

# City council holds off raising electric rates

The Oberlin City Council decided to wait until January to make any decisions about raising electric rates, giving the members a chance to look at the possible ways to raise rates and talk with customers.

At a meeting Thursday night at The Gateway, City Administrator Gary Shike handed out a worksheet with 17 scenarios for rates. A report the council received in November from the Kansas Municipal Energy Agency said that the city was projected to be short \$140,000 in electric fund.

Mr. Shike said the city could raise the rates 1 cent per kilowatt hour, which would generate around \$134,000 a year. If the city adds another \$5 to the meter charge, he said, that would generate half of what the fund needs.

Basically, the average bill needs to be increased 10 percent, said Mr. Shike. The typical home uses around 800 kilowatt hours a month, he said.

That increase, said Councilman Joe Stanley, won't make the city any more money, it will just cover the city's power costs. This year, said Mr. Shike, the city is paying about 6.5 cents per kilowatt hour on average. That is at least two cents more than last year.

If customers conserve energy, said Councilman Patrick Pomeroy, then the city won't have to buy as much.

"There is no good solution to this," said Councilman Rob McFee.

A lot of transfers come out of the election fund, said Councilman Joe Stanley, and the money is used to run other departments, including the

## Council Roundup

At its meeting Thursday night, the Oberlin City Council:

- Heard it will cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$16,840 to upgrade old wiring for two of the city's wells so they can be hooked up to a portable generator. Story on Page 1A.

- Decided to wait until January to make any decisions about raising electric rates. Story to left.

- Heard the mayor thank the city foreman, crew and all employees for the great job they did during the snow storm last week. Story on Page 1A.

- Discussed stray cats, but didn't make any decisions about what can be done with the animals. Story to come.

- Decided not to do anything with the franchise agreement with Midwest Energy at this time. Story below.

library, The Gateway and the equipment fund

Without that money, said Councilman Ray Ward, city taxes will be much higher.

Or the services much lower, added Mayor Ken Shobe.

Councilman Pomeroy said he wanted some time to look at the scenarios and explain them to people.

The council agreed to table the discussion until the January meeting.

# Gas agreement to stay the same

The Oberlin City Council decided not to do anything with a natural gas franchise agreement with Midwest Energy at the meeting Thursday, but still has several months to make any decisions.

The agreement includes a 2 percent franchise fee for the city, which is passed on to customers. The agreement can be revisited at five-year intervals.

City Attorney Steve Hirsch said the agreement is up Feb. 5, and the council has 90 days from that date to make a decision.

The money pays for the firm's use of city streets and rights of way.

Councilman Ray Ward said with gas rates already up and the city needing to raise electrical rates, this would be a bad time to increase the franchise fee.

The council didn't know if the 2 percent paid now was on the whole bill or only a certain part.

Later, the council received a request from the Housing Authority to

see if its director and maintenance person could be put on the city's insurance plan. The authority operates Sappa Valley Manor, with low income apartments.

