

Motion to apply for loan fails again

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
kldavis@nwkansas.com

The Oberlin City Council defeated a motion to apply for \$4 million to build a water treatment plant from the state Revolving Loan Fund on a 3-2 vote Thursday, putting the unpopular project back on hold.

After over an hour and a half of discussion about the plant and possible fines the city might have to pay if it isn't built, Councilman Ray Ward made a motion to borrow the money from the state.

Council countdown

At a meeting last Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Defeated a resolution to apply for a \$4 million loan for a water treatment plant on a 3-2 vote. Story at left.
- Talked briefly about a recent

meeting of groups with an interest in Sappa Park. Story to come.

- Agreed to declare three vehicles as surplus property and advertise for sealed bids. Story to come.

Agency to fine McCook over the same issue, council members Rhonda May, Rob McFee and Marcia Lohofener voted not to borrow the money. Councilmen Jay Anderson and Ward voted for it.

The plant supposedly is needed to meet new federal requirements that uranium, a radioactive metal, in drinking water can't be over 30 parts per billion and arsenic, a heavy-metal poison, can't be over 10 parts per billion.

The city has uranium in the water wells at 40, 60 and 100 parts per billion, said Chris Miller, owner of Miller and Associates, the McCook engineering firm which does the city's work.

If the city blends wells 10 and 12, said Mr. Miller, the arsenic level gets below the limit, but blending can't get the uranium levels where they need to be.

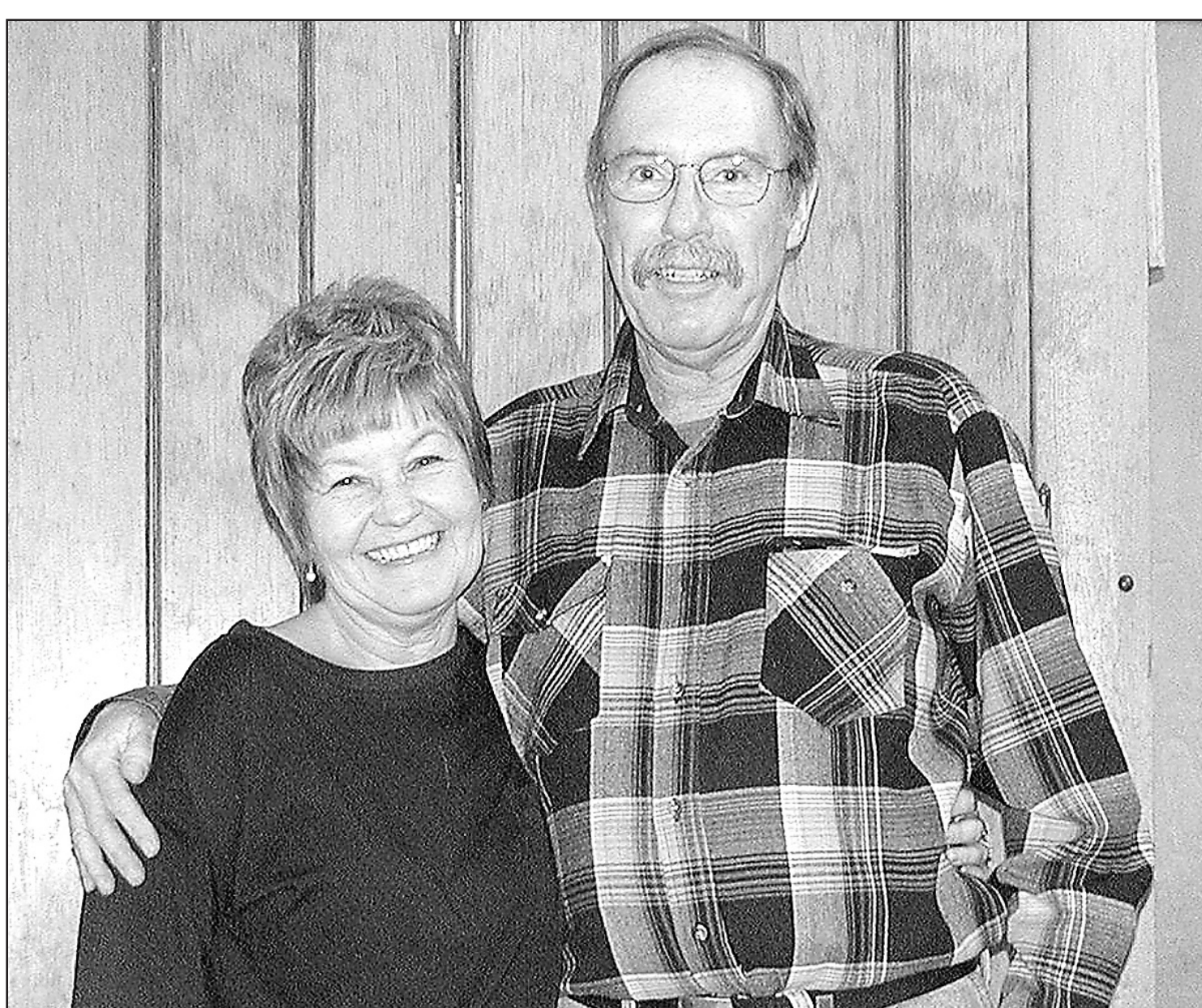
The \$4 million, he said, includes other improvements to the water

