



Ceiling goes up in center

ON A LIFT, Neal Russell (above) put ceiling tiles in during the work day at the new Golden Age Center on Saturday. Dorothy Moore (left) looked for spots where paint needed to be touched up. Volunteers are invited to another work day starting at 9 a.m. Saturday.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

*Money given for sidewalk at new center

(Continued from Page 1) sidewalks. When the Golden Age Center moves into the new building on the west side of Penn Avenue, he said, the senior group will start holding fund raisers again.

The total finished project for the senior center, cinema and bowling alley, said Greg Lohoefer, with the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., should cost \$1.5 million. That includes a \$150,000 guaranteed loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development administration, a \$300,000 bond, a tax credit program and lots of donations, including money and in-kind contributions.

"Do we have that money in the Community Growth Fund?" asked Councilman Ray Ward.

The city has exceeded its budget in that fund, City Administrator Austin Gilley replied. He said he had looked at the sidewalk ordinance, and it says the city can build a sidewalk for whoever they choose. He said he hasn't been able to find anything showing that the city planned to pay for this, however.

Mr. Lohoefer said he was told that in Norton, the city will do the labor if the owner provides the materials. He said he wasn't sure if that was on private or public property.

The city foreman is on vacation, said Mr. Gilley, otherwise he would be at the meeting. Mr. Gilley said he's not sure if the city has the equipment to put in a sidewalk.

Councilwoman Rhonda May asked if someone builds a home in town, do they have to put in a

sidewalk? It's not required, said Mr. Gilley.

Councilwoman Marcia Lohoefer said she thinks the city needs to pay for the sidewalk. The community, the people have done a lot to support this project, she said, making a motion for the city to pay for the work.

If the council wants to do the project, said Mr. Gilley, he can figure out where to get the money.

Councilman Ray Ward seconded the motion.

Does the money have to be designated for the sidewalk, asked Councilman Bill Riedel, or can the city just make a donation?

It can be done either way, said Mr. Gilley.

On a side note, said Mr. Gilley, employees in the Public Works Department are looking at ways to address fixing some of the sidewalks downtown.

The motion passed with Councilman Rob McFee voting no, because it wasn't stated where the money was going to come from.

The money probably needs to go to Decatur County, said Mr. Lohoefer, since the county owns that property.

There were two bids, he said, but the lower one was from Dallas Johnson, which is the one given to the council.

Most likely the money will come out of the Community Growth Fund, said Mr. Gilley. The city has already exceeded its budget in that fund, he said, so the budget will have to be republished.

*Signing rights stay the same on airport project

(Continued from Page 1)

Lohoefer said they would be. "No, they won't," said Councilman Rob McFee. "This would bypass the council."

Mrs. Lohoefer added "after the council has studied the documents" to the motion.

"Therefore," said Councilwoman Rhonda May, "Austin has no signature authority for these. That's your intention."

"Yes," said Mrs. Lohoefer. "Things need to be simplified to be sure to get them done on time."

She added that throughout the process with the airport she's felt it's needed to be done this way.

"There are so many projects on the table," said Ms. Grafel. "It is very complicated."

If that's the council's desire, said Mr. Gilley, then have Ms. Grafel report to the mayor. If the council wants to cut him out altogether, he said, that's the council's decision.

"I don't know if I want that," said Mayor Joe Stanley, adding that he didn't know if he had the time to be that deeply involved.

Everyone at the table needs to be involved, said Councilman Bill Riedel. He said he would hate to eliminate someone even if it was just out of courtesy.

What Mrs. Lohoefer is saying, said Mr. Ward, is that deadlines don't need to be missed because the council needs to wait to give him permission to sign.

When Gary Shike, former administrator, was here, said Mrs. Lohoe-

fer, she thought they voted to give him the authority to sign.

This would be just to try to eliminate the delay time, said Mr. Ward, to which Mrs. Lohoefer agreed.

Mayor Stanley said he didn't want to cut Mr. Gilley out of this project. He is the constant here. In two years, said Mayor Stanley, he (the mayor) won't be here anymore and in four there could be a whole new slate of council members.

Mr. Ward withdrew his second, adding that he doesn't want to see a delay in getting paperwork signed.

Mrs. Lohoefer withdrew her motion, but said things need to get done in a timely manner.

Ms. Grafel does need to be the go to person, said Mr. Gilley.

The council does need to decide if someone should have the authority to sign the contracts, said Mayor Stanley.

If there was an updated master plan, said Ms. May, that could be approved and then the contracts that fall into that scope could be signed.

Mrs. Lohoefer made a second motion to allow either the mayor or administrator to sign documents from the aviation administration, engineers or the transportation department. There was no second on the motion.

If there is normally time, several weeks, to get something signed, said Mr. Ward, let's just leave it how it is now. If it doesn't work, the council can change it later.

