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THE OBERLIN HERALD

Council wrestles with budget

The Oberlin City Council started preliminary discussions for next year's budget at a special workshop Thursday night.

The council met for several hours to talk about the budget and things the city needs to do or purchase, and will meet again after the regularly scheduled meeting at 6:30 p.m. Thursday downstairs in The Gateway.

City Administrator Gary Shike said last year's budget was \$6,836,431 and when the council came into the meeting, the budget for next year was at \$6,756,917.

By the end of the meeting, with council suggestions, the budget was up enough to force a property tax increase of 5 mills, he said. Each mill in the city raises about \$7,000, so it was up \$35,000.

The council didn't make any decisions, said Mr. Shike, as it was late and the meeting was only for preliminary discussions.

One of the items the council talked about, he said, is something that comes up every year, which is what the city pays the county for dispatch services. Every year, he said, the council complains that they pay too much for dispatch. He said the council doesn't know what the bill will be for this year yet, as the city pays one-third of the total. This year, that is \$4,015 a month.

There weren't any major changes brought up, said Mr. Shike. The city plans to trade one police car, the Chevrolet that Chief Wade Lockhart drives.

The council talked about putting \$70,000 in the budget for street sealing, replacing a mower for

the cemetery and getting a new one for the parks, he said.

They also discussed repairing the wall on the historic band shell in City Park. Mr. Shike said the council is waiting for an estimate to see what that might cost.

At the pool, he said, the council talked about making repairs to the bath house, including a new metal roof.

The council has to have the budget to the county clerk by Saturday, Aug. 25.

Before that can be done, the members will have to vote on the proposed budget, publish it in *The Oberlin Herald* and hold a public hearing.

The budget meeting on Thursday, like all council meetings, will be open to the public.

Put out to pasture



AN OLD-FASHIONED RAKE sat in the grass and weeds off U.S. 83 north of Oberlin. At one time it would have been busy picking up new-mown hay, but now it's abandoned

and rusting away by the side of the road with a view out over the Beaver Creek Valley.

— Herald photo by Cynthia Haynes

Group seeks commissioners' help

The Decatur County commissioners talked with a member of the Decatur Tomorrow Intergenerational Action Team about getting kids and others involved in government.

High school vocal teacher Susan Nelson, a member of team, said they have members from three sections of the "public square" — business, education and health and human services — active in the group, but would like one from the fourth — government, she said.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said both he and Commissioner Doyle Brown were on committees at the beginning, but neither of them ever got a call for a meeting.

Mrs. Nelson said the team would welcome any of the commissioners. Right now, Oberlin is represented on the team but, she said, they want the whole county to be represented.

County Roundup

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Agreed to do a cost-share program for weed spraying for the fall treatment and give a 2 percent discount to people who pay their bills within 15 days. Story below.
- Signed a contract to maintain railroad crossings after the Kansas Department of Transportation upgrades them. Story on Page 3A.

• Talked with a member of the Decatur Tomorrow Intergenerational Action Team about getting kids and others involved in government. Story at left.

• Talked with the county Extension Council, whose members proposed forming an extension district with another county or two. Story on Page 1A.

Government has been difficult for the team, said Mrs. Nelson, because kids aren't going to go to meetings on their own. Maybe government organizations can set up an ex-officio position to show kids how things work.

Another idea the team has is to set up an intergenerational mentoring program so that youth and adults can work together with computers, phone programming, cooking and in other areas.

Mrs. Nelson said they are also

looking into grants to set up a youth leadership program modeled after the KARL program, Kansas Agricultural and Rural Leadership.

This fall, she said, the team plans on making a presentation at the high school emphasizing getting involved to the junior and senior classes.

County Clerk Marilyn Horn said she thinks there is a Kansas County Government Day, but the county has never participated in it.

Commissioner Unger said they would like to have kids come to a meeting. He said he thought all the elected officials would be OK with that. In past years, he said, the government class at the high school has visited, as well as classes from the grade school.

Commissioner Stan McEvoy said he was in favor of the idea, too, and would do what he could to help.

County to share cost of spraying fall weeds

The Decatur County commissioners agreed to do a cost-share program for fall weed spraying and add a 2 percent discount for people who pay the bills within 15 days.

With the cost-share program, they said, that means the chemical will cost \$50 a gallon, saving the landowner from \$15 to \$20 per gallon.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said he thinks they are going to have a bad season for musk thistle with all of the moisture this year. He suggested adding the 2 percent discount for bills paid within 15 days of billing date. Mr. Unger asked Gaylen Huntley, noxious weed director, how much spray the department can afford.

That depends on the bindweed

season, said Mr. Huntley. The department bought two palettes of spray for bindweed and they have used one already.

The weeds need to be sprayed when they are young, said Mr. Unger. He said he thinks there is around 5,000 acres infested by musk thistle in the county, maybe 10,000 acres.

The commissioners approved the cost-share and the discount for paying the bills within 15 days.

Mr. Huntley said the truck he has been using to haul the recycling trailer to Colby is having some problems. He said the trailer is too heavy for the three-quarter-ton truck. The department has a one-ton truck, but it is used for roadside spraying.

He said the Chevy he drives won't last long hauling the trailer.

Maybe, said County Clerk Marilyn Horn, Mr. Huntley can get some bids for a truck. He said he hates to get a new truck when the job beats it up so bad.

Maybe, said Mr. Unger, Mr. Huntley can ask for some bids. He said they have bought some good used vehicles.

The commissioners approved repairs to the noxious-weed truck caused by hauling the trailer to Colby.

Mr. Huntley said he ordered a set of tires for Bus 22. The cable on the wheel-chair lift broke, said Mr. Huntley. He tried to call and get a new one, but can't find a company

that will send the part.

In other business, the commissioners:

• Heard the roof at the weed control building is leaking. Mr. Huntley said the leak is bad and water ran down the walls on the inside of the shop during the recent storms.

• Heard the department will be looking for seasonal help. Mr. Huntley said four townships want roadside spraying and the workers are having to do it after hours because they are busy during the day.

• Talked about holding a seminar on noxious weeds, as chemicals are changing. Mrs. Horn suggested holding it before the Chamber of Commerce Farmer Appreciation Dinner on Friday, Feb. 29.

Rain, cool evenings keep water usage reasonable

A little rain and cool nighttime temperatures kept water usage in Oberlin last week a bit lower than the week before.

From Monday, July 9, through Sunday, Oberlin residents used a little over 3.2 million gallons. That's down from 3.4 million the first week of the month, said City Clerk Deanna Castle.

Rain the first of the week helped,

as Mother Nature blessed the town with about three-fourths of an inch over four days, including a little bit of hail on Thursday.

Last year, the city started water restrictions in May when the town residents were using more than 700,000 a day.

So far, that figure has been reached just once in June and not at all in July. However, temperatures

have been climbing from the 70s and 80s to the high 90s and possibly into the triple digits later in the week.

The Oberlin City Council is to meet on Thursday and City Administrator Gary Shike said it may take a hard look at the city's water needs and usage.

According to reports received at the city office, water usage for last week was:

- 542,000 gallons on Monday, July 9.
- 453,000 gallons on Tuesday, July 10.
- 292,000 gallons last Wednesday.
- 524,000 gallons on Thursday.
- 359,000 gallons on Friday.
- 482,000 gallons on Saturday.
- 563,000 gallons on Sunday.