

Gymnastics a good bet for city at The Gateway

Decisions the Oberlin City Council has to make on a request to use The Gateway arena at cut-rate prices are not as easy as they might seem, but in the end, we think it will be simple.

If we have a civic center to encourage activity and get people together, then the council needs to say yes — with some reservations.

The Creative Movements gymnastics club wants to move its weekly classes to The Gateway when school starts, hoping to teach kids the sport from 5 to 7:30 p.m. once a week.

The problem is the club can't afford the \$125-a-night rental fee the city usually gets for the arena, which could total nearly \$4,500 for the year. Its old rent at the Decatur County Museum was less than a tenth of that.

The museum apparently isn't an option, though, since the board paid to refinish the floor at the Old Bohemian Hall and decided the gym mats wouldn't be good for the surface.

Now, the Creative Movements board is trying to decide how much it can pay the city and council members are thinking about how much they can afford to give. Decisions which amount to spending tax money are never easy, but this group does a lot for Oberlin and our youth.

Council members talked about some restrictions: The club would have to set up and take down its own equipment, plus any tables or chairs already set for an event. It might be preempted by a major, paying event with due notice, and some members, at least, want the

kids out by 7 p.m. when the center normally closes on "winter hours."

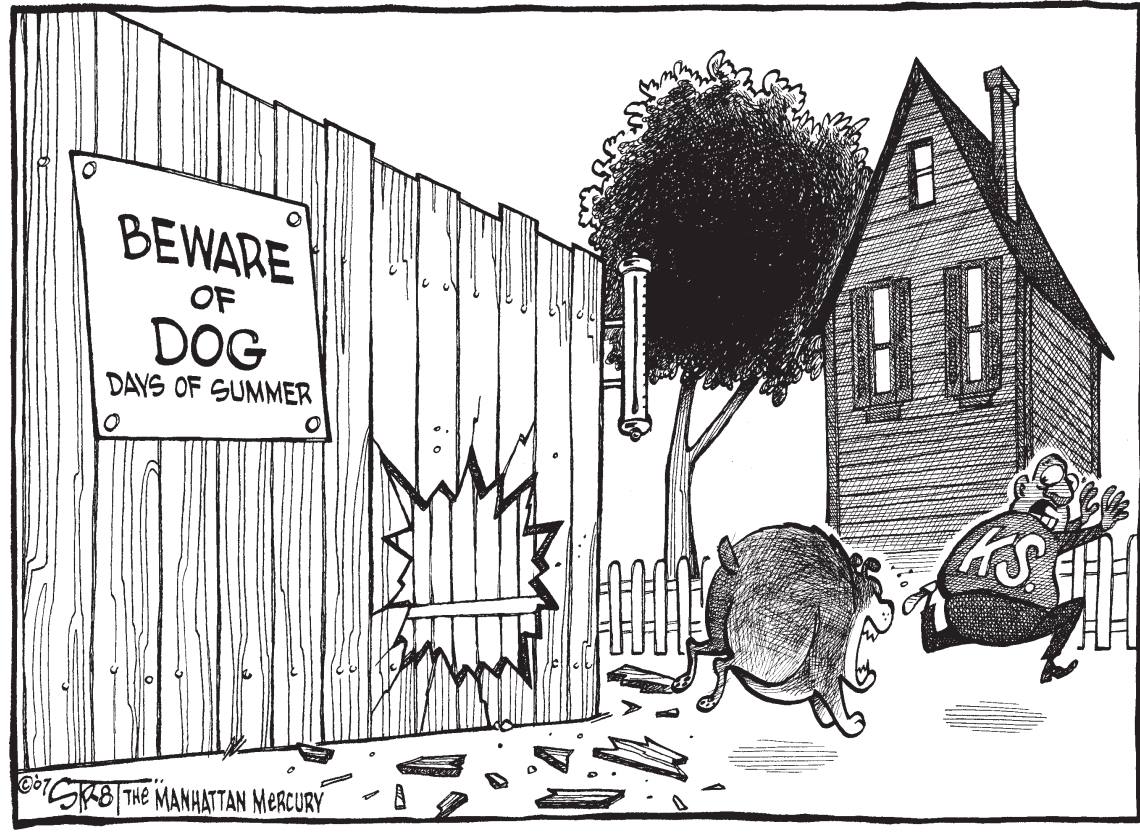
Since The Gateway already loses about \$100,000 a year, any costs to the city from this deal would be minimal by comparison. Few, if any, events would be lost and the only real cost would be overtime for the person closing the building. Creative scheduling should minimize that. The center could close at 7:30 one day a week.

The real issue, then, is whether the city should subsidize a club aimed at helping kids. The council has to face a similar decision when it agreed to allow the Girl Scouts to hold a camp at the old Sappa Valley Youth Ranch this summer. (And waited so long to make a decision, the Scouts went elsewhere.) Nonprofit youth groups aren't going to pay full rent. They don't have the money.

