

Sales tax viewed

Money might aid development

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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Would a special 1/2 percent sales tax be a good way to go to pay for economic development? Oberlin City Administrator Austen Gilley asked the City Council at its meeting Thursday night.

Mr. Gilley said that it's tough to figure how much the city spends on economic development because it's scattered about in all sorts of funds and accounts.

He said the downside of a city sales tax is that groceries are not taxed in Nebraska and he doesn't want to send more people up to McCook to buy stuff. However, he said, the state already has a 5.3 percent sales tax and Decatur County a 1 percent tax. The difference in another 1/2 percent would be 50 cents on \$100 worth of merchandise.

On the plus side, he said, it could be a good source of revenue for the Economic Development Corp. and other projects. It could be used to finish off the bowling alley at the senior center/activity complex, which should help to bring more people into town.

A sales tax, he said, takes some of the burden off the property taxpayers, and helps spread the burden to outsiders, who come into the city to use the facilities.

A sales tax would have to be put a vote, he noted, but now is a good time when people are interested and excited about the new facility.

A 1/2 percent tax would generate about \$60,000 a year, he said, and it could be earmarked for economic development. That way, he said, all money would come out of that fund and not be scattered about.

City gets bids for roof

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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Two roofing companies pitched their products to the Oberlin City Council on Thursday in hopes of getting a contract to re-roof The Gateway.

John Williams from Washington Roofing and Weatherproofing out of Great Bend told the council that his company would cover all the ductwork on the roof with urethane foam to insulate and seal it and put a roof on with no seams.

"The products we offer are completely seamless," he said. "Not one seam in the roof... It literally makes it tough as nails."

The company's products are certified by Arizona State University, he said.

He gave references from area jobs, including work for the Weskan and Wheatland/Grinnell school districts, the Smith Center courthouse and school and Colby Community College.

Mayor Joe Stanley said that he had called three or four references for the company and all had said they were pleased with it and said when they called, the company answered right away.

"You'll never have to replace this system," Mr. Williams said. "(It) may require some repairs if there's a really major hail storm."

The company bid was \$100,010 with a 15-year warranty and \$72,165 for a 10-year warranty.

Jim Murray spoke for Murray Roofing and Construction of Colby, which puts on Duro-Last roofs. He brought Mark Akagi, director of sales for Morris Group, which manufactures the product.

Mr. Akagi showed the council samples of the Duro-Last system, which is basically a sandwich with two pieces of white vinyl around a heavy nylon screen. This system prevents tears, he said, and if one should occur, it can be easily repaired by heat bonding.

(See ROOF on Page 10A)



A MEMBER of the Decatur County Road and Bridge crew ran a grader (below) for the inside of the building were handed out at the Oberlin City Council meeting last Thursday. (above) last week to spread out the dirt other members of the crew hauled to the site for the new senior center, theater and bowling alley. The plans

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Center moves forward

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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The demolition is done and the dirt work just about completed for Oberlin's new theater, bowling alley and senior center on Main Street.

Although the demolition crew had to take time off while Decatur County waited to hear the results of asbestos tests, both the former Golden Age Center and Sunflower Cinema are gone.

Last Tuesday, Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman said the crew was starting the dirt work to prepare the site for the new building.

By Monday, he said, the pad was built. Mr. Stallman said he thought there would probably be another 10 to 12 loads of dirt brought into town. Then Dave Bose, who did the demolition work along with Mick Barth, will come in using a laser to cut the top off the dirt pad. That way, said Mr. Stallman, they will be able to make sure that it's flat and everything is accurate before they move on to the next phase.

The crew, said Mr. Stallman, had to deal with some soft spots in the dirt before they could start bringing loads in from south of town and building the pad.

Throughout the week, there were seven county employees on the project, he said. Three were driving trucks, there was one in a grader, one in the packer and two in scrapers.

