

City puts cash into park wetlands

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Applause filled the room Thursday night as the Oberlin City Council voted unanimously to pay \$12,025 for an engineer to draw up plans for a wetlands at Sappa Park.

After a presentation by Gary Anderson, co-convenor for the Decatur Tomorrow Steering Committee, Councilwoman Rhonda May made a motion to approve hiring the engineer, with the money coming out of the city's community development fund.

The motion was met with a round of applause from the 20 people in the audience, mostly park supporters.

In 2005, said Mr. Anderson, Decatur Tomorrow was started with the help of Terry Woodbury of Kansas Communities, a Kansas City-based consulting firm. One of the committees under that group covers Sappa Park.

In personal interviews Mr. Woodbury had with people around town and at public meetings that led up to forming the development and planning group, he said, Sappa Park was

the No. 1 priority to a lot of people.

It's tremendous what's been done at the park since 2005, Mr. Anderson said, but it's still an underutilized community asset. Think about what it would cost to replicate the park, he said, probably half a million to a million to build the shelter house, another \$2 million for the dam and more for the roads. It could easily be worth \$5 million, said Mr. Anderson.

At this point, the park needs water to move forward, he said, not only running water, which the council is working on,

but a wetlands.

Water would bring more campers, picnickers and more people in general, he said.

Sappa Park could be a revenue source for the city, said Mr. Anderson. Phillipsburg has a lot where people can pull in and camp. It might have electricity, he said, adding that he didn't know for sure.

People can use the space to camp and leave a donation, said Carolyn Burtis, with the park committee, and Phillipsburg brings in \$3,000 to \$4,000 a summer.

A wetlands or small lake at Sappa Park, said Mr. Anderson, could draw more people, which could mean more money. Someone could maybe sell bait or rent out canoes.

People need to look at the park as not just a liability, he said, but an asset.

The committee, said Mr. Anderson, is at a point where they can't move on without the council members saying they will take the next step.

Rick Pauls, a long-time backer of the park, has put a lot of hours into this project (See WETLAND on Page 5A)

Former owner of bowling alley charged in fire

Arson charges were filed Friday against a co-owner of the Centennial Bowling Alley and the Red Crown Lounge, which burned down three years ago over Memorial Day weekend.

Sheriff Ken Badsky and Deputy Jay Tate arrested Ken Morgan of Oberlin on Friday on a warrant from the attorney general's office. Sheriff Badsky said Mr. Morgan made his first appearance before Judge John Bremer the same day and bond was set at \$100,000.

The defendant requested state-appointed counsel. That afternoon, David O. Baumgartner of Phillipsburg was appointed a Mr. Morgan's attorney.

The charges include two counts of arson, a level 7 nonperson felony.

The fire at the bowling alley and lounge, owned by Mr. Morgan and Maurice Zodrow, started around 3 a.m. on Monday, May 30, 2005.

After the Oberlin Fire Department extinguished the flames, Un-

dersheriff Randy McHugh started an investigation. Later that day, the crime scene was turned over to the state's fire marshal's office. Melvin Dale, an investigator sent out by the office from Garden City, went over the scene.

After nine hours checking out the scene, Mr. Dale declared the fire an arson.

The June 1, 2005, edition of *The Oberlin Herald* reported that, "Mr. Dale said he didn't find a source for an explosion (reported by witnesses), but it could simply have come from the rapid buildup of heat in the fire.

"Flames and smoke were rolling out the west end of the bowling alley roof, over the kitchen, where the fire was most intense. There, the steel roof was warped and buckled. 'At this time, I'm going to call the fire arson,' the investigator said. 'As to how it was set, I'm not going to say at this time. I'll have to wait until (See ARREST on Page 5A)

Motel operator, city council discuss opportunity for inn

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Oberlin City Council talked with a Nebraska man interested in putting a 21-room motel in town at the meeting Thursday, but neither party made an offer.

Dave Winfield of Kearney, Neb., said his chain, Winfield Inn and Suites, focuses on small, rural towns because he likes the people. The motel would have cherry wood furniture and flat screen televisions in the rooms, he said, and the rooms are geared at families and couples in the 45-65 age range. The rates will be affordable, said Mr. Winfield.

