

Council debates who should pay for transformers

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
c.haynes@nwkansan.com

The City of Oberlin may or may not end up paying for two new transformers for the Oberlin Housing Authority and Sappa Valley Manor.

The city owns the land on which the low-income housing project was built in the 1960s, but no one was sure when the City Council met Thursday, May 21, just who owns the buildings.

The apartments were built in the 1950s or 1960s. They are operated by the Housing Authority, a five-member board appointed by the mayor.

City bonds were used to build the manor, and renters can qualify for a federal subsidy. Renters have to fall into a certain income bracket to live in the apartments. Those who qualify then get a federal rent subsidy that goes to the Housing Authority.

City Administrator Austin Gilley said that the transformers are old and leaking. There's no health danger, he said, but they could fail at any time.

And, unlike most of Oberlin, utilities at the facility are underground, making the cost of replacing them higher, he said.

The city has been asked to pay for the removal, at \$1,580; two new transformers, \$6,955; and refurbishing the old ones to use as backup, \$2,000, he told the council. Prairie Land Electric out of Norton would do the work.

Mr. Gilley said that Housing Authority Director Ardieth Louderback told him the manor has no means of paying for the repairs.

City Foreman Dan Castle told the council that normally when the city

gets special requests such as this one, the requester has to pay for the materials and labor. Underground wiring is a real problem, he said, and will be expensive to fix. His crew is really not equipped for the job, so Prairie Land would be better for the job.

Mr. Gilley said the transformer project is on the agenda at the Thursday meeting to be discussed again, as there are still questions about the project.

Mr. Castle said he believes that the city owns the land on which the apartments sit but not the buildings themselves, and electric service is tied to buildings, not the land.

He said he thinks the Housing Authority should take care of the bill. The two transformers serve only the buildings at the manor.

Councilman Rob McFee noted that if the federal government owns the buildings, it should be responsible for the replacement.

"If it ain't ours," he said, "I don't think we should fix it."

Mayor Joe Stanley said that he thought the first priority would be to find out who owns the buildings. Mr. McFee agreed.

"If we own it," he said, "We'll have to fix it but if not...."

Mr. Gilley said that Mrs. Louderback feels that this is the city's responsibility.

City Councilman Bill Riedel said that if the buildings are owned either privately or by the federal government, the city has no business doing anything with them.

The city normally puts the lines above ground, said Mr. Gilley.

Mr. Gilley said he would see if he can find out who owns the buildings and get back to the council so it can make a decision.

Commissioners approve purchase of air conditioner

The Decatur County commissioners approved buying a new air-conditioning unit for the Good Samaritan Center.

Director Janice Shobe and Terry Black, maintenance man at the center, met with the commissioners to talk about the purchase on Tuesday, May 26. Mr. Black said the condenser is out in the old unit.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said he wondered if there was one from the old senior center in storage at the Decatur County Fairground that would work.

Mrs. Shobe said they had asked for bids. With the location and size of the unit, she added, they would need a crane to get the old one out and the new one in.

She said she sent specifications to five companies and two responded. The bids were for \$53,834 from Garrett Plumbing Heating and Electric Co. of Norton and \$23,000 from R&M Service Center of Oberlin.

If Robert Groneweg (of R&M) feels like he can tackle this, then he would be the one to use, said Commissioner Gene Gallentine. The group checked the budget and the county, which owns the building, has \$86,000 for center maintenance.

The commissioners approved the bid from R&M.

Mrs. Shobe said the facility's report from a recent "walk-through" inspection by the state will be ready in the next few weeks, and they will develop a long-term plan from that. The report will be presented to the commissioners, she said.

The commissioners received an e-mail from the fire chief that the Jennings Fire Department has bought a 1995 IHS triple-axle tanker truck with money raised at the annual Firemen's FunDay.

The stainless-steel tank has a 5,200-gallon capacity. The commissioners called the county's

insurance company to see if they have to meet any regulations on fire department equipment. The insurance agent promised to check into it and suggested talking with the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration about any safety regulations.

Clerk Colleen Geihlsler said Jane Gilliam had been in to talk with her. Ms. Geihlsler said Mrs. Gilliam said she and her husband were interested in selling a house behind the courthouse and wondered if the commissioners still wanted to buy it.