system, so only \$3 million is really for the plant? Ms. May asked. Mr. Miller said that is right. About \$1 million of the money would go to replace water mains and valves, mostly in the southern part of the city.

The coagulation filtration plant is designed to take uranium and arsenic out of the system, said City Administrator Gary Shike, but won't do anything about nitrate

(See WATER on Page 8A)

After more discussion and questions about how long it took the Nebraska state government and the U.S. Environmental Protection



DAVE AND SHERRY BERGLING embraced at their home (above), where Mr. Bergling fell down a flight of stairs at the end of December, bruising his brain. Ward Votapka (below left), Kirk Brown and Robert Groneweg helped set up for a benefit dinner for Mr. Bergling on Saturday at the American Legion. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Man makes recovery

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
kldavis@nwkansas.com

Dave Bergling says he could have died after a fall late in December at his house. In fact, maybe he did, once or twice.

Relatives said he wasn't breathing when they found him at the bottom of the basement steps. They revived him and called an ambulance. Emergency medical technicians feared he could have broken his spine. They treated him gingerly.

Doctors found a couple of bruises on his brain, but had trouble getting a clear scan because Dave, a former Army sergeant who doesn't sit still much, kept trying to get up.

At first, his wife Sherry said, it seemed like he wasn't healing very fast.

But with determination, help from a lot of friends, hundreds of prayers — and maybe a little luck — he's pulled through, passed all of his tests, and although he says he just lost three weeks of his life, he's back at work and pushing forward.

Mr. Bergling, advertising manager for *The Oberlin Herald*, fell down the basement steps at his home after midnight on Saturday, Dec. 29. His wife said she had fallen asleep on the couch in front of the woodburning stove, where her husband had started a fire.

Mrs. Bergling's children and grandchildren were visiting. They had planned to leave that day, but Mr. Bergling had suggested they stay the night and he would make chili for lunch.

Dave was still up, Sherry said, talking with the kids. He went to grab his jacket and go outside, and they heard him fall down the back basement stairs, which



are near the coat rack and the back door.

Mr. Bergling said the stairs were narrow, padded with carpet and slanted down a little.

Her kids, said Mrs. Bergling, heard Dave fall. Her daughter Eva and her granddaughter's boyfriend, Creighton, found Mr. Bergling at the bottom of the stairs. He wasn't breathing, they said, and they started doing cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

The kids resuscitated him, said Mrs. Bergling, and woke her up.

He was lying at the bottom of the stairs, she said, and he talked to her, saying "I died" three times. In the meantime, said Mrs. Bergling, her granddaughter, Audrea, called 911 and dispatch wanted to know where they lived. (The house is at the east end of Victoria Street, in a rural part of south Oberlin.)

"My granddaughter didn't know the address," she said, "but found a

piece of mail on the counter in the kitchen. That's why the (enhanced) 911 update is such a good idea."

