

Extension service may join Norton

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Decatur County commissioners voted 2-1 Tuesday to form an extension district with Norton County unless someone carries a petition sending the issue to the voters.

Byron Hale, extension agent for the county; Tranda Watts, area specialist for family and consumer sciences, and Extension Council members Susan May, Amanda Grafel and Peggy Pratt talked with the commissioners about making the switch to a district.

Statewide, extension officials have been pushing for districts serving several coun-

ties, which have the power to levy their own property tax and take spending decisions out of county hands. Commissioners basically would no longer have a say in the program.

The district would be run by a new board with four representatives from each county. In the first year, Mr. Hale said, the board would be named by the commissioners. After that, the members would be chosen at the spring city/school elections.

The district board would set a tax levy for both counties, he said, and both counties will continue to have offices and agents.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said he had gotten mostly negative feedback about the

idea of an extension district. He said he would have to vote against the plan. Both Commissioners Doyle Brown and Stan McEvoy, who said they had basically no feedback, voted in favor of the switch.

The resolution will be printed in today's *Oberlin Herald* and again next week. After the last publication, said County Clerk Marilyn Horn, there is a 60-day period in which someone can come in and asked to do a petition. The petition needs signatures of 5 percent of the registered voters in either county, which is 101 in Decatur. That would then send the question to an election in the county that petitions it, she said.

The last day to turn in a petition is Mon-

day, Feb. 9, for Decatur County, Mrs. Horn said. There wasn't any discussion on where Norton County is in the process.

Since talking with the commissioners months ago about the district idea, said Mrs. May, extension council members have talked with people and asked them to call the commissioners to say if they are in favor of joining with Norton County or not.

Mr. Unger said he had one constituent in favor of the district and all the others were opposed because they didn't want a separate taxing entity.

The people who serve on the board will be from Decatur and Norton counties, said Mrs. Pratt, so you have to believe that they

aren't going to raise taxes just to raise taxes. They will be paying them, too, she said.

Mr. Brown said he didn't receive any calls. Mr. McEvoy said he did talk to one person from Norton County.

Mrs. May said the board thinks joining with Norton County is "a wonderful idea." The state is heading towards districts, she said, and they would rather be with a financially strong county as opposed to a county they just get stuck with.

Are the four people from each county chosen at-large or is it one from each commissioner district and one at-large person? asked Mr. Unger. Mr. Hale said he wasn't (See EXTENSION on Page 8A)



Crafts sold at show

AT THE OBERLIN ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW on Saturday at The Gateway, Megan Rippe (above) worked on a piece before she placed it on her table for sale. At the front table (right), Chamber board member Sid Metcalf handed out tickets to people for a chance to win door prizes.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



Money from estate still coming; none yet spent

Not all the money left to The Gateway and the Decatur County Hospital by an area couple has been received yet, and so far, none of it's been spent.

Fred and Henrietta Bremer left their estate, estimated at nearly \$2.5 million in land, securities and other property, to the two. Both have received around \$500,000 from liquidation of securities so far.

At the beginning of November, an auction at The Gateway sold 960 acres of land from the estate. A Colorado couple, Gilford and Carlyne Mahaffy, purchased the land for more than \$1.4

million.

Both Mayor Joe Stanley and Administrator Lynn Doeden said neither the city nor the hospital has received any money from the auction yet. Neither knew when they will.

Mayor Stanley said he wasn't sure how long it takes after an auction to get the cash.

None of the money left to the city for The Gateway has been spent, he said. He said the City Council is looking at a new roof for the building since the old one leaks bad.

Mayor Stanley said as far as he knows, it is the original roof, although there have been some

repairs. The city did receive around \$45,000 in insurance money, he said, but that won't pay for the whole roof.

Although the city hasn't received any bids on the project, he said, they have heard numbers around \$100,000 for a new roof.

Other than that, said Mayor Stanley, lots of ideas have been thrown out, but the council hasn't made any decisions. The members will be looking at the long term, he said.

Mrs. Doeden said there aren't any plans at the hospital for the money so far.

Race promoter says board owes him cash

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The man who promoted auto races at the Decatur County Speedway last year claims not only he doesn't owe the county Fair Board any money, but says the board owes him.