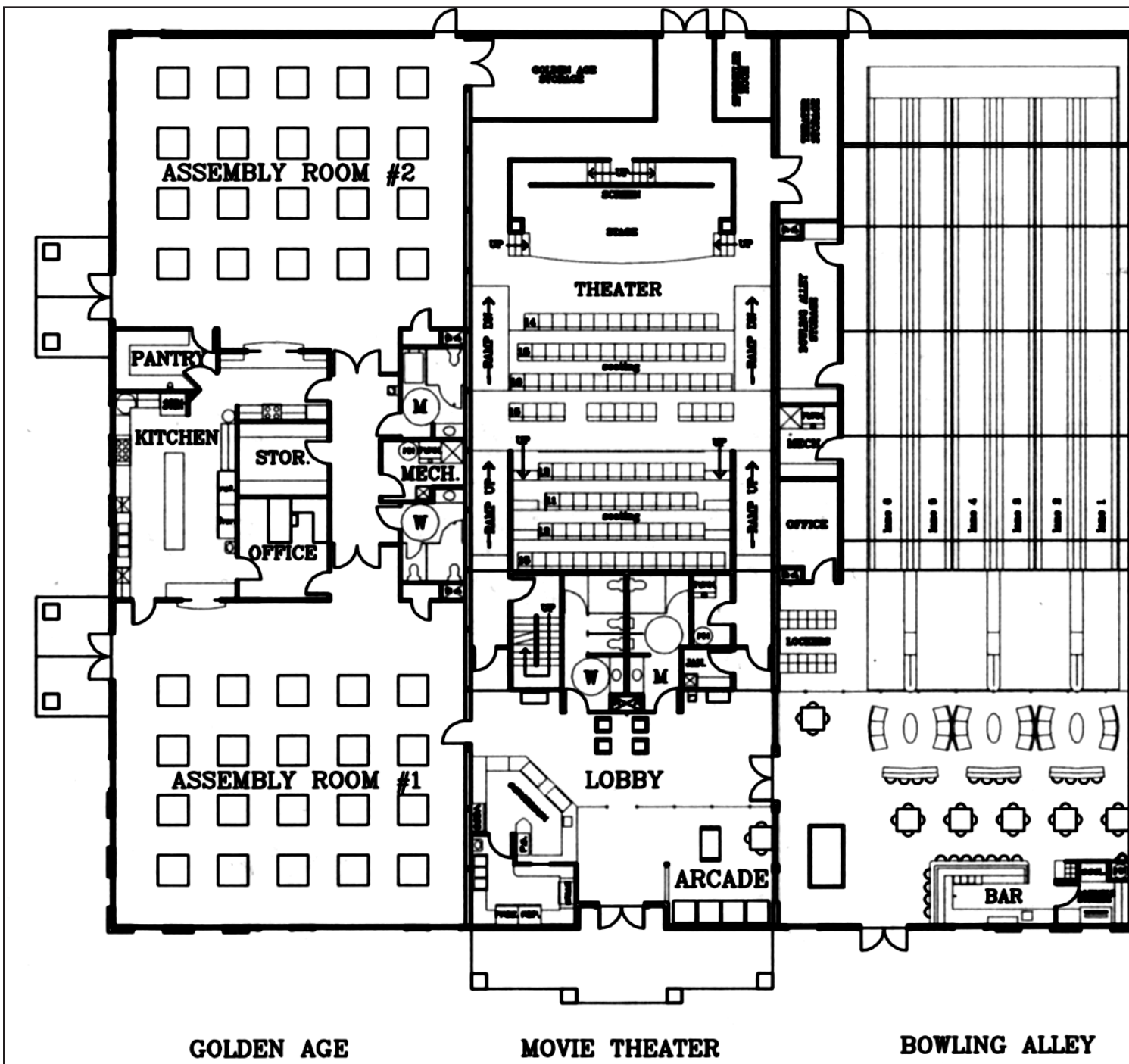
All of the dirt, he said, is coming off Gerry Tally's land south of town. That's the same location where the concrete debris was taken to fill in an old sand pit.

The agreement was that the county could take the dirt off the land if it would fill in the hole and then level the field. Mr. Stallman said he thought that would be done about the same time as the dirt work on Main Street.

After the site is level, there will be some underground work, said Kevin Brown, owner of Sappa Valley Construction, including water lines and any plumbing needs. That all has to be coordinated with the concrete and footings, he said.

Then it will be time to start pouring concrete. Weather cooperating, he said, he thought they could be pouring concrete by the end of the week. The foundation will then have to cure for a while

(See CENTER on Page 10A)



GOLDEN AGE

MOVIE THEATER

BOWLING ALLEY

Complex will get city's help

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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The city of Oberlin will provide transformers and some electricity for the new Golden Age senior center and activity complex, the city council decided at its meeting on Thursday.

Economic Development Corp. spokesman Greg Lohofener told the council that the new complex would be split into four or five heating/cooling areas with the Golden Age part to have one or two areas. The theater and bowling alley will each have one, he said, and the youth area, which will include concessions for both activity centers, will have a separate one. The four areas can each be locked off and heated and cooled separately from each other, he said, thus lowering utility costs.



IN A TRACTOR another member of the crew pulled a piece of equipment that packed the dirt down last week.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

The new center will need three electrical transformers, which will be the same as the city normally uses and has in stock, Mr. Lohofener added.

He asked the council to provide

up to a year's worth of electricity for the building to help with the expense of start-up.

"Initially there's going to be some cash-flow crunches," he said.