When the ambulance crew arrived just after 1 a.m., they didn't know if Dave had broken his back or neck in the fall, she said. They strapped him to a back board and loaded him in the ambulance.

Mrs. Bergling said when she turned around from attending to Dave, her daughter Stephanie handed her her coat, shoes and purse, and she was ready to go.

At the Decatur County Hospital, said Mrs. Bergling, they scanned Dave's brain and tried to do a body scan, but he wouldn't hold still. Dr. Stellan Andrea said there were two bruises on the brain and advised that he needed to be flown to a larger hospital in either Kearney, Neb., or Denver.

Mrs. Bergling said she had heard good things about the Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney and

the weather was bad in Denver, so they headed to Nebraska.

Workers in the emergency room had to hold Dave down, she said, because he was agitated. The couple had to wait for the fixed-wing plane to arrive. She said she was told a helicopter wouldn't be able to land in Oberlin because of the snow.

While they waited, said Mrs. Bergling, someone at the hospital asked her if she wanted to go home and pack a bag. She looked at them and said she had her purse and didn't need anything else. Really, she said, she just didn't want to leave her husband.

Mrs. Bergling was able to ride in the air ambulance with her husband to Kearney. At the larger hospital, she said, the doctors did a complete body scan. They found the two bruises in the brain, one above each ear. The brain surgeon went to (See COUPLE on Page 8A)

Board to vote again after a tie last week

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
kldavis@nwkansas.com

After six interviews and two votes ended in a 3-3 tie last Tuesday, the Oberlin School Board decided to table a decision on a new board member until officials could check with lawyers on what to do.

What they found out is the board will just have to keep voting until the tie is broken, said Superintendent Pat Cullen. Board members had wondered if they could just flip a coin. The position will be on the agenda for the next board meeting at 7 p.m. Monday at the district office.

With a little over 30 people in the audience last week in a special meeting at the high school cafeteria, the board voted on large pieces of paper marked with the member's name.

The first vote picked out Doug Brown and Jerry Chambers as front runners, eliminating four other candidates. The second ended in 3-3 tie. The board decided to table the decision, not knowing whether they should flip a coin or what.

After calling the legal department at the Kansas Association of School Boards last Wednesday, Dr. Cullen said the board will need to keep voting until one of the candidates wins a majority.

The appointment for the board is needed because of the resignation of Delayne May, who quit in January after moving to Lawrence. Her term runs to June 30, 2009.

Six candidates were interviewed, including Mr. Brown, who works at Frenchman Valley Co-op in McCook; Mr. Chambers, with the U.S. Army; Dr. Gary Fredrickson, an Oberlin dentist; Abby Hissong, insurance agent; Jess Randel, technology manager at Colby Community College; and Colleen Rittmann, who works at the Decatur County Feed Lot.

Before starting the process, board President Dewayne Jackson explained that although the meeting was open to the public, the board was asking the candidates to leave during the interviews. He said the board couldn't make any of them leave, but would appreciate it if

they did. Mrs. Rittmann and Mr. Randel chose to wait in the hall for their turn in the hot seat, while the others stayed in the room.

Although the meeting began at the district office, Mr. Jackson looked at the crowd and made the call to move it to the cafeteria.

The audience included more than 30 people, mostly district staff and teachers. There were also a few Oberlin business owners and a handful of retired educators.

Each of the candidates was asked the same 12 questions.

Mr. Brown said that with his business experience and education, he thought he could be a real asset to the board. He said he has experience with budgets, cash flow and working with financial statements.

He said if the district had the money, he would like to see seat belts put in all of the school buses, especially for country kids. It would be a big plus, he said, adding that declining enrollment is the district's greatest challenge.

In dealing with a hostile patron or staff member or even with a reporter, Mr. Brown said, the board needs to act together. One member can't go out on a limb, he said.

He said he has served on the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. board for seven months, on the Chamber of Commerce board for nine years, on the Liberty Township Board and the stewardship board at St. John's Lutheran Church.

Mr. Chambers said with two children in the school district, he has a vested interest in the schools. He said he not only wants to help with the board, but wants to be part of the team, continuing with the success of the district.

