

# Merry Christmas!

# THE OBERLIN HERALD

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## Public complains about city chief

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

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Several residents, many of them supporters of the city's airport project, aired complaints about the city administrator during an Oberlin City Council meeting last Thursday night, with some suggesting the council terminate his contract.

The meeting room upstairs in The Gateway was packed, with 30 people filling the seats. Normally, most of the seats are empty, with a reporter, some city employees and a few citizens in the audience.

While Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener made a motion to terminate Mr. Gilley's contract at the end of the year, the vote failed two to three.

Mayor Joe Stanley asked if public comments could be kept to three to four minutes each. A former

### Vote ends with man keeping his job

A close vote last Thursday kept Oberlin's city administrator in his position.

After receiving heavy public comment, with several suggesting that the council terminate Administrator Austin Gilley's contract at the end of the year, and a few closed-door sessions, the council voted 3-2 to keep the administrator.

After hearing the public comment, the council started with a 20-minute closed session for non-elected personnel with the mayor, council and city attorney. After that, Mayor Joe Stanley, City Attorney Steve Hirsch and Mr. Gilley met for 10 minutes, give or take, in a recess before the council, mayor,

administrator and attorney headed back behind closed doors for 30 minutes.

After the last session, Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener said with all that has gone on, the council needed to take a vote on whether Mr. Gilley would stay on as administrator.

"Because I feel this way, I'm going to move at the end of the year to terminate Austin's employment," she said.

Councilman Ray Ward seconded the motion, with both Mrs. Lohofener and Mr. Ward voting yes to the motion. Councilwoman Rhonda May and Councilmen Rob McFee and Bill Riedel voted no.

councilman who is a leader of the informal "airport committee" was the first to speak.

Sometimes it's difficult to say

when you have made a mistake, said Jay Anderson, a former council member. It's time, he said, with the community divided and the

problems the council has had, to end Austin Gilley's tenure as city administrator. Dr. Anderson served on the council when Mr. Gilley was

hired.

"We are entering into a big job," said Dr. Anderson, "and seeing Mr. Gilley's record, it would be an error or hindrance."

He said at one point, Mr. Gilley didn't get some paperwork done for money for the new runway. Fortunately, he said, because of contacts by Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., with the Federal Aviation Administration and the Kansas Department of Transportation, the city was granted a three-week extension.

If the city is going to do the airport project, said Dr. Anderson, the city needs an administrator who will get the job done. He said it's time for a new administrator.

The number of people who turned out for the special city election last

week was impressive, said Gary Walter, president of The Bank and a former mayor.

In November, he said, he tried to do something and failed. Mr. Walter said he wrote a letter to the governor about the water treatment issue. He said he gave a copy of it to Mr. Gilley, who was going to run it by Willard Perrin, with the city's water department. Another copy was sent to the newspaper.

Mr. Walter said he wasn't sure if the council ever received a copy of that letter. He said he had sent it to Mr. Gilley and thought it would go to everyone.

It makes no sense to spend millions on a water treatment plant, he said. The city doesn't need potable water to water a lawn or wash a car. (See RESIDENTS on Page 5A)



AT THE DRAWING on Saturday, Steve Haynes (above), publisher of *The Oberlin Herald*, read numbers off the first ticket drawn. Connie Grafel (below) looked through

her tickets to find the one that won her the \$1,000 grand prize.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

## Christmas drawing brings out crowd

By KIMBERLY DAVIS

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The sun was out as people lined up their cars along Main Street early Saturday morning, waiting for the Oberlin merchants' annual Christmas on Us drawing at the gazebo in Centennial Park.

While the drawing started at 11 a.m., some parked their cars as early as 9:30 a.m. so they could sit in the front seat during the drawing. As it turned out, most got out and lined the sidewalk around the park. Several hundred people filled the park, looking for a chance to win the \$1,000 grand prize.

For the past six weeks, shoppers have been collecting little red tickets from the sponsoring businesses. The customer took half of each ticket and the other part went into the merchants' drawing box. Oberlin Herald employees carried those tickets to the drawing on Saturday.

With all 15 of the \$50 "instant winner" prizes already collected, only the grand prize ticket needed to be drawn from the large bin full of tickets.

The first number to be drawn was 881787, a red ticket given out

at Ampride. No one came forward with the other half.

