

Circle drive set to go

After a unanimous vote Thursday night, it looks like The Gateway will get a circle drive on the south side of the building.

The Oberlin City Council received drawings for a circle drive on the south side and a longer, straighter one on the west side of the civic center several months ago. The council voted to send the drawings back to W Design Associates of

Council wants winter use

Nebraska for some revisions. The design team sent back two options, one for \$58,839 and the second option for \$60,871 with more subgrade preparation, more concrete sidewalk replacement and more in culverts.

Councilwoman Rhonda May

made a motion to accept the second option with the exception more dirt work may be needed for a better turning radius. Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener seconded the motion.

Ms. May said her concern is the slope on the right hand side of the

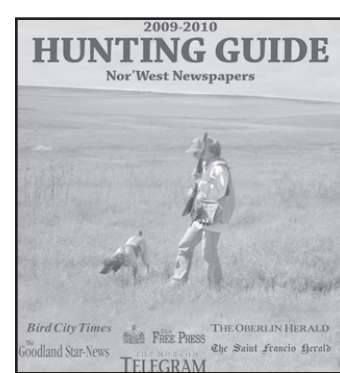
loop, because if the turning radius is too tight or the hill is too steep, people might not want to use it in the winter.

If the cost goes up a little for more dirt work, she said, she still wants to do the project. If it's a little more expensive and people aren't scared to enter it in the winter, then it's OK, she said.

Hunting guide today

Nor'West Newspapers' annual fall hunting section is included in today's copy of The Oberlin Herald.

The section includes articles on the outlook for hunting pheasants, deer, turkey and waterfowl in this area, where to buy licenses and the rules and regulations for the year. It also has maps showing where



hunters can go for walk-in access to land in northwest Kansas.

City Council picks election over loophole

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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Although the Oberlin City Council learned Thursday that it might not have to take a proposed airport ordinance to a special election, the members decided to go ahead and hold the ballot anyway.

A resolution is needed for a special election, said City Administrator Austin Gilley. Advice from the county election officer is to hold a mail ballot on Tuesday, Dec. 15. A resolution is needed from the city for the state, he said.

Mr. Gilley said he read an article in the League of Kansas Municipalities magazine just that afternoon which might change how the council decides to handle the airport issue.

Administrative ordinances aren't subject to a petition, said Mr. Gilley, and the argument could be made that this is an administrative ordinance, making the petition null and void. If the council decides to say that the airport falls under administrative ordinances, he said, there would be political trade-off.

The Supreme Court, said Mr. Gilley, has four tests on whether something falls into this category.

There aren't a lot of cases on this, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch, and they are all across the board. There was one that dealt with the relocation of a highway in a city and the court system ruled that it was an administrative ordinance. Another was for the widening of a street, which was ruled legislative.

The information on administrative ordinances, said Mr. Gilley, wasn't presented before. After reading the magazine that afternoon, he

said, he talked with Mr. Hirsch. Mr. Gilley said he felt that he needs to give the council all the information that he has. This is a political decision, he said, and up to the council, not him or the city attorney.

So if the council says it's administrative, said Councilwoman Rhonda May, the city could avoid an election, but whether it's an administrative ordinance or not could be argued. An election, though, could help clear the air, she said.

"If we try to exercise our way through a loop hole," said Ms. May, "people could be upset, and perhaps rightly so."

Councilman Ray Ward said he thinks the city needs to go ahead and have the election. He added that he thought that not all of the people who signed the petition understood what they were signing.

An election would clear the air, said Councilman Rob McFee. Mayor Joe Stanley said he also agrees, which gave the group the consensus.

Mrs. May asked if the council has any say on whether it's a mail or regular election. Last time, the city did a special election the city wasn't given an option, said Mr. Hirsch, but this time the council does have a say so.

The letter from the county election officer, said Mayor Stanley, suggests that it be done by a mail ballot.

Mr. Hirsch said he thought the suggestion was based on the cost, with the mail ballot being cheaper.

The council approved a resolution to set the election on Tuesday, Dec. 15, with a mail ballot.

First the sand, then the concrete



ON THE SOUTH END of Main Street, owner Wayne Hackney and helper Todd Gould from Oberlin Concrete spread sand Monday before they put concrete down. The concrete and bricks needed to be replaced after the city had to fix a water leak near the hydrant to the north of the Last Indian Raid Museum. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Alliance plans holiday activities

The Oberlin Business Alliance is getting ready for the holiday season, planning the annual Spook Parade, Business-to-Business Tour and Parade of Lights.

The members talked about the Spook Parade.

If the girls volleyball team heads to state the Spook Parade will start after school lets out at 11:30 a.m. Friday, Oct. 30. If the girls don't go to state the parade will take place after school that Friday.

The Business-to-Business Tour will start at 4 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 15, with those who want to go along to meet at the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center. The tour allows business owners and employees to see what

businesses around town have for sale. Anyone who wants to be on the tour should call the Chamber office at 475-3441.

At dusk, around 6 p.m., Friday, Nov. 27, will be the Parade of Lights. So far, no theme has been chosen, but a call was made to Oberlin Elementary School for suggestions.

This year, said Kurt Vollertsen, owner of Ward Drug Store, they will be able to use the downtown sound system to announce the float entries.