If the schools had the money, he said, and after some research and horror stories of the No Child Left Behind Law, he would bring back everything every child wants to learn about. Then he would work on the buildings and pay the teachers and administrators better.

In dealing with upset patrons, staff or the media, Mr. Chambers (See BOARD on Page 8A)

Disease results negative for deer killed in area

Test results from the 36 deer taken in Decatur County by the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Department all came back negative, meaning there might not be a major problem with chronic wasting disease in the county after all.

Two weeks ago, department biologists came to the county to take 25 to 50 more deer, ending up with 36 to test for the fatal disease.

At the beginning of the month, the department reported that three deer shot during the fall hunting season had tested positive for the disease. For several years now, the department has asked hunters to send in samples to test their deer for the disease. The illness hasn't been proven to be transmittable to humans or cattle, but is fatal in deer, elk and moose.

With only 11 total tests last fall and three of them positive, the department wanted a bigger sample.

Monday afternoon, Lloyd Fox, big game/furbearer program coordinator for the department, said all

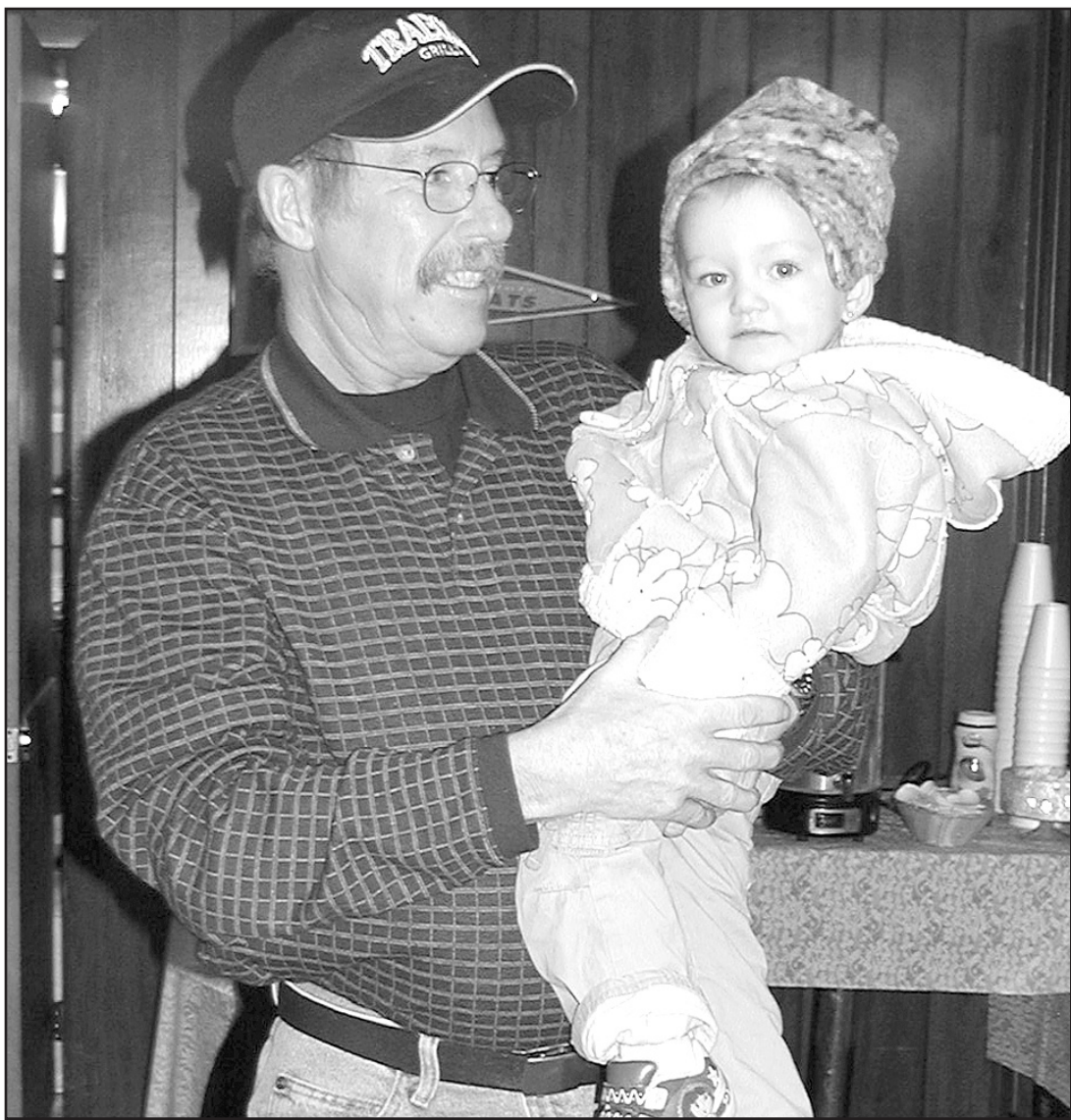
of the deer tested negative, which has the biologists scratching their heads. The previously small sample size was giving the experts nightmares, he said. Now they're asking if it was a fluke.

