

Council decides how not to spend Bremer money

The Oberlin City Council agreed Thursday not to spend money from the Bremer donation on operating costs at The Gateway.

The money can be spent on repairs and improvements, but not the day-to-day operations at the civic center, the council decided.

Councilwomen Marcia Lohoefer and Rhonda May and Councilman Ray Ward voted yes to the motion and Councilman Bill Riedel voting no.

The council also wants monthly reports on how the money is being spent.

The council had talked about the money at a past meeting, said Mrs. Lohoefer. She said she doesn't think it should be used for operations, but there hadn't been a vote on it.

The argument could be made that if the Bremer money is used to pay for operations at The Gateway instead of the money being transferred from the electric fund that the bequest was being spent to benefit the electric department, not The Gateway, she said.

Ms. May said that she would hate for the money to be spent on operations and then come back in five years with an idea for a project and not have any money to do it.

The city sells electricity and collects taxes, said Councilman Ray Ward. That's how it gets money. The city operated on the electric income and taxes before the Bremer money. The Gateway is a city building, he said.

Mr. Ward said he wasn't sure the money should be used for daily

operations, but for repairs and improvements.

There is \$100,000 in the budget to be transferred from the Bremer fund to The Gateway for this year, said City Administrator Austin Gilley. Does that need to be re-visited, Mrs. Lohoefer said she didn't think they should make that transfer.

During the budget process, said Mr. Riedel, the council talked about that transfer. He said he would hate to have a motion and tie the city's hands about how that money can be used, when the transfer is discussed every year.

The decision could be revisited, said Mrs. Lohoefer.

Maybe the account could be monitored, said Mr. Gilley, instead of making it a policy. The council could get monthly reports on how the money had been used and make any decisions on spending it.

That could solve the problem, said Ms. May. She added that she doesn't want to micromanage the fund. Also, she said, she doesn't want to wake up one day and have \$100,000 left and only have a new roof to show for it.

Mrs. Lohoefer said she had been asked if it was OK to use the Bremer money to build a new city office. Mr. Gilley said if The Gateway really gets going as an event center, the office space might be needed, in which case the city offices might need to move.

The council approved a motion not to spend the money on monthly maintenance and asked for monthly expense reports on the fund.



ON THE FRONT porch of a house at 211 N. East on Thursday, a fireman (above) carried a five-gallon bucket full of smoldering insulation outside. Chief Bill Cathcart

(below) brought the buckets and a metal trash can to help contain the material.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Overloaded wires start fire at house

Overloaded electrical wiring apparently started a fire Thursday in an Oberlin man's home.

Fire Chief Bill Cathcart said the furnace was out in Allen Shields' home at 211 N. East. Although the parts had been ordered, they weren't in yet, and the furnace wasn't working. Mr. Shields was using space heaters to warm the home and the wires got overloaded, the chief said.

The call came in that there was smoke in the attic of the home just

before 1 p.m. Thursday, he said. Chief Cathcart said there was minimal damage to the rafters and insulation.

Firemen used five-gallon plastic buckets to carry smoldering insulation out the front door of the house, placing the material in a large metal trash can in the front yard. The chief said they used pressurized water extinguishers to put the fire out.

Fire fighters were at the home for an hour and half, he said.



Recession sends more people to pantry

With the worst recession in years gripping the nation last year, almost 250 people more used the Decatur County Food Pantry than the year before.

In 2008, 190 adults and 109 kids used the pantry, some more than once (the service is available up to three times a year). In 2009, said Melanie Anderson, who manages the pantry, it served 342 adults and 199 kids.

Ms. Anderson said the pantry received about 2,300 items from the Stanley Hardware food drive last week. With the help of a crew

of volunteers, she said, almost all of the items are on the shelves.

The December food drive, she said, is a great service to the community. It's a big help to the pantry and covers the last month of the year, which isn't taken by a church.

With 11 churches in the county, said Ms. Anderson, each one takes a month to bring in donations for the pantry. Stanley takes the last one.