The number of rooms can be adjusted, he said, adding that the motel would offer high-speed Internet and a continental breakfast.

The company is based in Kearney, where he owns a strip mall. Mr. Winfield said he is building a 21-room motel in Curtis and a 10-room motel in Arnold. In the motel plans, he said, he tries to leave some land so he can add on later.

Mr. Winfield said he owns his own construction company and will do all of the work. He told the council he always keeps his word,

so as long as the council does the same and is honest and up front with him, they will have a good working relationship.

Have you done a demographic study for the motel? asked Mayor Joe Stanley. Mr. Winfield said he hasn't had a chance. He said he did check out the LandMark Inn here, but hasn't been to the Frontier Motel yet.

Connie Grafel, marketing director of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., said they have had some communication with the Frontier, who aren't very happy about a new hotel coming in. They said they have some improvements planned for the Frontier, but didn't say when they would happen.

The council asked how many rooms are available in town. Gary Anderson, owner of the LandMark Inn, said he has seven and he thought there were 34 total.

Mr. Winfield said if he does end up building a motel here, it will be a nice, new place but he thought there probably won't be enough business for two motels.

(See MOTEL on Page 5A)

Elevators move corn to make room for wheat

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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With wheat harvest just around the corner, elevators in the county are moving corn around to make room for a lot of grain.

Kurt Anderson, general manager of the Decatur Cooperative Association, said with the large harvest last fall, there's still corn in the elevators. Some has been sold but not yet moved, he said, and some is still owned by farmers waiting for the price to climb.

At the elevator in Oberlin, he added, most of the corn goes to feedlots or ethanol plants and is

shipped by truck. Loading the corn onto a truck, said Mr. Anderson, takes more time than loading into rail cars, which means it costs more because there's more labor involved and higher fuel costs.

Although the amount of corn left, 300,000 bushels, has caused some concern, he said, they have made room for the wheat harvest at the Co-op's seven elevators.

The average amount of wheat brought into the elevators over the last five years has been 2.8 million bushels, he said, and the firm has room to take in that much again.

(See WHEAT on Page 5A)



ON MAIN STREET Sunday, Chris Koerperich and a volunteer cooked pork burgers and bratwurst at the Decatur County Museum for a lunch held for the people riding in Bike Across Kansas. Mary Beth Grisanti, Wichita, got ready

to get back on her bicycle to head for Norton after eating at the museum.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis and Cynthia Haynes

Cyclists stop, eat in town

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Road bikes lined the sidewalks Sunday in front of every restaurant in town and the Last Indian Rain Museum, where board members sold hot bratwurst and pork burgers, fresh chips and cold water.

Around 800 bicyclists came through Oberlin during the day, most stopping to have a bite to eat either at a potato bar at Stellar Sales, Mean Genes, A&W, Pizza Hut, the Re-Load, the LandMark Inn or at the county museum.

The riders which started in St. Francis on Friday, were headed east to the Missouri River at Atchison, riding border to border in the annual Bike Across Kansas.

They stayed the night in Atwood on Saturday and planned to camp out Sunday in Norton.

People in Oberlin planned meals for the riders, including a breakfast buffet at the LandMark, a pancake feed and then lunch at the museum, and lunch at the (See BICYCLISTS on Page 5A)



Hail darkens downtown as globes get whacked

Hail destroyed many of the globes on the lights on Oberlin's downtown canopies Thursday, forcing the city to replace all the globes.

The county has been under severe thunderstorm or tornado watches and warnings for much of the last

three weeks, and a severe thunderstorm watch had been issued for the afternoon and evening on Thursday.

About 4 p.m. that afternoon, Oberlin and the county were hit by a hail storm which knocked down

tomato plants in backyards and broke the globes that cover the lights on Main Street.

More than 30 of the 53 globes over the lights downtown are broken, said City Administrator Gary Shike.

"The older, more discolored globes tended to be the ones that survived," he said.

The city will order replacements for all of the globes so all will be the same color, he said.

(See STORM on Page 5A)