Joe Bellm said in an interview in November and then a conversation on Monday that he asked for \$1,000 a race to help with advertising and promoting the track and the board still owes him \$2,000.

At a Decatur County commissioners meeting in November, members of the Fair Board said the board had loaned Mr. Bellm \$2,000 to get the races started and they never got that money back. They also said that the board was supposed to get 1 percent of the gross receipts from the races.

The board plans to promote the races in 2009 with racer Rick Salem and Brenda Ploussard helping set up the dates, said Ken Badsy, fair board vice president, with the idea of keeping the money local.

In order to get the races off the ground last year, said Mr. Bellm, he told the board that it would take a lot of promotion. He said he brought in some advertising, which cost around \$500 for a live radio feed for each of the five races.

About midseason last year, he said, he brought in NASCAR driver Randy LaJoie. That cost around \$2,000, with half coming out of his pocket and the rest from other promoters.

If the Fair Board was supposedly giving him a loan, asked Mr. Bellm,

County might sue man

Decatur County commissioners and fair board members say they are prepared to sue the man who promoted auto races at the fairground last year, depending on how an upcoming meeting goes.

The commissioners and fair board members, including President Greg Long, Vice President Ken Badsy and Treasurer Linda Schroer, talked last Tuesday about a possible lawsuit at the commissioners' meeting.

Mrs. Schroer said Joe Bellm, the promoter, called her the other day and talked about setting up a meeting Monday, Dec. 1, or Tuesday, Dec. 2, but nothing had been set.

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shouldn't there be some kind of documentation? It never was a loan, he claimed. There was an understanding that the money was supposed to help promote the track.

He added that he did receive \$3,000 for promotion for three races, but the board still owes him (See MAN on Page 8A)

Weekend marks start to shopping

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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It's official. The Christmas shopping season is off and running, with the opening weekend and "Black Friday" things of the past.

In Oberlin, people were out and about for the annual Parade of Lights on Friday night. Many were looking around, with plans to return to stores later, while others made purchases.

Gary Anderson, owner of the LandMark Inn and Oberlin Mercantile, said he thought opening weekend had been comparable to last year. Traffic in the gift shop was probably about the same, he said.

He had maybe a few less people on Friday than last year and more on Saturday, although there really wasn't a big swing either way.

Some people weren't buying, said Mr. Anderson, just looking and making plans to come back.

He said business seemed to be good all week, not just on Friday. It seems that people were shopping all week, even before opening weekend.

The Teller Room restaurant was busy on both Friday and Saturday, said Mr. Anderson. Several people came in for dinner on Friday and then watched the parade.

Across the street at Goltl's Home (See OWNERS on Page 8A)

Angel Tree forms needed by Friday

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Forms to get a child's number on the Oberlin Jaycees' Angel Tree need to be turned in by Friday to give people time to shop and bring the gifts back.

Abby Hissong, who organizes the tree project, said there aren't any numbers left on the tree — people are shopping for

everyone who was on so far — but she knows there are around 10 forms out that haven't been turned back in.

The tree, which stands in the window of Fredrickson Insurance Agency, is decorated in lights and wish lists for kids in Decatur County who otherwise might have a slim Christmas.

(See FORMS on Page 8A)

*Extension might merge with Norton

(Continued from Page 1A) sure, but thought the original board would make those decisions.

One of the major arguments from the people he talked with, said Mr. Unger, is that this is just one step in doing away with counties.

"I think this is a way to strengthen the counties," countered Mrs. May.

The projection from Kansas State University, using the 2006 budget, said Mr. Hale, showed that joining in a district would save Norton County almost \$30,000 and Decatur almost \$40,000.

This is about a more efficient way of doing things and being able to provide more services, not less, said Mr. Hale. The office here will remain open, he said.

It's also about the financial situation the county is in, said Mr. Brown. People have to be asking how many of the programs that are currently offered will be axed. The university is saying there is more money for districts, he added, but what if that changes? What happens if they say that the state money isn't here to keep it going?

If cuts are made, said Mrs. Pratt, she'd assume it will be done either way.

Mr. McEvoy said he can't see how the university is saving money with the districts. Mr. Hale said money will be saved on training and in other areas.

Mr. McEvoy said he doesn't like the way the election process is set up. If people don't run for the seats,

he asked, what will happen?

