

Woman claims city ruined homesite

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

An Oberlin woman who owns land south of the new waste water treatment plant has filed a claim against the City of Oberlin for \$250,000, alleging the city's new waste water treatment lagoons will reduce the value her land south of town.

The city received notice of the claim last Tuesday from Daniel C. Walter of Norton, representing Julie Cunningham, who also has crossed swords with the city over her chickens.

The waste water lagoons are just north of and adjacent to land that Ms. Cunningham owns south of town, the claim says.

According to the claim, Ms. Cunningham moved back to Oberlin from Missouri and

Council Roundup

At a meeting last Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Talked about the petition to put a proposed change in the animal ordinance on the ballot. Story below.

- Allowed a motion to change the animal ordinance so people wanting to keep farm animals and miniature livestock wouldn't need an acre of land. Died for lack of a second. Story below.

- Accepted the low bid to perform an archaeological survey on the land south of town where a new water treatment facility may be built. Story on Page 3A.

- Agreed to let the Oberlin Girl Scouts use the former youth ranch for a week-long summer camp in July, but said the Scouts still need to get a contract and rental price. Story on Page 3A.

Maple, inside city limits. She asked the Oberlin Board of Zoning Appeals for permission to keep four chickens at her home in town. The board turned down her request because she doesn't have one acre of land, and at the end of that meeting, she told the city they could take the extra land she needed to make an acre in town out of what they owe her on the land south of town.

The claim states that Ms. Cunningham has reviewed the Kansas Department of Health and Environment minimum standards for a water pollution facility.

"From those standards, it appears that all potential house and business locations within 1,000 feet of a new plant location and a plat of the area to be served by the system

are to be shown in the facility plan on the final plans."

Ms. Cunningham hasn't seen the final plans, the claim states, questioning whether this was done.

"The design plans and specifications for the new lagoon treatment systems as approved by this department stipulate that there should be no construction activities within 30 feet from the city property line," it says. "This requirement has been ignored."

It says the bottom of a drainage ditch is 12 feet from the property line, while the bottom of the lagoon is 75 feet from the line.

"The construction, maintenance and op-

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Petition wins right to vote on animal rule

A petition to get a proposed ordinance allowing "barnyard" animals on lots smaller than one acres on the city ballot has been certified for a vote with 194 signatures.

Melinda Enfield, who also is running for a council seat, is coordinating the petition effort. She got approval from County Attorney Steve Hirsch on the wording of the ordinance and to circulate the petition.

Last Friday, the petition was turned in to County Clerk Marilyn Horn with 194 signatures, two more than were needed. Mrs. Horn said she checked and approved the signatures.

At a City Council meeting last Thursday, after Mrs. Enfield, a chicken owner, left, Councilman Jay Anderson said he would like to adopt the ordinance the way the council wants it because otherwise they won't be able to change it for 10 years.

Approving a new ordinance, Mr. Hirsch noted, wouldn't necessarily stop the petition process. Dr. Anderson's motion died for lack of a second.

Mr. Hirsch said the council now has 20 days to adopt the ordinance or decide to put it on the ballot.

Even if the ordinance goes to an election, noted Councilman Ray Ward, that doesn't mean a majority will vote yes.

At this point, said Mr. Hirsch, if the ordinance is adopted, the council can't change anything for 10 years without an election.

If the question goes to a special election, Mrs. Horn said, it could cost the city about \$2,500, but there

Council passes up ordinance

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

A motion to change the city's animal ordinance so people wouldn't need an acre of land to keep chickens and other farm animals died for lack of a second Thursday night at the Oberlin City Council meeting.

Melinda Enfield, who talked with the council Thursday, Feb. 1, for over an hour about the proposed ordinance, asked if the council could look at it again on Thursday.

Mrs. Enfield, who has chickens and wants to keep them at her home in the city, said she believes the proposed ordinance is fair and has taken everyone's opinions into account. The proposal eliminates the one-acre rule, includes a \$5 permit fee and allows people who live within 300 feet to object.

In the audience were Julie Cunningham, who petitioned to have chickens at her home; her parents, Richard and Clara Russ; and Rose Eskew, who

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is still a chance to get it on the April city ballot.