Right now, he said, the project is about \$20,000 to \$30,000 short of the money needed to finish off the senior center and theater and \$100,000 short of the money

(See CITY on Page 10A)

Patriotic 'tea party' planned for Sunday in Centennial Park

Mark your calendars for the first "Oberlin Tea Party" at Centennial Park at 2 p.m. Sunday.

The idea of the patriotic rally, said Marcia Lohofener, a member of the Oberlin City Council who is organizing the event, is for people to get out and express their love for America.

There is a national movement to hold these kind of rallies. Mrs. Lohofener said she's seen on the news and read about that other cities are having rallies. She said she isn't sure what the essence of those rallies are if it's just to air complaints or to express the love for this country.

Mrs. Lohofener encourages

people to make signs and posters expressing their love for this country. On the other side, she suggested, they should write their concerns about what's going on in the country today.

Everyone is invited to meet at the gazebo on the corner of Penn Avenue and Commercial Street,

then walk down Main Street carrying their signs and placards, then back up to the park. The walk will be followed by the United Methodist Church praise band leading the signing of patriotic songs.

The idea of the "Oberlin Tea Party," said Mrs. Lohofener, isn't to be Republican-versus-Democrat, but a

time for everyone to come together and express their feelings.

"Come join your neighbors and friends," she said, "instead of sitting at home in fear and helplessness."

Mrs. Lohofener suggested that people bring lawn chairs and beverages if they want something to drink.



LOOKING AT THE GATEWAY on Thursday, Mark Akagi (left) and Jim Murray (pointing) were discussing the building's finer points while John Williams walked behind them into the

building. Mr. Murray and Mr. Williams both provided bids for a new roof for the civic center.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

*Roof on Gateway needs replacing

(Continued from Page 1A)

The roofing company takes exact measurements of the roof and its attachments, he said, and the manufacturer makes the fabric to those specifications so that once on, it is a perfect fit.

Since the product is white, he said, it reflects most of the sun's rays, making the roof much cooler than most. The roof should be no more than 5 to 10 degrees hotter than the air temperature. That helps air conditioners on the roof work better and extends their life, he said.

The company would also clean and seal all areas not covered by the regular roof and cupola, he added, caulk and reseal any areas that need it and reseal the windows.

Area references for the company include the Gove County Medical Center and American Family Insurance and Beringer Hardware in Colby.

The company's bid is for \$119,485.

The council has a third bid from Roofmasters Roofing and Sheet Metal Co. of Hays for a variety of options, including retrofitting a new roof over parts of the building. The options ranged from \$572,882 to \$698,890.

City Administrator Austen Gilley told the council that he didn't feel that any of the roofing contractors

Council Roundup

At its meeting on Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Received bids from three companies to reroof The Gateway. Story on Page 1A
- Heard that the outhouses at Sappa Park need repairs. Story on Page 3A
- Was asked to provide transform-

ers and a year's worth of electricity for the new senior and recreation center downtown. Story on Page 1A

• Received a suggestion from City Administrator Austin Gilley to look at a 1/2 of 1 percent sales tax to help pay for the senior center and other economic development projects. Story on Page 1A

was better than the other. It would just be the preference of the council for the products and the price differences, he said.

He said that the money donated by Fred and Henrietta Bremer for use on The Gateway — a little over \$1 million — should be used to fix the roof, which really needs repair.

"We're not doing a whole lot of good for ourselves letting that money sit there," he said.

He also noted that if the council takes one of the two lower roofing bids, there are a lot of other things that need to be done around the building.

The water damage from the leaking roof needs to be fixed, he said, as does the stage floor and an exterior door for the Morgan Theater. Some areas of the building were never finished and more storage space and

shelving are needed in the kitchen. The carpeting is getting old and there have been some electrical failures in the kitchen. The washer and dryer in the building are for home use, and new industrial machines would work better, and a 100-gallon hot water heater had to be replaced last week.

It's all little stuff compared to the roof, he said, but it should be fixed if money is available to keep the building in good shape.

The heat exchanger and air conditioning units on The Gateway roof also need to be dealt with, he added.

If the council wants to replace them, it would be a good time to do it when the roof is fixed, but that would cost \$65,000.

If the heat exchangers are the only problem, and those are replaced, the

* Center work moves ahead

(Continued from Page 1A) before a building actually starts going up.

People are still going to see activity at the site, said Mr. Brown. Equipment will be rolling in, as will job-site trailers.

Greg Lohoefer, a member of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. board who's been working on the project since the beginning, said he had received a building permit from the City of Oberlin. He said they still have to go to the Zoning Appeals Board for a variance, since that part of town isn't zoned for a bowling alley.

Mr. Lohoefer said they are still short some money for the project.