There are 24 people involved in the committees of the Extension Council, said Mrs. May. They don't all sit on the board, but all have an interest. Surely from that number, there will be people interested in running.

To make this process work, said Mr. Hale, the decision really needs to be made today.

There was some talk about sending the question to an election first, but the commissioners found out the only way for the question to go to an election is through a petition.

It seems like if people are for something they don't discuss it, said Mrs. May. When they are against something, she said, then they discuss it.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch looked up the law on district. He said it does say the four members have to represent a county, but doesn't say they have to live in the county.

An advisory election in the spring was suggested. Mrs. Horn said although an advisory election can be done at the polling places, her workers can't count the ballots and really can't handle it.

It wouldn't be an official ballot, added Mr. Hirsch.

The commissioners then approved the resolution to move ahead with an extension district with Norton County in a 2-1 vote.

Each county will continue to have separate offices, 4-H programs and fairs, Mr. Hale said.

A moment for thanks...



MORE THAN 125 PEOPLE, including TyLynn Peterson and J.Lynn Lohoefer, lined up to get turkey, ham, mashed potatoes, gravy, stuffing and corn during the annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner at St. John's Lutheran Church on Thursday. Marvin May handed out to meat.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

*Forms needed for tree

(Continued from Page 1A) This year, the wish lists haven't stayed on the tree for very long, said Mrs. Hissong. On Monday, there weren't any left.

The kids don't show up by name on the tree, she said; rather, each one is assigned a number. Then the needs and wishes are filled out on a form under the number.

People can come pick up a numbered sheet without knowing who the child is. Those people buy gifts, wrap them and return them to the insurance agency, where the parents come pick them up.

So far this year, said Mrs. Hissong, they have 41 kids, compared with 58 last year.

Unlike past years, she said, there are more children 4 and younger than older ones. There have been a lot of infants with a request for a blanket or throw as an extra item. In the past, she said, more teenagers and grade-school children were on the list.

Something that they are doing different this year, said Mrs. Hissong, is providing a bag of fruit for each child on the tree. She said they are working with the Decatur Community High FFA to get the fruit, which has been ordered.

Members will sack the fruit, which is paid for through donations to the Angel Tree.

There have been some really generous people and groups, said Mrs. Hissong. She added that they hope to get movie passes for kids old enough to go to the Sunflower Cinema.

All of the donations given for the Angel Tree, she said, go back to the kids.

All presents have to be back at Fredrickson Insurance by Friday, Dec. 12. Then parents can pick the gifts up on Wednesday, Dec. 17, and Thursday, Dec. 18.

*Man claims board owes him

(Continued from Page 1A) \$2,000.

He said his agreement was to pay a percentage of the money he made back to the fair board, not a percentage of the gross. Mr. Bellm said he lost about \$17,859. How can anyone pay 1 percent on a huge loss? he asked.

The speedway is a great facility, he added, but it is in the middle of tracks to the north, east, south and west. Mr. Bellm said he has a passion for racing and wants to help promote a quality track. He added that he promoted races throughout the area last year.

Mr. Bellm said he appreciates the help he got from grading contractor Dave Bose, the county ambulance and fire departments, and others who helped with races.

The Fair Board wanted to do a sprint car race at the end of the season last year, he said, but he didn't want anything to do with it. Mr. Bellm said the board did try to force his hand and lost money on the race.

Mr. Bellm also said he didn't write any bad checks. He said sprint-car promoter Salem did receive a check on what he called "a five day swing," which he asked him to hold, but Mr. Salem did get it paid. Mr. Bellm said he banks with Chase

*County agrees to lawsuit

(Continued from Page 1A)

The board members told the commissioners at a previous meeting that Mr. Bellm owes the Fair Board money for races he held at the Decatur County Speedway last season.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch said the last instruction he got was to do what he needs to do to collect the money, but that the board members don't want to go to court.

Mr. Badsky said he thought the board had decided that going to

court would be OK.

Mr. Unger made a motion to follow the recommendation. Mr. Hirsch said he wasn't sure if they should do that before they meet with him.

The motion was amended to follow the recommendation depending on how the meeting goes. The commissioners approved.