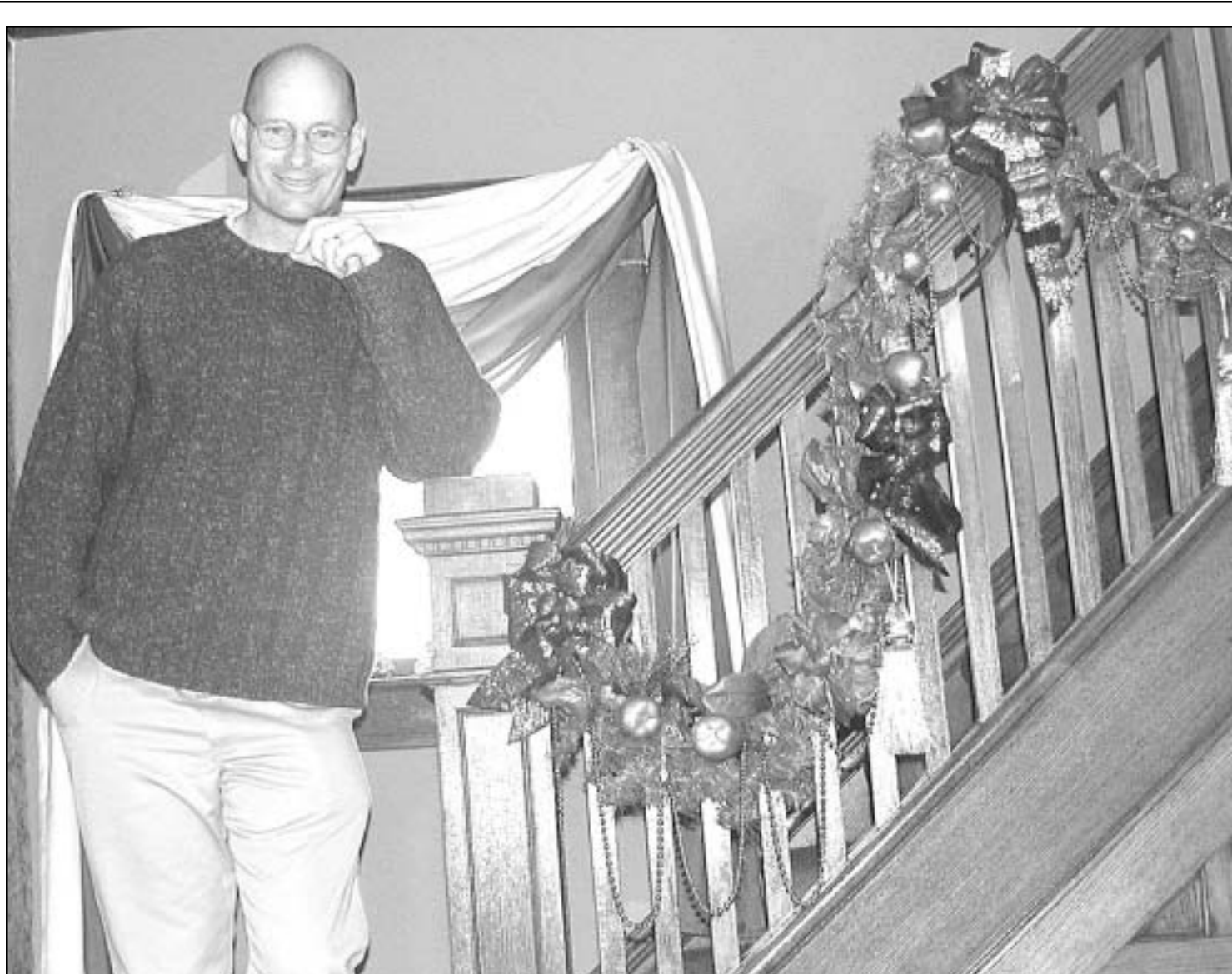
The council said it was OK as long as the housing authority pays for the two people.

Police Chief Wade Lockhart said he received a call from Nex-Tech recently about the city's radio repeater on the water tower. He said there is a part that probably needs to be replaced and a coaxial cable has a crimp in it.

If anything is replaced, said Chief Lockhart, Nex-Tech suggests that the antenna be replaced, too.

The chief said he wants to wait to do anything on it.

He said the police department didn't have any problems getting around in the snow last week. The first night, they borrowed a four-wheel-drive vehicle from the city crew, he said, and after that they used their patrol cars.



# Homes open for tour

**HELPING TO SHOW OFF HIS HOME** at 302 N. Penn. Preston Pratt (above) waited to take visitors upstairs after his wife Peggy had lead them around the downstairs during Decatur Professional Women's Homes Tour on Sunday. Cheryl Metcalf (below) examined a nutcracker ornament at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center, another stop on the tour.

— Herald photos by Cynthia Haynes

# Architect to talk about pool

Architects with Water's Edge Aquatics will be at The Gateway Thursday night to answer questions about the Oberlin swimming pool project and report on their findings.

The meeting will start at 6:30 p.m. downstairs in the civic center. The meeting is open to the public, and pool committee members hope everyone will turn out.

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