

We need to get together and talk about airport

Everyone involved in the brouhaha over Oberlin's runway extension project — backers, opponents, petition signers, city officials, council members — got a new lease on life Thursday when the City Council agreed to wait for a new public meeting.

What that means is that everyone will get to hear all the facts from the city and airport backers on what the project would entail, what it would cost and who would pay.

Then, everyone could have their say and try to convince the others that the project should or shouldn't be built. And the council can decide how to handle a petition which would put the project to rest — or force an election.

Done properly, the meeting, at 7 p.m. next Wednesday at the high school cafeteria, could do much to bring about understanding, and if not unity, at least civility and respect among the parties. Whether it would engender enough support to see the community united behind the project is another question.

Those who passed a petition complained that many things that get done in Oberlin have been "crammed down" our collective throats. That's a hard charge to evaluate.

The Gateway was approved by voters, but not until a second vote. Because backers did not give up easily, with a \$1 million gift at stake, is that a cram job?

The new community center downtown came in for some criticism because it's been pushed by a quasi-public agency, the Economic Development Corp. board. However, details of the project have been made public and reported extensively. A small proportion of tax money was used to build the center.

Would that someone would get behind the proposal to build a new pool and water park with the same zeal as Greg Lohofener has shown for the community center.

The "airport committee," an unofficial group that has pushed for the new runway, came together from diverse backers of the plan, everyone from city council members to county commissioners and airport users.

It's been somewhat shadowy, meeting at unknown places at unannounced times. It could rightly be criticized for a lack of openness on a project where openness could have paid big dividends.

However, all the committee's proposals, the engineering contracts and proposed land purchases have been run through the City Council.

The bottom line, as we understand it, is that Oberlin could have a 4,800-foot runway, expandable some day to 5,500 feet and even 7,000 feet, for about \$225,000 in city and county tax money. The rest would come from the Federal Aviation Administration, the state and federal stimulus money.

And that would be a darned good deal for the taxpayer. We've said that before.

Some things have been crammed down this community's collective throat — unneeded new sewer and water plants and a runway relocation project — but the cramming was done by the state and feds.

These same officials are forcing us to finance these largely unnecessary projects. We were given no choice, it's true.

The airport, on the other hand, sprang from local minds, even if it would use federal and state money. It's something that might, at least, be good for us and the economy here.

Whatever happens, though, everyone deserves a chance to speak, to question, to form opinions and be heard. That's what the meeting next week is supposed to be about.

The city-sponsored meeting two weeks ago did not turn out that way. The structure, where people were allowed to ask questions, but not to say their piece, may have been logical, but in this tender situation, it seemed likely only to inflame passions.

The way of free and open discussion is better for everyone.

After the facts are on the table, we still may not agree on what should be done, but we should all be friends. Let's hope that happens. — Steve Haynes



Retreat fun but hard on back

My friend Barbara stopped in this morning to see if I had any extra eggs. As I hobbled to the kitchen she said, "What happened to you?"

My answer: "I spent the last two nights sleeping on a bunk bed with a two-inch mattress. That's what."

This was my annual women's retreat weekend, and I always pay for it for a few days afterward. But, just like having a baby, you forget about the pain and are willing to try it again. So, in a couple of days, my back will feel better and next September, I'll be ready to sign up again.

We have more fun than should legally be allowed. We stay up way too late, play games, laugh and eat. But, we also hear a wonderful speaker, make new friends, spend time with old ones and attend interesting workshops.

I attended one workshop on simplifying our lives, decluttering, prioritizing and evaluating. The class leader said to ask ourselves three questions about our "stuff." Do we need it, use it or love it? If we answer "yes" to any one of those, we may keep the item. If the answer is "no," then it should go.

I tried to find some "wiggle room" and asked her what the verdict would be if we "might" use it. Her answer was, "If you haven't used it in two years, you aren't going to." A lot of my things have exceeded the statute of limitations by about 10 years, so I need to start making some decisions. If I don't, my kids will.

The other workshop was on marriage. We played a game of "Clue" to find the culprit that "killed the marriage." As it turned out, the guilty parties are criticism, stonewalling, defensiveness and contempt. I know I've been guilty of these "crimes" on occasion.

The final phase was to list our husband's good qualities and describe about him what was: noble,



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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true, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy.

I haven't shared my answers with Jim yet, but it's probably something he needs to see.

One admonition I received from the "girls" who went to retreat with me was, "None of this better get in the paper."

OK. What happened at camp stays at camp.

— ob —

Did you hear about the wife who asked her husband, "What's on TV?"

He answered, "Dust."

And, then the fight started...

LAST WEEK'S COLUMN

Have you seen the commercial where the husband and wife, after their vacation, fall face forward onto their own mattress? That is almost how Jim and I felt after returning home last week.

Not that our kids didn't have good mattresses for us to sleep on — they did. It's just that none of them were king-size beds like we are used to. Even the one motel we stayed in only had queen-size beds. We both like a lot of "sprawling" room.

We must have needed the break, though. One of our friends saw us a couple of days ago and said, "My, you two look refreshed."

I told Jim we must have looked pretty exhausted before we left.

