plan.

Mr. Stallman said the crew has been putting gravel on Road 340, which is the Hall Road, located eight miles south from the Highway 36 and 83 intersection. Mr. Stallman said they should be done soon.

Playing in the dirt



LAST WEDNESDAY, Marty Olson's first grade class helped dig up seeds outside the district soil conservation office. Alexandra Waterman (left) watched as her classmate Justice Harris washed the seeds off.

— Photo by Jonna Inman

Chief hires third patrolman

The Oberlin Police Department will be up to full strength again, as the chief has hired a third full-time patrolman who should start next week.

Police Chief Wade Lockhart told the Oberlin City Council on Thursday night that he had hired Allen Rogers from the Plainville area. He said Mr. Rogers is certified in law enforcement and has around nine years' experience.

"I think he will make a good officer," said Chief Lockhart.

City Administrator Gary Shike said he wanted to offer the new patrolman \$9.65 an hour.

Chief Lockhart said he talked with Mr. Rogers about wages and he wanted closer to \$10 an hour, but \$9.65 will work.

New Councilman Rob McFee

asked if this is a full-time position to eliminate the 80 hours of overtime a month the city has been paying. That is a 160-hour-a-month job, Chief Lockhart said, but it may not eliminate all the overtime.

It will alleviate the problem, though, said Mayor Ken Shobe. A fourth officer will also mean more coverage for the city.

"Why, to harass people who have old cars?" asked Mr. McFee, who has been cited by the department a couple of times for having inoperative vehicles on his property.

No, said Mayor Shobe. The police department has run short for two years. The city is paying what the council felt was an excessive amount in overtime, not just the cost of the pay, but also on burnout for the men.

The fourth officer, he said, will reduce the overtime, but there will still be some for vacations and training.

If the city is going to pay someone for a full-time job, said Mr. McFee, then it should eliminate the overtime. He said he doesn't have a problem with a fourth officer, but it should eliminate the overtime.

It won't eliminate the overtime, said Chief Lockhart; that is the nature of law enforcement.

With four officers or three, there is always one on days off, he said. If they get into a case and their shift is over, they don't stop helping someone.

The council approved the wage of \$9.65 an hour.

Woman takes new job

After almost 24 years, Peg Smith will say goodbye to the Hirsch and Pratt law office this week and move on to a job in McCook.

Ms. Smith has worked at what is now Hirsch and Pratt for a month under 24 years. She said she started when Stan Morgan and Terry Rogers were the partners. Wallace Wolf worked there at the time, too. When Mr. Rogers left, Steve Hirsch was brought on board and later Preston Pratt.

Originally from York, Neb., Ms. Smith moved here 24 years ago.

She went to the Lincoln School of Commerce to train as an executive secretary. On the job, she said, she prepares paperwork, answers the phone, schedules appointments, works on payroll for townships and clients and does general office work.

On Monday, she will start as the assistant in the Red Willow County court clerk's office. Ms. Smith said she took the job for career advancement. She doesn't plan to move to McCook right away.

Ms. Smith is a member of the Decatur Professional Women, Decatur County Stand Against Violence, Relay for Life, Northwest Kansas Family Shelter, Decatur County Drug and Alcohol Council, Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce, Oberlin Arts and Humanities Council and the United Church, where she plays the piano.

She has three children, Shane, who lives in McCook; Melissa, Hoxie; and Kristi, Oberlin.

Hirsch and Pratt plan an open house from 2 to 4 p.m. today. Everyone is welcome.

Wind knocks out line

Kansas wind can be blamed for leaving most Oberlin families in the dark on Mother's Day afternoon.

Constant winds blew a jumper wire around near U.S. 36 on the east side of town until it broke. City Administrator Gary Shike said the wire was just worn out from the wind hitting it over the years.

The broken wire caused several circuit switchers to open up around 1:50 p.m. It took some time to figure out where the problem was, Mr. Shike said.

Initially the whole town was out, said Mr. Shike. City Foreman Dan Castle and lineman Ron Beneda narrowed the problem down to the east side. The power came back on, he said, and then the east side was shut back down until everything was fixed.

Mr. Shike said he wasn't sure what time all of the power was turned back on.

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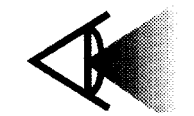
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