Male deer move around a lot, said Mr. Fox, so although all three were taken in the same area, along the Sappa Creek, that doesn't mean that is where the deer would be roaming today if alive.

The question now, he said, is did the hunt just not hit the hot spot for the disease, or is there a hot spot here? It's possible the spread of the disease in Decatur County might just not be as bad as originally thought with the small sample size.

These results show that the disease isn't as prevalent in Decatur County as originally feared.

Mr. Fox said he was busy Monday calling everyone who accepted deer meat after the harvest two weeks ago, to let them know that the meat is OK. The department gave away over 700 pounds of meat.



AT THE AMERICAN LEGION during a benefit dinner, Dave Bergling held his granddaughter Kelly. Mr. Bergling fell and suffered a head injury at the end of 2007.
— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

*Couple thanks community

(Continued from Page 1A)
put in a probe and a tube to drain any liquid off, she said, and Dave went to surgery right away.

The tube had a clamp on it, said Mrs. Bergling. All of this was hooked up to a monitor that would beep when there was a touch too much fluid on the brain. A nurse would turn the clamp, and sometimes just a few drops would come out. It was enough to take the pressure off his brain, though.

Mrs. Bergling said she talked with an older woman while she was in the waiting room in Kearney. Mrs. Bergling said she told her that she kept telling God that they had only been married five years and that wasn't enough.

This woman, said Mrs. Bergling, told her she had told God the same thing not too long ago, but it had been 53 years for her and her husband died.

"I guess when you love someone," said Mrs. Bergling, "it's never enough time."

Dave was sedated and moved to the Intensive Care Unit, she said. The doctors did another brain scan on Monday and the brain had stopped swelling. This was the beginning of his recovery, she said.

The doctors never had to remove any of his brain to make more room, because the swelling stopped, she said. Actually, she said, even today, although Mr. Bergling is no longer in the hospital, his brain is still healing. The doctors said it could take three months, six or maybe a year. They really don't know.

A couple of days later, doctors removed the brain probe, but Dave still wasn't talking.

The hardest part, said Mrs. Bergling, was the waiting. With a brain injury, she said, no one knows what will happen. It just depends on where the bruise is, how bad it is, and the doctors couldn't say what would happen next. All she could do was wait and see. And she did, never returning home to Oberlin until they could come home together.

The following Thursday, said Mrs. Bergling, the doctors stopped sedating her husband. He opened his eyes. He still wasn't talking, but he started to want to get out of bed.

Dave, she said, was agitated and the nurses had to keep him in bed. He would pull out his intravenous tubes and even the feeding tube through his nose. The doctors decided to put a feeding tube directly into his stomach.

Mr. Bergling was released to a regular room, but he still had a nurse with him 24 hours a day and still was agitated. He would sleep just seconds at a time, said Mrs. Bergling. It was hard to believe that a person could stay awake for that long.

Although he doesn't remember anything about the three weeks he was in Kearney, Mr. Bergling said he was told that when people would come to visit, he would start counting on his fingers, figuring out how many people he needed to cook for.

In Kearney, he did some therapy

every day and by Jan. 14, the doctors decided Mr. Bergling was well enough to be moved to a rehabilitation center. Mrs. Bergling said the choices were Craig Hospital in Denver, Wichita or Lincoln.