Gary Walter, president of The Bank, suggested that everyone should ask people to plan a float for the parade.

In other business, the members: Heard that the meeting would probably be the last for Connie Grafel, marketing director for the city and the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. She said the city administrator feels she has been inefficient and has strongly suggested that she get off some boards.

Karen Thompson, with the Dresser, said she was sorry to hear that and others agreed. Members told Ms. Grafel they would still like her to continue coming.

Heard that alliance membership bills would be going out at the end of the month. Anyone who pays before the end of the year gets a 10 percent discount off the \$25 individual membership fee and \$75 for a business fee, said Mr. Vollertsen.

Talked about a planned tailgate party before the home football game on Friday. The group plans to serve burgers from 5:30 to 7 p.m. in City Park.

Talked about a fund-raising soup lunch in the back room of the Golden Age Center scheduled for 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 19.

Talked briefly about Christmas advertising proposals. The group has received one from KLBV channel 4 out of Colby with options for \$200 or \$400. Brian Loker, general manager of KFNF, said he would be getting them one from the radio station. Gary Anderson, owner of the LandMark Inn, said the Oberlin Convention and Visitors Bureau meets soon and will look at that proposal.



Gary Walter

Volunteers, owners could fix properties

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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The Oberlin City Council asked the city administrator to work on a volunteer program for blighted properties in the city, while also continuing to encourage landowners to clean up their places.

The city is receiving more and more complaints about blighted properties, said Mayor Joe Stanley. There's been 10 in 2009, said Administrator Austin Gilley.

The strategy so far, he said, has been to talk informally with the property owners about fixing up the areas.

Mr. Gilley said he knows that the topic is sensitive, but he suggested an alternative program.

He said he talked with Roger Wilson, a property owner who has three blighted properties in the city.

He said the city could do a program where the owner applies to get the demolition done on a property. The city could do one house per block per year, he said. If they did more than that, the city would have to get a permit from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

This would mean wear and tear on the city equipment, he said, and the city would have to pay at the county landfill to dump

the items.

The city wouldn't be able to do two-story homes or ones with basements, he said, but this way, there won't be a tax lien on the property.

It could make a lot more valuable by tearing down the blighted building, he said.

By doing this program and allowing homeowners to apply, it could possibly help cut down on rodents and other animals in town. Mr. Gilley said he thinks the city has paid for 300 skunks to be trapped so far this year.

The city crew could probably remove one property a month, he said.

There could be two programs, said Councilwoman Rhonda May, one in which the property owners apply and another that's more formal, with the city winding up as the owner.

Things like the volunteer program have worked well in other communities, said Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener, adding that she thinks the city needs this one.

The city needs to do something to help encourage people to take care of their properties, said Ms. May. It benefits everyone.

The city has put money in the budget in the past for blighted (See CITY on Page 12A)

School board tables motion to join group planning lawsuit

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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The Oberlin School Board tabled a decision to join the Schools for Fair Funding group, which plans to sue the state Legislature again for not paying school districts what it said it would.

This group, said Superintendent Duane Dorshorst, has reformed because of the cuts made by the state in money for public education, which some claim are unconstitutional cuts. The state isn't paying at the level the Supreme Court said it should, he said.

The group, said Mr. Dorshorst, would like every school district in the state to be a member this time. There are pros and cons to this, he said.

If the Legislature is sued, said Mr. Dorshorst, schools may have to wait for 181 days before the courts take action. The reasoning is that would give the lawmakers time to correct their errors during their session.

It costs \$2 per student per district to join the group, said Mr. Dorshorst. The group wants to represent all 140,000 students in the state.

The most the district will pay, he said, is \$5 per student, if the suit goes to court. That's roughly \$1,800 a year for Oberlin to join, he said.

Looking at the history, said Mr. Dorshorst, the

Legislature only increased the school budget after it was sued.

If the board wants to be a part of this group, he said, the decision needs to be made by November. Member Barb Olson said she wondered what the smaller districts are going to do. The only superintendent at a recent meeting who came out and said he was going to try to get his district to join is from WaKeeney, said Mr. Dorshorst.

The board discussed the idea, with several members mentioning that they aren't sure if they should be party to suing the Legislature. Mrs. Olson said she agreed, but thinks it's pathetic that the only changes have happened when the Legislature has been sued.

The group really hopes that the Supreme Court will re-open the first lawsuit and tell the Legislature to pay the per pupil base at the amount they have agreed before the recession.

According to the lawsuit the state was supposed to pay school districts \$4,597 per pupil. This year school districts are receiving \$4,218, said Mr. Dorshorst. He added that the legislature is likely to cut another \$80 off that amount before the first of the year.

The board decided to table any decision and discuss the issue at the November meeting.

Treats to aid pantry

All Decatur County teenagers are invited to go trick or treating for the Food Pantry next Wednesday evening.

Teens are invited to meet at 6 p.m. in the basement of Sacred Heart Catholic Church for food and fun. From 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., the teens will head out, knocking on doors, to gather food items and donations for the pantry.

People who live in the country can drop their items off at any church, said Duane Dorshorst, sponsor of the Catholic youth group, or at the entrance of the Catholic church.

Groups helping sponsor the event include Teens for Christ and youth groups affiliated with the United Methodist, Catholic and Lutheran churches.