But then no one really pays full rent at The Gateway, given the subsidy. If they did, it would be a pretty quiet place.

With the right rules, the gymnasts should not put much of a dent in the city's treasury, though, and this is the kind of activity we should be supporting. It teaches kids something valuable and keeps families from having to go to another town for recreation.

Whether you agree or not, if you have an opinion — and many people do — now is the time to talk to a council member and make your feelings known. The members should make a decision in two weeks. — *Steve Haynes*



Flowers, she finds, travel well

They went 1,200 miles, spent four nights in four motel rooms and got in and out of 10 vehicles. For a little vase of flowers, that's a big week.

Last Tuesday was our 36th anniversary. Our children called and expressed their amazement and Pat, our office manager, got us a beautiful little vase with three carnations, a purple spiky thing and some greenery.

She laughed and said that I wouldn't have to pay for this one. That's a running joke with us. Steve has a local florist send me flowers for birthday and Valentine's Day and I have to pay the bill at the end of the month.

This time I had flowers free and clear, but I was leaving town.

I spent Tuesday afternoon working at a pharmacy across the street from my office. I took my flowers so I could enjoy them.

They were pretty easy to carry, so I got a wild idea. Why not take them with me? It wouldn't have worked on a plane, but we were taking the train to Santa Fe.

So as soon as I got off work, I loaded the vase and our luggage and headed for Colby, where I was to meet up Steve, who works in Goodland most Tuesdays.

I parked my car behind the *Colby Free Press* and moved luggage and flowers to Steve's truck. We drove to Garden City and spent the night at a motel. At 6 a.m., we used the hotel's courtesy car to drive to the train station and boarded Amtrak for



Open Season

By *Cynthia Haynes*
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points west. (So far, we've got one hotel and four vehicles.)

The train let us off at Lamy, N.M., about 15 miles southeast of Santa Fe. Sadly, even in the old days, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe didn't go to Santa Fe. Trains stopped at Lamy and you had to get to the New Mexico capital on the road. We took a shuttle from Lamy to the Hilton in Santa Fe and spent the night.

Our trip was set up to check out facilities in this desert community for a summer meeting in 2008 for about 50 people.

Merle and Mary, friends from Salida, Colo., joined us the next morning at the Hilton and while my flowers spent the morning in the room, we explored the town.

A shuttle at noon took us, our luggage and flowers to our next hotel, The Inn on the Alameda. (We're up to 600 miles, three hotels and six vehicles.)

Again the flowers had to spend a dull day in the hotel while we toured The Hotel Santa Fe and the La Fonda.

The next morning, Merle and Mary took us back to the train station and we caught Amtrak for Garden City.

A little out of Lamy, the conductor came along and asked Steve for his ticket. Since they'd taken our tickets as we got on the train and I had taken the stubs off to elsewhere, Steve was in a bit of a quandary.

Then the conductor saw the flowers tucked into the seat pocket and said, "Oh, I remember the flowers," and left.

Any man carrying a pretty little vase with three carnations, a purple spiky thing and a few pieces of greenery is memorable, I guess.

At Garden City, the bouquet went with us in the courtesy car to the hotel and spent the night. Then they went home in Steve's truck. We stopped in Colby but didn't bother moving the flowers to my car. We didn't want to bother them.

Although they were as pretty as ever, I think they were asleep. They'd had a big week.

House gets ready just in time

OK, we can relax now. My daughter Kara and granddaughter Taylor arrived last night, but up until they got out of the vehicle, we were moving furniture, vacuuming and packing "stuff" away to make ready the "new" house.

Both Jim and I work well under pressure. In fact, that seems to be when we get things done. Eight weeks ago, we started a list of projects to finish before the kids came. Most of it was still not done at the first of last week. But by 9 p.m. Sunday, we had knocked out a large portion of them.

That morning, it still looked like we had been vandalized. When we got home from church, we went right to work and didn't stop until Kara and Taylor arrived. Then we could act like "la-di-da," we live like this all the time.

You know all those shows on



Out Back

By *Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts*
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HGTV where there is a deadline and the house is a mess right up until the end? Jim said, "We look like we're contestants on 'Flip This House.'"

The good news is, now I can relax and really enjoy their visit. If the kids will just let us relax.

Kara's husband, Adam, is flying in tomorrow night and he hasn't been here in several years. Kara and Adam are both hands on, "Let's get something done" people and want to help us get some major project done

while they're here.

The only problem is choosing just one. The list is almost endless.

We could paint the front porch railing. I still want the north porch screened in. There is the crown molding to paint and install. Lots of pictures still need to be hung. I almost forgot about the curtains I want to make, and Jim could use some help running air ducts to the rest of the house.

I reminded Kara that she is on vacation, too.