The doctors told her Craig couldn't do anything the hospital in Lincoln couldn't do. Lincoln, she said, was only two hours away, which meant less time her husband had to be in an ambulance.

By Thursday, the couple was in Lincoln. Dave, said Mrs. Bergling, was talking and awake, but the brain wasn't still connecting.

The doctors did ask him if he could count, she said. Mr. Bergling said he started counting to 10 in German. Although he didn't remember that, he remembers being told that's what he did.

Friday morning at Madonna Rehabilitation, said Mrs. Bergling, they got her husband up and in a wheelchair first thing in the morning. He still wasn't really awake or talking.

That afternoon, though, everything changed.

"That's where I come in," said Mr. Bergling. "I woke up and remembered."

He didn't remember everything at first, Mr. Bergling said. For instance, he told doctors he lived on a farm and raised cattle. Then he remembered that he grew up on a farm, but he doesn't live on one today. Mr. Bergling said as far back as he can remember, he helped his dad feed the cattle.

The following Monday at Madonna, they stopped the 24-hour nurse coverage and Mr. Bergling started walking.

"I just started to walk all over the place," he said, adding that he found where they kept the coffee and ice cream. The other guys staying there wanted coffee in the morning, so he would get it for them.

Mr. Bergling said he did lots of therapy. Even when the staff would say they were done for the day and would do something tomorrow, he would demand to get it done.

"He was determined to get out of there," said his wife.

It's spooky, said Mr. Bergling, to wake up and not remember. He still doesn't remember the fall or those three missing weeks.

When he arrived in Lincoln, Sherry said, the doctors told her he could be there 50 days. He actually stayed just eight.

At first, the doctors said the end of February, said Mrs. Bergling, then the middle of February, end of January and finally it was pushed up to Saturday, Jan. 26.

"My birthday," her husband added.

When he returned home, Mr. Bergling was scheduled for rehab in McCook for a month. He was done in two weeks. The Vietnam veteran, a longtime Army recruiter who retired as a sergeant major, said he just made up his mind to get it done.

The doctors have just been amazed by how quickly he recovered, said his wife.

Even the first night in Lincoln,

she said, she would say his name and Dave would respond by calling her "sweetheart." At that point, the nurse gave her a thumbs up, said Mrs. Bergling, saying that it was good that her husband recognized her voice.

Mr. Bergling said he was supposed to go back to Lincoln at the beginning of this week to get his final checkup and be cleared to work. Instead, he called around trying to find a way to do it earlier. So on Friday, Feb. 15, the couple went to Grand Island to meet his doctor, and Mr. Bergling was cleared to drive and work. There are no restrictions, he said.

Over the past month and a half, friends have stepped up to help the couple.

Three guys who hunt with him in the fall, he said, Roy and Benny Delsaver and Dave O'Neill, a second cousin, from Brighton, Colo., called Sherry and said they were coming out to replace the basement stairs. They don't expect anything back in return, he said.

People came and visited, they called and sent cards. Mr. Bergling said he doesn't remember most of the conversations, but was told later who came and called.

The Berglings agreed that there are so many people that they want to thank, it's hard to remember them all. Many pitched in to help. The Oberlin American Legion Post held a barbecue benefit Saturday that raised around \$1,000 to help them with expenses.

"Thank you to the ambulance crew and the people that were in the emergency room at the hospital that night. Thank you Robin and Nancy," said Mrs. Bergling. "Thank you all for your prayers, cards, calls, hospital visits, e-mails. Thank you Pat and Kim for taking care of our animals. Thank you Robert and Judy for bringing up my car to Kearney and all your support."

"Thank you, American Legion for the benefit. Thank you, Robert, for preparing the meat and for all those who helped and came to the benefit. Thank you Jim and everyone at *The Herald* for doing Dave's work. Thank you, *McCook Gazette* for all your support. Thank you Natasha for doing my work at the hospital and for all of you who donated paid time-off hours for me. Thank you for all the hugs and 'welcome homes.'"