Next was ticket NO. 600615, a red-and-white ticket. Just under a minute passed as people looked through their tickets and then Connie Grafel came forward with the winning ticket.

Ms. Grafel said she got the winning ticket at Ward Drug Store. She had around 50 tickets in her hands that she said she'd collected over the weeks.

Ms. Grafel said she'd never won Christmas on Us before. She added that she'd never won anything, but had two wins this week, alluding to the airport election last Tuesday. As marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., she's work hard on the airport project.

She said she planned to take the scrip money to the Carpet Center and look for new flooring for her bathroom. Ms. Grafel added that she might also visit Dale's Fish 'N' Fun to buy something for her sons.

Prior to the big drawing, seven people claimed instant money during the week.

(See SIXTEEN on Page 5A)



## Administrator congratulates city on election

The Oberlin city administrator congratulated the city and the group that led the campaign for the airport election at a council meeting Thursday.

"A 2-1 margin is a clear mandate that the citizens want us to continue to spend time and resources on the ongoing airport project," said Administrator Austin Gilley.

With that, he said, he has three recommendations that he read off his administrator's report:

- "I hope the city council will recognize the need for the administrative support in such a project and not undermine the will of the people by underfunding and under-supporting its administrative staff that is taking on a number of significant capital projects with inadequate resources and incentives. I hope that council will be open to some restructuring, new expenses and helping to reprioritize city projects around this mandate. It is important that we not make management an afterthought."

- "I also recommend that the city begin to pursue and recruit a fix-based operator for the airport, so that such a person or company with this expertise can begin to help us market and plan the operation so that the

(See AIRPORT on Page 5A)

## Council Roundup

At its meeting last Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Voted 3-2 to kill a motion to terminate City Administrator Austin Gilley's contract at the end of the year. Story above.

- Heard from the Economic Development Corp. marketing director that things are moving forward slowly on a new hotel. Story to come.

- Came to a consensus to hold off on putting in a playground, park and walking trail outside The Gateway. Story on Page 3A.

- Approved a blighted property ordinance allowing owners to get help from the city to demolish a house. Story on Page 3A.

- Approved allowing police officers, but not other employees, time after the end of the year to use their accrued time off. Story to come.

- Heard public comment from several people about the administrator and his job performance. Story above.

## Businesses to close for Friday holiday

By MARY LOU OLSON  
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Most Oberlin stores and businesses plan to be open during the day on Thursday, Christmas Eve, but some will close early.

With the exception of convenience stores, however, nearly everything will be closed on Christmas Day.

Raye's Grocery will close at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve. The grocery will be closed on Christmas Day.

Dollar General will close at 6:30 p.m. Christmas Eve and be closed on Christmas Day. They will be open New Year's Day.

Federal, state, city and county offices, as well as all banks and financial institutions, will be closed on Fridays. Decatur County offices and Decatur County Landfill will close on 3 p.m. on Christmas Eve. They will also be closed on New Year's Day. The treasurer's office will close at noon on Dec. 31.

Crossroads Express and Ampride convenience stores will be open regular hours on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

D & M Sinclair and A&W Root Beer will close at 6 p.m. on Christ-

mas Eve and be closed on Christmas Day.

The Frontier Restaurant will be closed all day both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Pizza Hut will close at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and be closed Christmas Day.

Subway, in the Ampride building, will close at 5 p.m. on Christmas Eve and be closed on Christmas Day.

The LandMark Inn's Teller Room will be closed Thursday and Christmas Day. Oberlin Mercantile will be open until 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and closed Christmas Day.

The Oberlin Library will be closed Thursday, Christmas Day and Saturday.

Many other offices and stores may close a little early on Christmas Eve, including *The Oberlin Herald*. Pretty much everything will be closed Christmas Day.

The Golden Age Center and meal site will be closed Thursday and Friday.



# \*Residents suggest city fire administrator

(Continued from Page 1A)

Maybe the city can build on the community support shown in the airport election and shift that to the water issue. If the governor got 700 letters, he said, surely he would answer one of them.

Lee Franklin, who serves on the airport committee, said he didn't want Mr. Gilley to think they are browbeating him, but thought Mr. Gilley's "contempt for the public process" has come out time and time again.