Even though demand was up in 2009, she said, people have really responded and the donations have been great. With people being laid off because of the economy and new

people all the time, said Ms. Anderson, she thinks use will continue to be high this year.

People can use the pantry up to three times a year, said Ms. Anderson. The first time each year, she said, they need to fill out an information sheet. They also need to bring an ID or proof of residency. The information is kept in a confidential file, she added.

Ms. Anderson said she keeps a log of each family and person so they can keep track of how many times they use the pantry.

While the pantry has had a large

donation, she said, there are a few things it seems they are always short of, including sugar and canned fruit.

More and more of the people are coming are dealing with diabetes, she said, so the pantry needs more low-sugar, sugar-free and low-salt items.

The pantry is open for people to come get items from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday. Anyone wanting to make a donation, said Ms. Anderson, can drop them off during the same hours Monday through Friday.

Commissioners have slim agenda, talk to a few

The Decatur County commissioners had a slim agenda last Tuesday, with no appointments, but talked to a few people anyway and then adjourned.

Appraiser Alan Hale said he thought he had \$25,000 in his budget at the end of the year and wondered what would happen to that money. The appraiser's office had budgeted for a mapping system, but then decided to hold off on it to save money.

In past years, said Commissioner Ralph Unger, some of that carryover went to operating expenses in that department and some to an equipment reserve.

Mr. Hale said he wasn't sure if the full \$25,000 is needed for operating expenses, but if it is, that's OK. If it isn't needed, he said the office needs two new computers to replace half of what's in there now.

Those two were bought in 2004, he said.

Looking at the future, said Mr. Hale, the money situation isn't going to get any better.

He said he would like to look for computers locally first, but doesn't want a homemade box either.

The commissioners told Mr. Hale to get some prices for computers.

The commissioners had a recommendation to re-appoint Kevin Rippe to the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. board. Mr. Rippe just finished his first term. The board has a two-term limit, with each term lasting two years.

The letter from Connie Grafel, marketing director, asked the commissioners to re-appoint Mr. Rippe. Although he no longer lives in the county, she said, he does work full-time at The Bank and the board would like him to continue working on projects.

There is no policy on whether members of this board have to live inside the county, said Commissioner Gene Gallentine, and he is a good member. He is still a full-time employee in Decatur County, said Mr. Unger.

Mr. Rippe also still owns a house in the county, said Commissioner

Stan McEvoy.

The commissioners approved the re-appointment.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved a bill to the local environmental protection group for \$1,205, which covered 14.2 water well inspections and 9.8 sewer inspections last year. The com-

missioners questioned how there were .2 and .8 inspections, but no one knew.

Seminar planned for marketing

There's still time to get involved in business marketing seminars scheduled for Friday.

The first seminar will be from 7:30 to 9 a.m. and the second from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. During the first session, coffee and rolls will be available, while sandwiches will be served during the second.

Dave Buchholz, the keynote speaker for the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce banquet Thursday night, will speak at the two seminars.

He is president of David and

Associates, a marketing communications firm in Hastings, Neb.

The seminars will cost \$10 for Chamber members and \$15 for others.

Enroll by calling Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., at 475-2901 or the Chamber at 475-3441. The seminar is being sponsored by the Chamber, the Economic Development Corp. and the Oberlin Business Alliance.

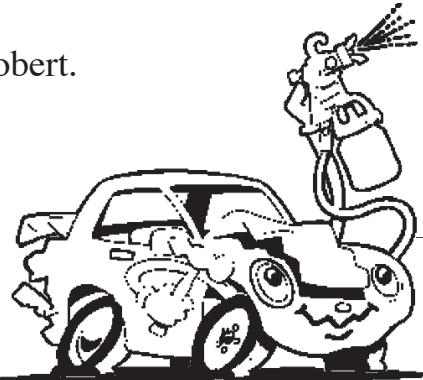
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