-ob-

Last week was a milestone birthday for me. The big 6-0.

Kara said she and Taylor were looking for a birthday card to send me when Taylor said, "Hey, Mom. This one is in large print. Now that Grandma is 60, do you think she needs it?"

Hold on a minute. I'm reminding her that 60 is the new 40.

From the Bible

Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

Psalm 81:1

Photo Policy

The *Oberlin Herald* wants to emphasize photos of people doing things in the community. If you know of an event or news happening that we should attend, please call 475-2206.

Please be sure to allow a couple of days' notice so we can arrange to be there.

Space in the paper is limited and so is the time of our staff, so we may not be able to get to every event, but we will try.

Because space is so limited, we cannot run team or group photos, any pictures of people lined up or of people passing checks, certificates

and the like. (We will always try to make room for a story about any of these events, however.)

We do run wedding and engagement pictures and "mug" shots with stories and obituaries, when they are provided to us. Please remember that we need a clear, sharp picture. Dark or fuzzy prints will not work.

We cannot return photos unless you submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with clear instructions for return. Other photos submitted may be picked up at our office within two weeks. After that, they will be disposed of.

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Town not in that bad a shape

We've had a few letters about the Oberlin's state of repair.

Is it really that bad?

No, looking around, this is still a pretty nice-looking little town.

Most houses and yards are well kept. Most buildings are in good repair. The city takes care of its streets and, with the state, has been steadily rebuilding the main routes through town.

Downtown, almost all the buildings are full. Owners are doing major repairs on at least one. New businesses are planned. The canopies still look good and the overall look is appealing.

The city has its sights on some dilapidated houses, with more to come. It needs to continue that program. At least one house under demolition orders from several years ago still stands after the owner made a few repairs. It's still a mess.

And yes, there are some weeds in a few streets. We all could try to do something about that, pull a few weeds. Perhaps the city could spray the persistent spots.

That said, we could do better. Oberlin needs some improvements, and all of us — city leaders, business owners, taxpayers — will have to swallow harder to foot the bill.

Some suggestions, a few expensive ones, and some that'd cost next to nothing:

- New sidewalks downtown. The



Along the Sappa

By *Steve Haynes*
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old ones are shot. One owner has replaced the concrete in front of his place, but that's about it.

The city might have to do the work and bill property owners over 10 years, as it did with the alleys.

- A new swimming pool. The city's pool commission came up with some good plans. Now it's time for someone to come up with a way to pay for the pool. If the city agrees to continue paying for operations, perhaps the county commissioners should consider a bond issue.

- Vacant buildings need to be fixed up or torn down. A city that does not pursue abandoned property ceases to be a viable community. The city has pursued many rundown buildings and houses. This is not the time to stop.

- Street repairs. The council agreed to allocate \$50,000 per year to pay for some improvements. We'd suggest the council target small areas, like the two rough intersections on West Hall Street, where repairs could make a big difference.

At \$50,000 per year, it'd take decades to replace blocks and blocks of streets. Think small, think high traffic, think big impact.

- More water. A town that has watering restrictions every year won't attract much new industry. A planned water-treatment plant might allow the city to use more wells, but if that's not the case, the city needs to plan for the future.

- Trees to replace what we're losing. Trees are the backbone of any town's looks. Oberlin still has a lot, but as they age, our trees thin out. We're starting to lose many older elms that survived the first wave of Dutch Elm disease. Not enough replacements are going in.

Every lot along city streets needs to have a couple of trees on the parking to maintain the over-arching, shaded look people prize. We need a major tree-planting program.

We're sure there's more. Any suggestions out there? Write a letter or e-mail to *The Herald* and make your voice heard.

Reader objects to story on crime

To the Editor:

I am appalled and embarrassed to read last week's sheriff's blotter concerning the incident at a rural residence. This is not news, it's not good reporting, and it's none of my (or your) business! Explain to me why information such as this must be printed in our local newspaper.

Melinda Enfield, Oberlin

Editor's Note: *The Herald* attempts to report all incidents involving a report of a crime. This case allegedly involved two. Just because an incident involves relatives does not excuse violence. We believe that when such incidents are ignored, they will continue. More reporting, not less, is in the public interest.

Letters to the Editor

King Corn takes his place

To the Editor:

Any citizen of our northwest Kansas and southwest Nebraska area, by taking a jaunt around the country block, can see what King Corn's capability can be: Blessed, beautiful beyond explanation.

In the question, does history repeat itself, King Corn takes center stage in the country Egypt of many centuries ago. Now hear this: the King James Biblical version speak-

ing, chapter 41-42, the story of a Hebrew named Joseph. How a nation was saved from starvation by an individual blessed by God Almighty who was calling the shots.

There is much more to the Joseph story in previous chapters of Genesis. Just about every human up and down plays a part.

Karl Wendelin Herndon