"He has ridiculed the airport committee," Mr. Franklin said. "He has called them incompetent and grandiose."

In a community like Oberlin, 90 percent of the people depend on 5 to 10 percent of the people to do the work, said Mr. Franklin.

There was a perfect example of that, he said, at the "community conversation" meeting on the airport before the election. All of the sides talked to each other. It turns out that many of those opposed to the airport project, he said, were actually opposed mostly to a 7,000-foot runway, not the project itself.

Oberlin is always being watched by people who don't live here, he said, especially those thinking of moving here. They want to know what the community is like, what the schools are like. That means we need to watch what we do, he said.

It's time to settle down and get to work on the airport project, said Rusty Addleman, a pharmacist and former store owner. He said he appreciates that the council brought the airport issue to a vote. There was lots of information that came out from both sides before the election.

Mr. Addleman said he recommends turning the project over to the airport committee. The members have worked on the project since the beginning, he said, for years and years.

Hopefully we can move forward with this and let someone oversee it who can get things done.

Mary Henzel, with the Oberlin Arts and Humanities Commission, said her group has concerns about proposed changes in use of The Gateway and proposed price increases. She said she's worried the city will price itself out of some business. If The Gateway is turned into just an event center, she said, it will take away its usefulness from the community.

If the city brings in events, who will provide housing or do the grant writing? she asked. She said she's gone in to talk with Mr. Gilley, but he hasn't made an effort to work with her.

The commission is a city board, she said; it's part of the city.

Mrs. Henzel didn't say she wanted Mr. Gilley terminated, but was worried about the working relationship between the city and commission.

Gaylord Shields, another airport committee member, said since almost the very start, Mr. Gilley has been against the airport. The administrator's communications with the Federal Aviation Administration and state have been negative and not true, he said.

Ms. Grafel, he said, has done such good work on this project from the very beginning and will continue to do that.

Now, however, Mr. Gilley is the only one with authority to talk to the aviation administration or the state, he said.

The airport project, said Deb Lohoefer, city resident, is important to Oberlin's future. There shouldn't be one person in control of the project; it is a city project.

She added that she would surmise that some of those people who voted yes (to end the project) were confused in the way the ordinance was written. This needs to be a community project, she said.

"Each council member should remember that you represent the community," said Dr. Anderson.

When the new sewer plant was first planned, said Shayla Williby, she asked about the smell, if it would be noticed, since she lives just north of it. Mrs. Williby said she's made several calls about the smell to Mr. Gilley. She's asked for a reduction in her utility bill since they can't even keep their windows open, she said. (Mrs. Williby lives outside the city limits, and about half a mile north of the plant.)

She said Mr. Gilley said she could take legal action against the city. Mrs. Williby said it took her back that the administrator would suggest litigation instead of saying that they could sit and talk.

Greg Lohoefer, a member of the Economic Development Corp. board, said he doesn't believe Mr. Gilley has airport experience. The people on the airport committee, who are pilots do, he said. Some have been involved with airports for 50 years or more. People on the airport advisory committee might be good help, too, he said.

The council is elected by and represents the taxpayers, said Judy Scott, who works at the hospital. Mr. Gilley is paid by the taxpayers, and he is paid to support what the community wants. If he can't do that, maybe he should find another location to peddle his wares.

"We want him to work for the taxpayers," said Ms. Scott.

Towards the end of the meeting, Marilyn Black commented that she thought it had been the rudest meeting ever. People have been laughing and talking while others were speaking, she said. She added that she thought it was supposed to be a public meeting, but she wondered how people were supposed to hear.

# \*Airport project moves forward

(Continued from Page 1A)

airport can be as self-supporting as promised."

"I also recommend to the mayor that as we update our boards and committees, that he appoint as many as possible representatives from the Economic Development Corp.'s airport committee to the city's Airport Advisory Board so that this groups' efforts can be legitimized and made an official part of the planning and managing process. I also hope this board will help us with some remaining hurdles to the project."

Mr. Gilley said some work will start next year on the project, including the technical plans and positioning of the new runway. The markers are large white X's, he said, so the crew is waiting on the snow to melt so the marks can be seen

from the air.

The location for a new Automated Weather Observation System can now be chosen, he said. The bidding will start soon for a trench for the electric and phone lines to serve it. The city doesn't have a trenching machine, he said.