He said he knows they are short \$25,000 for the first two phases, which is to complete the theater, senior center and recreation area. They also need \$100,000 to finish the bowling alley. That will include electronic scoring.

Mr. Lohoefer said he plans to start fund raising in April, but if anyone wants to donate they can contact him or Connie Grafel, marketing director for the corporation. Both have offices in the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center.

Besides private donations, he said, Shayla Williby has sent in four grant applications for the project and is working on more.

* City will provide help for complex

(Continued from Page 1A) needed for the bowling alley. It has always been the plan, he said, to finish off the senior center and theater first and then worry about completing the bowling alley later.

Councilman Jay Anderson asked Mr. Lohoefer how many volunteer hours he has put in on the project.

"A few," Mr. Lohoefer answered with a smile, noting that lots of people have donated their time, talents and equipment, including students, and demolition contractors Dave Bose and Mick Barth.

"It seems like every time I've talked to you, you've been working on it," Mr. Anderson said.

Mr. Lohoefer said that the center is an economic development project for the community.

"We'd like to make this (center) as multi-functional and biggest use as possible," he added.

Mr. Lohoefer said he wasn't even sure how much he was asking the city to donate, but anything would be helpful and appreciated.

After he had left, the council agreed to donate the transformers and pay for them from the community growth fund. Since council members Marcia Lohoefer and Rhonda May were absent, the rest of the council decided to table the electricity donation.

In the past, Mayor Joe Stanley said, the city has given up to \$100 a month in electricity to the theater. However, he noted the city provides the county museum with about \$2,500 worth of electricity a year with a \$3,500 limit.

The city has also provided a free sewer hookup and will probably be providing some water, he noted.

"We'll help 'em as much as we can without getting lynched," said Council Rob McFee.



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Business group seeks members

Members of the Oberlin Business Alliance are extending an invitation to all businesses in town to join the group.

The members talked about the group when they met for lunch Wednesday, March 4, at the Landmark Inn. Gary Walter, with the Bank, asked how the membership numbers compare with last year. Tina Watson, Chamber of Commerce manager, who serves as secretary for the group, said she thought there are more members this year than last.

There are some people who say they won't join the alliance because it duplicates what the Chamber does, said Mr. Walter, but the two aren't the same.

Maybe the groups need better communications, said Deanna Castle, a Chamber board member. Does the alliance have a newsletter? Do people know what the group does? That information should be covered in the Chamber news by the secretary, said Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. There are lots of people who don't read the newspaper, said Mrs. Castle.

Kurt Vollertsen, owner of Ward Drug Store, said the members have talked about having the secretary send out the minutes of the meetings

to people who can't make it.

He added that they certainly invite all the businesses to send someone to the meetings, whether that business is on the highway, on Main Street or in someone's home.

Does the alliance invite people with new businesses to the meetings? asked Mrs. Castle. That is the Chamber's job, said Ms. Grafel, because a person can't be a member of the alliance unless they are a member of the Chamber.

Businesses are invited to send a representative to alliance meetings, said Mr. Vollertsen. Members meet at noon the first Wednesday of the month at the LandMark.

In past years the alliance helped organize ordering flowers and getting the planters on Main Street looking good before Mother's Day.

After some discussion at the meeting last Wednesday, however, it looks like businesses are on their own this year to order the flowers and get them planted.

It would be nice to get some kind of perennials in the planters, but most of them are not as colorful when they come up each year, said Laurie Wasson, with Prairie Petals. It does look nice when all of the planters are done, she said, but it's a busy weekend for her to be ordering flowers, separating them into groups and making sure people pick

them up or deliver them.

In other business, the alliance members:

• Heard that the banners for spring are in and now just need a pocket sewn in them to be hung downtown. Anyone who wants to make donations to the banner fund can take a check made out to the alliance to the Chamber office, noting on it what it's for. The banners only last two to three years, said Mr. Vollertsen, but look nice hung around town.

• Heard that the Economic Development board had held a strategic planning meeting. Ms. Grafel said the state requires the group to have one every three years. The information from the meeting will be used at the Decatur Tomorrow community conversation on Monday, March 23, at the high school.

• Decided to hold a fish fry from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Good Friday, April 10, in the drive-thru of the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center.

• Talked about gathering donations for a gift basket for the college basketball championship contest coming up.

• Mentioned that Santa Bucks expire at the end of March. People who haven't spent their bucks, a kind of scrip issued for Christmas promotions, need to do so soon.

Grade school carnival set for Monday

It's just about time for the Supporting Our Schools carnival at the Oberlin Elementary School.

The carnival will run from 5:30

to 8 p.m. on Monday in the grade school gym and cafeteria. Kids of all ages will have the chance to play games and win prizes. Food will be

available.

All money made will go toward paying for future events for the students at the grade school.



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