— ob —

The worst part of being away from home for so long was returning to a mountain of junk mail. My

shredder has been working overtime since our return, and I have already contributed one large bag of shredded paper to the recycling container.

I am the treasurer for three organizations plus bookkeeper for Jim's construction business and our personal checking account. That meant five bank statements had to be justified. No wait; only four. One club operates on a cash basis. But still . . . after two late nights spent with bills and the calculator, I think I am back on track. I need to call the bank to make sure I entered all the debit-card transactions, and I should be done. Not that I love paying bills, but there is a certain satisfaction derived from seeing something through to the end and marking a statement "Paid in Full." It might take me awhile, but everybody always gets paid.

Sometimes, I have to remind myself of how to eat an elephant: One bite at a time.

— ob —

The editor of the newspaper where I used to work sometimes includes "blonde" jokes in his column. I like husband-and-wife jokes, too.

Did you hear about the wife who hinted to her husband about what she wanted for an anniversary present?

She said, "I want something shiny that goes from zero to 150 in about three seconds."

He bought her a bathroom scale. And then, the fight started. . .

Keys no good on these locked doors

I swear I didn't change the locks. I'm not even mad at Steve, but he still got stuck outside with a worthless key in his hand the other night.

It's been a bad month for us at the back door. Last week, it happened to me, too.

There are two doors to our home — one in back by the garage, and the front door.

Because we don't use the front door and the wind has caught and broken the screen several times, we always keep the screen locked.

It's the back door that we use for our daily comings and goings.

Earlier in the month, I got a call from Steve. He couldn't get into the back door because the door knob had come loose as he tried to get into the house. It would turn, but was no longer connected to the latch.

Since I had been complaining about that knob for several months, my sympathy level was pretty low.

Should he break the front screen, try to pry open a window or kick in the back door? All of those solutions sounded expensive and messy, but he went to the garage



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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for a crowbar.

He said he had the bar in hand when he figured out the easy way.

He took the bar and smacked the free-spinning knob, knocking it right off. Then he took the pliers out of his pocket and used them to turn the mechanism.

For several days, we had to use the pliers to close the back door. Luckily, it was summer and my handy husband soon replaced the door knob and mechanism.

I'd just gotten used to having two doors again when I got home last week to find several large pieces of plywood over my back door and the window on the side.

We had roofers, and they had set up the plywood at an angle to protect

the glass.

Even though the wood wasn't flat against the door, there wasn't much room between it and the house, and there was a pillar between me and the opening.

It took some squirming and crawling to get into the house, but I had frozen food in the car, and the 'fridge' was inside. A woman with frozen food can do amazing things.

Steve had been telling me for several days that the roofers were coming, but I hadn't thought that meant they planned to keep me out of the house. I called him to complain.

For some reason, Steve's level of sympathy was quite low.

Insects enjoy last day of summer

Ah, the last, fading light of summer.

A gorgeous, hazy afternoon with the mercury headed to the high 80s, the cicada's singing and nothing much to do except mow the lawn. And work, of course. On Sunday, there's always work.

And so it was until sometime after sundown, when they emerged. And then, it was like being in some bad horror movie, only the bugs were real.

Thousands of bugs. Millions of them. All flying around the street lights, the yard lights, the patio lights, the porch lights.

And did I mention, trying to get into the house?

The back screen was covered with bugs of every sort, big and small. Thousands of 'em. And they all wanted in.

Every time we'd go in or out, a couple hundred bugs would come in. And since we were grilling out back, we had to go in and out a lot. Eventually, we turned off the light out front and started using that door, but by then, the damage had been done.

Bugs were everywhere. We had to pick them out of our plates, our drinks, our hair. They circled the lights above, then plunged to the table, dead. They landed on our plates, next to the steak. They flew around our heads.

They would not leave. There were, literally, every type of summer bug imaginable except june bugs and millers. Guess it's too late for them.

The bulk of this air force seemed to be the little flies that spend the summer as worms in leaf galls on trees. At the end of the summer, they emerge enmass to drive humans crazy for one brief moment of time. They lay eggs, fly around and die. But before they die, they flock by the



Along the Sappa

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thousands to every light in town.

There were squadrons of these little guys, but other bugs of every description: leaf hoppers, beetles, moths, wasps, flies, you name it. A blue dragonfly landed by my hand at dinner. I took it out the door to release it, but I think it just came back in. It was a beautiful thing, though.

In the morning, the carnage was awful to behold. Dozens of dead bugs littered the dining-room table. More filled the covers of the kitchen lights and the shades of any light that hung down. It will take all week just to clean the lights out.

When I got out to the car to escape, I found more bugs. A hundred or so, apparently attracted to the glow of the GPS screen, had died right there on the dash below it. I'll need to sweep the car out.

What happened? I guess the warm, summery day just woke up every bug in the district, all those



that had slumbered through the cool nights of late August and into September. They saw one last chance to fly, to feed, to breed, to live life before the frost comes. And that won't be long.

Summer is over, the autumnal equinox was Tuesday and fall rode in on a cold front late Sunday night. Bug scrapers will soon be exchanged for frost scrapers. And bugs will soon be but a memory. But what a night they had.

From the Bible

Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.
Proverbs 1:23

Write

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