Hospital prepares to start expansion

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

Construction could begin this spring on a project to add 11 rooms and a patient waiting area to the Decatur County Hospital.

Administrator Lynn Doeden said at a strategic planning session last April that one of the biggest concerns for employees and committee members was that the hospital needed more space, especially for clinics offered by visiting specialists.

Out of that session came a plan to add three exam rooms, a stress test room, a procedure room, doctor's office, nurse's office, an office for Cottonwood Home Health Care, three restrooms and a waiting room. The expansion will be south of the emergency room entrance east of the wing for patient rooms. The area now is part of the lawn.

The rooms will be used for specialty clinics and outpatient procedures, Mrs. Doeden said. The hospital offers five specialty clinics.

The clinics, she said, are a community service the hospital provides so patients don't have to travel to larger towns. Doctors come in from Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas to see people here.

With the setup now, she said, there isn't much privacy for people using those clinics. Often doctors have to talk with the patients in the

hallway, she said, but with the expansion they'll have private rooms for consultation.

She said the hospital board has hired CG Architects from North Platte, Neb., and the firm assigned Grant Creager as the architect on the project. Plans have been drawn up and the board has contacted the U.S. Department of Agriculture about a low-interest loan.

It's important for people to know, she said, if the hospital can get the loan, they won't need any tax money to build the addition.

The estimated cost of the expansion is \$650,000, Mrs. Doeden said, not including equipment. The loan, if approved, will pay for most of the building expense, said Mrs. Doeden, but the county hospital board will kick in some money from bequests and memorials.

The hospital, said Mrs. Doeden, was built in 1952. In September 1987 the county passed a bond issue of \$2.7 million to update the facility. The bond issue was paid off in August 2002. There hasn't been any construction at the hospital in the last 20 years, she said.

Mrs. Doeden said the board has received two bids on the construction, one from North Platte and one from Goodland. Neither has been accepted, nor have construction contracts been signed, she said.



Kids put on play at school

FOURTH GRADERS

Dylan LaBuda (above left) and Dakota Tate narrated the morning kindergarten class play last Thursday. Molly Tate (right in right photo) and Alex Hayward played two of the cats in "The Little Red Hen." The play is about a little hen, played by Rielly Rittmann in the morning, who wants help to plant her seeds, but none of the animals wants to help her. In the end, she makes bread from her harvest and all the animals want to help eat it. The next time the hen asked for help planting, all of the animals chipped in.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



Teens learn you can make a difference

By KIM WESSEL

The Decatur Dictator

One person can make a difference. Rachel Scott is proof of that.

On Friday, Feb. 9, Oberlin students in grade 6 to 10 went to Quinter for a seminar on "Rachel's Challenge," a school assembly and training program that came out of the Columbine High School tragedy of 1999.

Rachel's parents started Rachel's Challenge and have written several books about her short life.

Students from Wheatland, WaKeeney and Quinter also came to listen to the story of Rachel Scott, the first student who died at Columbine eight years ago.

The speaker, Nicole Nowlen, went to school with Rachel, and she had an interesting story herself. She said she was in the school that day and was shot in the side with a sawed-off shotgun. She said her life was saved because she was overweight.

Nicole and other speakers travel the country talking about Rachel and how to accept her challenge of helping others.

Rachel's brother Craig speaks to schools when he is not busy with school himself. He was in the library at Columbine eight years ago with two of his friends, Isaiah Shoels and Matthew Kechter. Two boys with guns walked in and started making racial comments to Isaiah, who was one of the few African-Americans in their

school. The two boys then shot Isaiah and Matthew, but for some reason did not kill Craig.

Rachel Scott was an inspiring girl. At the age of 17, she had already made an impact on many lives. Nichole told us she lived her life knowing that she would someday die and touch the hearts of people all over the world. She kept detailed diaries, similar to those of Anne Frank.

In an essay written a month before she was killed, Rachel challenged her readers to "start a chain reaction of kindness and compassion."

"My codes may seem like a fantasy that can never be reached," she wrote, "but test them for yourself in the lives of people around you ... you just may start a chain reaction."

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