The commissioners called Lee Gilliam to get a price, but made no decision.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Received a bill from Nelson Concrete and Construction for \$48,500 for the floor and foundation for the new recreation center, which was \$1,692 more than the agreed-on price. Owner John Nelson wrote a letter saying he would donate the extra time and machinery expense if the county would pay for the extra concrete.

- Approved a bill for \$80,849 from Sappa Valley Construction for work on the new building on Main Street.

- Signed an Identity Theft Prevention policy for the ambulance department that Director Linda Manning has been working on. County Attorney Steve Hirsch had already looked it over and made a few changes.

- Heard that agriculture teacher Jason Ketterl from Decatur Community High, Peggy Pratt with Northwest Kansas Juvenile Justice Services and Sheryl Unger, who works at the Oberlin Clinic, had filled out applications to serve on the new Extension District board. The commissioners decided to give people one more week to apply.

cooked breakfast, everyone will go to the test plot at the May family farm west of town on the south side of U.S. 36.

Representatives from the Extension service and seed companies will talk about the 18 varieties.



BEHIND THE COUNTER at Oberlin's new Subway, manager Ryan Leitner and Jody Ploussard worked on getting an order out. The sub shop opened Friday at the intersection of U.S. 83 and U.S. 36. — Herald staff photo by Kim Davis

Subway restaurant open for business

Oberlin's new Subway restaurant opened Friday with a crowd for lunch and it has stayed busy since.

Manager Ryan Leitner said the shop has had around 350 through their doors each day since opening at the Ampride Cenex station.

Subway is a nice, clean place with fresh food, said Mr. Leitner. Those three factors set the shop apart from others.

The store is open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week, he said. They don't offer breakfast, but do offer all kinds of subs, salads and flat-bread sandwiches.

Mr. Leitner said Subway has eight employees but they are still accepting applications. All of the employees work part-time, he said, 20 to 30 hours a week.

Mr. Leitner said he had lived in Oberlin for

five years, then he and his wife Janna moved away. They returned in August. He said they returned because their family is here. The couple is expecting their first child in October. Mrs. Leitner works at the Good Samaritan Center.

Mr. Leitner said he thinks Subway will have a grand opening, but it hasn't been scheduled yet. The regional manager over the store, he said, is Dave Kern of Colby.

Youngsters get start on swimming

Towels wrapped around their shoulders, some walked and others rode their bikes to the Oberlin pool Saturday afternoon.

The youngsters were ready; they'd been out of school for a week and some were getting restless. It was time to go swimming.

The city pool opened Saturday afternoon, a week later than normal, because of a leak under the concrete decking that had to be fixed.

The pool is open for adult swim from 11 a.m. to noon Monday through Friday, open swim is from 1 to 5 p.m., lap swim from 6 to 6:30 p.m. and open swim from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

On Saturday, it's open from 1 to 6 p.m. for open swim and on Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m.

Pool admission is \$1 a day for kids 12 and under and \$2 for adults, while summer passes for a family cost \$60 and for individuals \$30. Anyone under 8 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

City Clerk Karen Larson said swimming lessons start Monday and run through Friday, June 26. Group lessons, 30 minutes each, cost \$15 for the two weeks. The top level, No. 6, starts at 8 a.m. and level No. 1 is at 10:30 a.m.

Andrew Dempewolf, pool manager, has received training to teach the lessons, Mrs. Larson said.

This year, Willard Perrin, with the city water department, will be the adult supervisor over the pool. Although he won't be at the pool all the time, Mr. Perrin will be checking in, said Mrs. Larson.

People can buy passes at the pool, she said.



*"Congratulations!
She looks just like you!"*

We've been part of family conversations for 35 years.

At Community Hospital, we treat patients like our family, because that's how we think of the people of southwest Nebraska and northwest Kansas. We're honored to play such an important role in the region where we live, work, and raise our families. And we'll continue to expand our mission of service excellence, for decades to come.

35
YEARS
1974 - 2009

COMMUNITY HOSPITAL
Advanced care. Always there.

1301 East H Street | McCook, NE 69001 | (308) 344-2650
www.chmccook.org

**Classifieds work!
Call 475-2206!**