Mrs. Bergling said a sister from Denver, Vermetta, came and stayed with her for six days in Kearney. At least there is a happy ending with this, said Mrs. Bergling, even if her husband can't remember those three weeks.

She said she couldn't imagine going through something like this without the support of everyone. That wouldn't happen in a big city, she said. It is just crazy the way people have stepped in and taken care of things.

"It is so wonderful," she said. "It has definitely restored my faith in human nature, just all of the people who said we were on their prayer chain."

"I just couldn't believe," said Mr. Bergling, "how many people prayed for me."

*Board tables vote to ask lawyer about tie

(Continued from Page 1A)
said, a board member shouldn't act unilaterally or without the consent of the board.

Mr. Chambers said he doesn't have a great deal of involvement in community activities. As a career military person, he said, he has been busy with that for the last 30 years. He said he has served on several committees in the military that mirror community organizations.

• Dr. Fredrickson said when he returned to Oberlin after dental school in 1982, he married a school teacher. He said he was interested in education then and possibly serving on the board. Even though it would have been legal for him to serve while his wife was a teacher, he said he decided to avoid any conflict. His wife, Sarah, is no longer employed by the district. After being a cancer survivor for a year, said Dr. Fredrickson, he has learned he can't put off things he is interested in.

Dr. Fredrickson said he feels that education is the most important part of his children's and the community's future. Being able to get kids to the education level they want, he said, is probably the best legacy anyone can give them. Dr. Fredrickson said he returned to Oberlin to make sure his kids got the best education possible, and he thinks they got it.

• Mrs. Hissong said she graduated from a school similar in size to Oberlin. She received a good education and so are her two children. She added that she is proud of the district and wants to be a part of it.

She said she has been the district's insurance agent, working at Fredrickson Insurance Agency. Mrs. Hissong said she checked into the legality of her serving on the board. There isn't any legal reason, she said, that she can't serve on the board, nor is there a conflict of interest. If chosen, Mrs. Hissong added, she would no longer handle the district's policy.

• Mr. Randel said he thought the overall goal of the board is to make the schools better. He said his entire career has been centered around making education better in the technology field. He added that his skills would help to make the school district better.

Mr. Randel was the district's technology coordinator from January 2001 to October 2005.

• Mrs. Rittmann said she has a unique perspective, having been a student here, working for the district and now having kids in the schools. A community without a good school system doesn't have much of a future, she said, and we need to keep our schools strong and keep growing.

Mrs. Rittmann said she is sure the board has a tough decision, but knew they will choose an excellent candidate.

Before the board took the first vote, the members took five minutes to review their notes.

In the first ballot, Mr. Jackson and member Barb Olson voted for Mr. Chambers, while Monte Moore and Dan Grafel voted for Mr. Brown. Dan Nedland voted for Mrs. Hissong and Chris Bailey for Mrs. Rittmann.

Neither Dr. Fredrickson nor Mr. Randel received a vote.

In the second ballot, Mr. Moore, Mr. Grafel and Mr. Nedland voted for Mr. Brown. Mr. Jackson, Mrs. Olson and Mr. Bailey voted for Mr. Chambers.

With a tie, the board talked about flipping a coin, although Mr. Brown had been unable to stay for the rest of the meeting. The board decided to table the decision.

Before the meeting closed, Mrs. Olson praised all the candidates for their interest and urged them to consider running for the board in the next election in April 2009. Three positions, held by Chris Bailey, Dwayne Jackson and whoever is appointed on Monday, will be up at that time.

*Water plant kept on hold

(Continued from Page 1A)
contamination or the hardness of water.

What other area cities are going through this? Ms. May asked. Norton, Atwood and McCook in this area, said Mr. Miller. Pretty much everyone up and down the Republican River.

Mrs. Lohofener said she called the city managers in Norton and Atwood to see what point each one is at with the water treatment process. She said she didn't really find out much. The city manager in Norton said he isn't aware of any more regulations coming from the Environmental Protection Agency. In Atwood, she said, the city is looking for alternate water sources.

In Nebraska, asked Ms. May, is it true that towns under 15,000 population can apply for an exemption?