Mr. Gilley said the city hasn't replaced the project manager for the airport project, so he will assume that duty. Many in the audience laughed at that comment.

While he said he is happy to associate a the large capital project, Mr. Gilley said, he plans to continue to ask responsible questions which might cause project supporters some discomfort. The questions are essential to the fiscal and operational responsibility, he said.

## Santa's coming to town



SANTA sits tall on top of a lighted motorcycle in the yard of David and Stephanie Blau on Marks Avenue. It's one of several lighted Christmas decorations in front of the home. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

# \*Sixteen win money in promotion

(Continued from Page 1A)

- Jack Benton brought in ticket No. 882338 which he got at Ampride. He said he planned to use the money on groceries.
- Sharon Ream brought in ticket No. 251090 which she got at the Carpet Center.
- Sarah Fredrickson brought in ticket No. 989826 which she got at Stanley Hardware. Mrs. Fredrick-

son said she planned to use the money on groceries for Christmas dinner.

- Jack E. Fortin brought in ticket No. 243353 which he got at Home Planning Center. He said he planned to use the money on groceries or Christmas presents.
- Judy Wenger brought in ticket No. 600237, which she got at Ward Drug Store. She planned to spend

the money on Christmas gifts.

- Wiley Farr brought in ticket No. 519323, which he got at Raye's Grocery. He plans to use the money on gifts.
- Don Juenemann brought in ticket No. 507991, which he got at Raye's and plans to use it on groceries.

Christmas on Us, said Kimberly Davis, managing editor of *The Her-*

*ald*, wouldn't be possible without the businesses that sponsor the ever-growing promotion year after year. Those included Ward Drug Store, Stellar Sales, the Carpet Center, the Bank, Dale's Fish 'n' Fun, the Land-Mark Inn, Raye's Grocery, Stanley Hardware, Home Planning Center, the Dresser, Ultimate Fertilizer, Ampride and *The Herald*.

# Board renews principals' contracts

## School Roundup

- At a meeting last Monday, the Oberlin School Board:
  - Approved renewing the contracts of district administrators after 40 minutes behind closed doors. Story at left.
  - Approved signing paperwork to move forward with a federal "Race to the Top" grant. Story to come.

After 40 minutes behind closed doors last Tuesday, the Oberlin School Board approved renewing the contracts of both district administrators.

The board called a 10-minute closed session with the board and superintendent and then met for 15, 5 and 10 minutes with just the board members.

The board agreed to renew the contracts for High School Principal Charlie Haag and Superintendent Duane Dorshorst, who also is elementary school principal, for the 2010/2011 school year.

The board approved giving two seniors a waiver on the speech requirement needed to graduate. Ashley Horton and Hunter Nedland asked the board for the waivers.

Mr. Nedland said he is in his third year of extracurricular speech, although he still has to write an informative or persuasive speech. Speech teacher Leigh Davis wrote

a letter saying it was OK for the board to grant the waiver for Mr. Nedland contingent on him meeting the requirement.

Superintendent Duane Dorshorst said speech is a district requirement, and it can be waived if the board wants. He said Mr. Nedland has met all other requirements for the credit.

The board approved the waiver contingent on him doing an informative or persuasive speech this year.

Ashley Horton also asked for a

waiver. She said she's met all of the requirements in her past three years in the extracurricular program.

Mr. Dorshorst said Ms. Davis wrote a letter saying she has met all the requirements.

In other business, the board:
 

- Approved the classified personnel handbook on second reading. Mr. Dorshorst said he met with the supervisory staff and they were all happy with the handbook. They found and fixed a few typos in it,

he said, but other than that nothing has changed.

- Heard that the district finished November in the red because the state didn't transfer money for the district in time. The district transferred money from reserves to cover the shortage, he said.

- Approved the resignation of Gary Jensen, a custodian, and Deena Zodrow, who works as an aide, helping out in the elementary school office.

Mr. Dorshorst said Mrs. Zodrow won't be replaced. Judy Marietta secretary from the high school, will work at the grade school in the morning and the high school in the afternoon.

- Named board members Dan Nedland, Monte Moore and Dan Grafel as the district's negotiators for the upcoming contract talks with teachers.

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