

# Gateway park on back burner

Although no vote was taken, the Oberlin City Council agreed Thursday to hold off on putting in a playground, park and walking trail on The Gateway's grounds.

City Administrator Austin Gilley brought up the idea of a proposed Bremer Park, named for benefactors who left money to the civic center, at a special meeting Thursday, Dec. 10.

At the meeting last Thursday, Mr. Gilley had a few prices for playground equipment for the park near the concrete slab, southeast of the building.

One set of prices was for a playground set for kids 2 to 5 from Fry and Associates Inc. of Kansas City, Mo., for \$17,544. The other was for \$24,554 for a playground for kids up to 12 from the same company.

The first step on the park, Mr. Gilley said, would be the playground equipment. Mr. Gilley added that he's working with a company to explore other options.

The playground would go near the cement pad. Then the walking trail would go up near the area on the corner of the property where a possible motel/hotel might go.

The playground would be right off the highway, said Judy Scott, who was in the audience. Couldn't the city just fix up the playground it already has at City Park?

There is money in The Gateway account, said Mr. Gilley, for a playground, but not in the Park Depart-

ment account. He said he did talk with the company about buying two units and getting a discount.

Mr. Gilley said they have talked about looking for a grant for the equipment in City Park.

The money from the Bremer estate was to put in a playground, said Ms. Scott.

The money is for the benefit of The Gateway, said Councilwoman Rhonda May.

Years ago, said Shayla Williby, when she worked in the building, there were events held on the concrete slab. Safety came into play, though, since it was near the highway.

Ms. May said she would like to table the decision, adding that she's not against the plan, but thinks there are other priorities with the Bremer money.

Councilwoman Marcia Lohoefer said she agreed. For the amount of people who would use it, she said, the equipment is too expensive.

Another issue is drainage, said Mayor Joe Stanley. The slab lies along a watercourse which drains under the highway.

The council's consensus was to not rush into the playground/park now.

Not that it's a bad idea, said Mayor Stanley. It could be a great way to express the city's thanks to the Bremers.

# Ordinance OK'd on demolition plan

The Oberlin City Council approved a blighted property ordinance allowing homeowners to get help from the city to get rid of a dilapidated house.

The ordinance would work in conjunction with rules the city already has in place, said City Administrator Austin Gilley. The council can vote to condemn a house now and order the owner to tear it down. If the owner does not comply, the city can step in and do the work.

The council has talked about another program, allowing homeowners to come the city to get help tearing down a blighted property before it's condemned.

If the city condemns a property now, said City Administrator Austin Gilley, it has to cover the cost to tear it down. With a voluntary program, the property owner would apply to get help, although the total expense wouldn't be covered by the city. The

city could then offer the equipment and man power to knock down and haul off the property. The owner would have to prep the house the labor to load the demolished property onto the equipment.

Although the ordinance has been approved the actual policy and procedure hasn't been set yet.

The voluntary program, said Mayor Joe Stanley, could help lower the cost to the city.

The overall idea, said Mr. Gilley, is to make the demolition of a blighted property as pleasant a process as possible. Often times an empty lot is worth more than the building on it, he said.

Councilwoman Marcia Lohoefer made a motion to approve the ordinance on the voluntary program, with Councilwoman Rhonda May seconding. All but Councilman Rob McFee voted yes.

# County won't pay extra recycling bill

The Decatur County Commissioners decided to not pay a supplemental bill to the Northwest Kansas Regional Recycling Center last week.

The commissioners received the bill for \$5,208 earlier in the month. The two commissioners present discussed the bill briefly at their meeting Tuesday, Dec. 8, but decided to wait until Commissioner Gene Gallentine was present to make a decision.

At the meeting last Tuesday, the commissioners agreed to not pay the bill.

Former County Clerk Marilyn Horn, who serves as a county representative on the recycling board, said she was supposed to mention the bill to the commissioners. It was brought up at the regional recycling meeting that Decatur County is the only one in the region that hasn't paid the billing, she said.

Mr. Gallentine asked if the board thought people would pay for recycling. Other counties and cities, said Mrs. Horn, have put a \$10 fee on all of the tax bills of homes where people live. That money is then used to pay for recycling.

The commissioners decided not to pay the additional bill, which

## County roundup

At the meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Decided to not pay a supplemental bill to the Northwest Kansas Regional Recycling Center. Story at left.
- Talked with the former county clerk about getting a new county bus through the Kansas Department of Transportation. Story to come.
- Gave permission to the ambulance director to fix a fan on a furnace at the ambulance barn. Story to come.

was sent to the county because the recycling center needed some extra money after the recycled items hadn't been selling as well.

Commissioner Ralph Unger suggested writing a letter to the recycling group explaining that the supplemental charge wasn't in the budget and that the county doesn't have the extra money.

# Canvass turns up nothing

The canvasses for the special elections last week turned up nothing new.

The Decatur County Commissioners looked at the ballot figures for the special election in Norcat and in Oberlin from Tuesday, Dec. 15.

Clerk Colleen Geihlsler, who serves as the county election officer, said the commissioners didn't find

anything with the election, leaving the numbers as they were that day.

Those were 282 yes votes for the airport ordinance in Oberlin and 485 no votes, meaning the ordinance didn't pass.

In Norcat there were 50 yes votes and 31 no, meaning that the clerk and treasurer don't have to live inside the city limits.



# Students enliven the town

STUDENTS from Oberlin Elementary School caroled through downtown businesses last Wednesday. Lindsay Eskew and Brittani Farr (above right) shared the song lyrics as they sang to employees in The Bank while Emma Anderson (left) waited for the next song. The students, bundled in their heavy coats, walked from the grade school to Main Street and then in and out several businesses before returning for lunch.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

# Food drive needs 619 more items in a week

The food drive at Stanley Hardware is more than two-thirds of the way done, and needs just 619 more items to meet the goal of 2,000 by

the new year. As of Monday morning, the store had 1,381 nonperishable food items, toiletries and cleaning supplies in

the south window. Anyone who wants to help can bring items to the store during regular business hours. After the

new year, the donations will be taken to the Decatur County Food Pantry in the basement of the United Church.

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