It is called an exemption, said Dave Blau, with Miller and Associates, but it actually is an extension for up to nine years. The extension is for arsenic, he said. There is no exemption for uranium. Nothing similar is available in Kansas, he added.

Who decided that could happen? asked Ms. May.

Mr. Miller said there is a five-member committee appointed by the governor of Nebraska and they came up with the idea. It was then approved through the Nebraska Department of Health and Environment and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

What do cities the size of Norca-tur, Jennings, Selden and Herndon do? asked Ms. May.

Selden and Jennings, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch, have already drilled new wells.

Did they find lower uranium? asked Ms. May. Mr. Hirsch said he didn't know.

The city has already tried drilling new wells, said Mr. Ward. That didn't work.

The group asked about the life span of the water plant. Mr. Miller said the basins probably will last 40 years, while mechanical items normally last 20.

With the violations for being over on the uranium level, said Mr. Miller, Oberlin is doing everything it is supposed to. The violations are being published and mailings are going out.

At some point, he said, there will be enough violations that the Kansas Department of Health and Environment will send a consent order giving the city so much time to build the plant.

With the city already receiving an emergency community assistance water grant for around \$400,000 to help put in a new well east of town, said Mr. Ward, will that speed up the fines?

The state, said Mr. Miller, won't just come in and fine the city. It could speed up the time of the consent order. Also, he said, the federal agency could step in and force the city to build the plant.

Plans for the water treatment plant were sent to the state in 2006, said Mr. Miller, so the department knows the city is working on the project. He said he had told the department that the city has applied for the money.
Has the U.S. Department of Agri-

culture said anything about a loan? Mrs. Lohofener asked.

Mr. Miller said he has sent e-mails to the department, but he hasn't heard anything except that they are waiting for the new Farm Bill to pass.

The new rates in the last year were those to pay for the water treatment plant or the wastewater plant? asked Mr. Ward.

They were for the sewer plant, Mr. Shike said. The city hasn't raised water rates to pay for the water treatment plant.

The rate increase needed to pay for the water plant is estimated at \$37.58 a month for a 20-year loan with no grant money, said Mr. Miller. That would be for an average water user.

So the city doesn't need to make a decision until it hears from the Department of Agriculture? said Mrs. Lohofener. The city needs a money source, Mr. Miller said.

The council talked briefly about possible grants for the project, although nothing is in hand.

The longer the city takes, said Mr. Ward, the price for the water treatment plant could go up. Right, said Mr. Miller, those are 2007 numbers. At this point, construction couldn't start until next year.

In McCook, he said, the state said they didn't care if the city had any money, the plant still had to be built.

Once the city applies for a state loan, the money should be here in around 30 to 45 days or so, said Mr. Miller.

The council also talked about looking for some kind of grant or just having people in the city dig their own wells.

It makes sense to do the application for the loan, said Mrs. Lohof-

ener. It sounds like it, said Mayor Joe Stanley. That doesn't mean the city is giving in, he told Ms. May.

No, said Ms. May, but why do it now when the city can do it later? It took 10 years in McCook for the fines and enforcement to start. The city only has a year, at the end of the next quarter, of violations for being over on uranium. It took six years of sporadic violations in McCook and then four solid years.

No one knows if it will work here like it did in McCook, said Mr. Ward. He made a motion to apply for a loan, with Mrs. Lohofener giving the second.

If the city gets that loan, asked Mr. McFee, will that mean that the city has gotten started and a consent order will come right away?

Mr. Miller said he never thought of it that way. He said if he had to take a stab at it, no one will probably do anything until after four quarters of violations, which will be the second quarter of 2008.

"I don't know how long they will let you sit," said Mr. Miller. "If the clock is ticking, it has already been ticking."

The city has actually already applied for money, Ms. May noted.

Ms. May said she sees no point in hurrying with the loan from the state. If that takes 30 days and the U.S. Department of Agriculture takes two years, she asked, why are we rushing?

Mr. McFee said the city should tell them off.

What will this do to the airport project? asked Dr. Anderson, noting that the city is asking for up to \$5 million in federal money for a longer runway.

There was no answer, and the vote failed 3-2.

STOP BEING GOUGED BY CABLE