*Runway project keeps moving ahead

(Continued from Page 1)

way has been pushed up from 2011 to 2010, he said.

This paperwork is for the current runway, said Mr. Gilley. The 5,500 foot runway actually exceeds what the administration recommends which is 4,800 feet.

Mr. Riedel said that the people that he's talked with aren't very supportive of the project. They want to know how the city is going to pay for maintenance on the runway after it's built.

The city is in the Federal Aviation Administration's pipeline, said Mr. Gilley, which in his opinion is a good thing. It's up to the council and community to decide what hap-

pens next.

Perhaps, he said, he and Connie Grafel, project manager, need to go visit with the engineering firm so everyone can be on the same page.

"I think we have been negligent in informing the county of the need," said Mrs. Lohoefer.

If there is a disaster there isn't a runway to get equipment in to help.

"Do we need a 5,500 foot runway if there's one in McCook 28 miles away," said Mr. Riedel. "Besides it's faster to get to Denver or another hospital by helicopter."

The council approved the agreement.

Census worker asks for county support

A worker for the U.S. Census Bureau asked Decatur County commissioners to support having people in the county fill out and return the census information right away.

Lech Wisniewski said at the meeting Tuesday, Aug. 4, that he's been working with the census since the beginning of January. He said his job is basically to help people in western and central Kansas get their information done and turned in. The more people who turn in the information, said Mr. Wisniewski, the more federal tax money there will be for those areas.

One in eight people get a survey that takes 45 minutes or more to fill out, he said, while the rest get the short forms.

He said he knows people get frustrated with the surveys. For instance, he said, people ask why the federal government needs to know how many cell phones are used in the county. The answer is to encourage building more cell towers, if needed.

The bureau, he said, has hired about two dozen people here who are using Global Positioning System devices to record the locations of every home in the county. By fall, he said, the bureau will be hiring more people.

The short survey has 10 questions and takes about 10 minutes, Mr. Wisniewski said.

The bureau sends the forms out to physical addresses, but some of those forms aren't coming back. For every form that's not returned, said

Mr. Wisniewski, the county loses tax money.

This can be important to the area, he said. For instance, the schools get some of that money in the free and reduced lunch program, special education and other areas, he said. This county is missing out on 30 percent of that money, said Mr. Wisniewski, because that many surveys aren't being returned.

Beginning next April, he added, for forms that aren't returned, workers will start going door to door.

The bureau isn't asking the commissioners to knock on doors to collect surveys, said Mr. Wisniewski, but to be cheerleaders to get people in the community to return the forms.

If the county doesn't want to get that tax money back, he said, there are others who will be more than happy to take it.

The people who were hired in

Decatur County to work for the bureau, he said, helped update the maps. They are in stand down mode now, but will start up again.

"What exactly are you asking us to do?" asked Commissioner Stan McEvoy.

So far, said Mr. Wisniewski, the bureau has been using Clerk Colleen Geihlsler as an information source. It's OK for Ms. Geihlsler to help as she can, said Mr. McEvoy, but he said he doesn't want her going out of her way either.

Mr. Wisniewski said he wants to talk with the economic development director and the Rotary Club. He said he wants people in the county to know what's going on.

"I'm not going to go out with pom-poms and a skirt and tell people to fill out the census," said Mr. McEvoy.

The people with the county who have information can provide it as

long as it doesn't take them a lot of time, he said.

Doesn't the bureau get the sense, asked Appraiser Alan Hale, that the lower response is political. Maybe people don't want the federal government to have their information.

There's a general apathy, said Mr. Hale. There's not a lot of trust in the federal government.

"I applaud you for coming out," he said, "but it's a tough sell."

The Census form, said Mr. Wisniewski, is a federal requirement. This is the first time he's brought this up, but people can go to jail if they don't fill out the information and return it.

If a local government does get federal money, said Mr. McEvoy, there's too much red tape attached to it. For instance, if the county gets federal money to build a bridge, then it costs more money than if the county just does it, he said.

*Treatment plans might change

(Continued from Page 1)

If the city were to need another well in the future, said Mr. Miller, the disadvantage would be having to build a larger plant.

The city has three wells, two east of town and one south of town. All three are in use today. With the water treatment plant proposal, only two wells east of town will be in the system. The water from the well south of town won't be treated.

Looking at the project, said Mayor Joe Stanley, and possibly building a smaller plant couldn't hurt.

A new well would be drilled on land south of the high school, said Mr. Miller. That proposed well is the highest in uranium. It's in the 80 parts per billion while the others are in the 50s and 60s.

The long-term risk to relying on two wells that are close together, said Ms. May, is that if there is a

problem with one, it could affect the other.

Of the three wells in use today, two need treatment and one meets drinking water standards, said Mr. Miller.

The council voted to table the decision. In December 2008 the council voted to apply for the loan, prior to that there were numerous votes against or motions that failed, including one in February.