Next season, said Mr. Badsky, Brenda Ploussard and Rick Salem of Oberlin will set up the race days.

and there isn't a Chase Bank in the area, which is why he asked for Mr. Salem and Mr. Bose to hold their checks. Both have been paid, he said, though Mr. Bose had to send his check through twice.

The trophy people were paid, the LandMark Inn, the radio station, everyone who was supposed to get paid did, he said, as did all of the racers.

He said what he thought happened is after the board lost money on the sprint-car race, they had to get money from the city (actually, it was the county) and then after looking at

the books, someone at the meeting asked about Mr. Bellm.

He also said he had provided a certificate of insurance for the races as he was asked.

"Don't throw me under the bus for trying to promote it all summer long and working hard," he said. "This is exactly what will kill racing in this community, because people are throwing stones and shouldn't throw stones, because everyone lives in glass houses."

With all that, said Mr. Bellm, he is still willing to help promote the speedway next year.

Clerk Karen Larson said Mr. Barber has a letter of conditions for the council.

Representatives with Miller and Associates will probably be at the meeting with an update on the plans.

The meeting is open to the public. It will be held upstairs at The Gateway.

Council may hire administrator

The last interview for a candidate for the job of city administrator was scheduled for Monday night, meaning the Oberlin City Council could offer the job to one of the four during its meeting Thursday night.

The council started the interview process before Thanksgiving, interviewing three men and one woman for the job vacated when Gary Shike who resigned.

The council will hold its first meeting of the month at 7 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway.

Also during the meeting, Dave Barber with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Administration, will return. At the last meeting, the council voted to ask Mr. Barber to move forward with a \$4.43 million loan for a water treatment plant.

*Owners report mostly good numbers

(Continued from Page 1A)

Planning Center, Dana Marintzer said they were only open on Friday night, not Saturday or Sunday, but did have some people come in.

Some came to look and some to buy, she said, but it seemed like there were probably fewer than last year, at least for her. It seemed like there were a lot of people who were out to watch the parade, but then left when it was done, she said.

Down the street at Addleman Drug Store, owner Rusty Addleman said he didn't really see any people in the store, but they also didn't order any stock for Christmas.

There seemed to be a big crowd

for the light parade, he said, and that was great. After the parade, though, he said it seemed like people left.

Unlike past years, he added, the store doesn't plan to be open on Sundays this year.

Across the street at Ward Drug Store, Kurt Vollertsen, said he was pleased with business on both Friday and Saturday. The weather was nice and it seemed like there were a good number of shoppers and buyers in the store.

He said he had advertised a 20-percent-off sale on merchandise, and he thought that seemed to help.

Mr. Vollertsen said he hasn't looked at the numbers from the weekend, but thought the store did at least as well as last year, no worse. With all of the gloom and doom over the economy, he said, people told him it would probably be down, but he thought shopping might actually be up a little over the year before.

WINTER SHOP SPECIAL BOOKING PROGRAM

10% OFF PARTS 15% OFF LABOR

FREE TRUCKING IF BOOKED BY DECEMBER 15TH

Bale Trailer

NEW Atchinson 12 Bale 2 Row Bale Trailer - ONE LEFT **SPECIAL \$11,150.00**

USED EQUIPMENT

1 NH TV145, Loaded.....	\$79,500
1 - NH HW365 Swather, 18' Rotary Head.....	\$79,500
1 - LB75B Back-hoe.....	\$35,500
1 - E35 Mini Excavator.....	\$31,500
2 -688 NH Balers (1 w/Net Wrap).....	\$19,500 & \$22,500
1 - Hesston 565A Baler.....	\$11,800
1 - Case 8465 Round Baler.....	\$10,500
1 - JD 535 Baler w/Net.....	\$11,500
1 - Sunflower 21' Chisel.....	\$3,750
1 - 5x12 Eitzen Feedwagon with scales.....	\$6,500
1 - LW170 Wheel Loader.....	\$69,500
1 - 1066 IHC Tractor Cab - A.C.....	\$10,500
1 - JD 4020 w/Cab.....	\$5,000
1 - Hesston 6610 Swather, New Hydro.....	\$7,000
1 - Oliver 1650 Tractor.....	\$5,000
1 - IHC 580 Manure Spreader.....	\$4,850
1 - Sunflower 9432 Drill, 30' Rebuilt.....	\$28,500
1 - Kosch Double bar Mower.....	\$1,500

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