

City brainstorms ideas for center

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
k.davis@nwkansas.com

The Oberlin City Council and about 25 in the audience talked about The Gateway at a special meeting last Wednesday, trying to find a way to keep the civic center open without draining the city's electric fund.

No one had any easy answers for the center, where the city's loss has grown to nearly \$200,000 this year, but one citizen pointed out that the city would have some of the costs just to keep its offices open.

Councilman Bill Riedel, who had asked for the public meeting, said his main concern is about the drain The Gateway continues to make on the city's electric fund, especially with fewer people using the facility because of the new community

center downtown and those going to the American Legion.

Already this year, he said, \$140,000 has been transferred from the electric fund to The Gateway and another \$50,000 will be needed to end the year.

The city's electrical system is going to need some work, he said, and that will soak up some of the money that's been supporting the civic center.

Mr. Riedel said the city's taxes are in the top 3 percent in the state and the electric rates are in the top 25 percent.

Meantime, he said, the city's population has shown a 9 percent decrease in the past couple of years, according to information from the League of Kansas Municipalities.

Mr. Riedel said he's not sure how the city can continue to transfer close to \$200,000 from the electric fund each year.

"I am asking for the council's help," said Mr. Riedel, "to come up with some ideas to reduce the drain on the electrical fund, as well as the citizens of Oberlin."

"I personally do not see how we can continue to operate The Gateway in the manner it has without a large tax increase, which I would totally be against. I also believe that continuing to use electrical-fund dollars is not a viable option, as this will put us in a situation where we will not be able to make the improvements and repairs that are and will be needed to maintain our electrical infrastructure in the future."

Some ideas he's come up with include

using money from the Bremer estate to support operations, lowering prices to make The Gateway more attractive to users, subcontracting out or doing away with the catering operation, making the facility more for the whole community, moving the police department to the building to save the money now spent for rent downtown, or renting some office space to others.

Mr. Riedel said he had asked City Administrator Austin Gilley to put together some numbers. Some of that information was given out during a public meeting a few months back.

Part of the decision is a moral or ethical dilemma on how much in electric rates, taxes and/or donations can be used to subsidize events. How many parties, said Mr.

Gilley, can the city and the Bremer money pay for?

In 2009, he said, 86 percent of the events were organized by local users. Seventy-eight percent of those events are one-time events with local people. The Gateway, he said, hasn't quite been the economic driver, bringing in outside dollars, that it could have been or could be.

The facility was empty about 70 percent of the year, he added. With the city's new accounting software, the expenses and revenues are being tracked accurately.

A city ordinance, said Mr. Gilley, says once money is in the electric reserve fund, it has to be used for that department. That's the same with the sewer reserve fund. That (See CITY on Page 8A)



Veterans honored on Memorial Day

A FIRING SQUAD PREPARED for the second round of a 21-gun salute (above) at the close of the Memorial Day service sponsored by the Oberlin American Legion on Monday at the Oberlin Cemetery. Connie and John Simonsson (right) raised the flag while veteran John Bremer saluted. Phil Law gave the program, playing songs from all wars on his trumpet. Trevin Reinert, 9, and his brother, Taylor, 7 (below), sons of Todd and Donna Reinert of Topeka, and grandsons of Dolores Koerperich, imagined themselves driving a jeep belonging to Walt Pennell.

—Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis and Carolyn Kelley-Plotts



Winter wheat has potential for a good crop

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
k.davis@nwkansas.com

The wheat crop in northwest Kansas has the potential to produce a good harvest come summer, with the growing conditions just right over the last few weeks.

Brian Olson, an agronomist with Kansas State University Research and Extension, said some fields are showing stripe rust that blew in from Texas and Oklahoma. Mr. Olson said a gene failed in the Jagger line of wheat, which includes Jagger, Post Rock and Jagalene, allowing the infection to spread.

Stripe rust, he said, basically destroys the leaf area so instead of producing a 60-bushel crop with 60-pound test weights, an infected field might produce 40 bushels with 54-pound test weight.

Anyone who planted varieties like TAM 111, which didn't have

that gene fail, should still see resistance to the disease.

The growing conditions for northwest Kansas have mostly been good, said Mr. Olson, though there is some sporadic hail damage.

Most of the wheat in Decatur County, he said, probably flowered about a week ago, so the crop is moving into the stage where the berries are starting to put on carbohydrates as the crop moves closer to harvest, he said.

Along the Nebraska border, the crop is probably flowering or just past that stage.

While the growing conditions have been good so far, said Mr. Olson, the good weather needs to continue through harvest.

With wet fields and a late corn and grain sorghum harvest, he said, 700,000 fewer acres of wheat were planted this year across the state.

Highway meeting Friday in Scandia

Members of the U.S. 36 Highway Association will meet Thursday and Friday in Scandia to hear reports from Missouri, Kansas and Illinois highway departments and get the results of a long-awaited economic study of widening the road.

The association's annual meeting begins with a reception and registration from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday at the Tags Grill and Bar meeting room, sponsored by Jim's Mini Storage.

The meeting continues at 9 a.m. Friday with reports from the state transportation agencies and the Federal Highway Administration. Mayor Gary Cline will greet the group, and Steve Haynes of Oberlin, president of the association, will preside. Coffee and rolls will be provided by Astra Bank and PK Collections.

Speaker for the noon luncheon will be Linda Sutton of the North

Central Kansas Small Business Development Center.

After lunch, Dr. Preston Gilson and Dr. Gary Brinker of the Docking Institute of Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University will discuss the results of their study of the economic impact of widening U.S. 36 from two to four lanes across Kansas.

The study found that improving the road to a four-lane expressway would bring economic benefits of nearly \$2.45 billion over 10 years to the 13 counties along the highway in Kansas, Mr. Haynes said. This includes \$1.4 billion from construction and more than \$1 billion from new business generated by the road.

"Most importantly," he said, "the study shows the new highway would create 898 new jobs in our (See HIGHWAY on Page 8A)

City meets with job candidate

The Oberlin City Council plans to talk about a candidate who could fill the city administrator's job during its meeting Thursday at The Gateway, maybe avoiding a new search to fill the position.

Former Administrator Austin Gilley put in his last day on Thursday. That night before, the council spent nearly an hour in closed session, 20 minutes of that time with a woman from the audience, later identified as one of the original candidates for the job.

Mayor Joe Stanley said Tuesday that the council has someone who could be hired for the job. Part of the decision will be whether to fill the position permanently or temporarily, he added.

If the city doesn't hire the prospective candidate, he said, they will probably use the same procedure they did to find Mr. Gilley, which was to go through the Kansas League of Municipalities search process.

When the council did that, the city received six or more applicants for the job. From there, said Mr. Stanley, they narrowed it down to three to interview.

The council spent close to an hour in closed session Thursday to discuss "nonelected personnel." The first session, for 30 minutes, included the council, mayor, city administrator and Gateway manager. There was no action taken on the council's return to the meeting except to vote to go back into closed session for 20 more minutes.

This time the motion was to include the council, mayor, city administrator and Julie McCoy, who was sitting in the audience.

Mayor Joe Stanley said later she was one of the people who applied for the administrator's job when Austin Gilley was hired.

Car shows planned for Saturday and Sunday

Classic, vintage and antique vehicles will take over Main Street in two towns this weekend, with shows in Oberlin on Friday and Saturday and Selden on Sunday.

To kick off its 9th Summerfest Car Show, the Last Indian Raid Museum will hold a "cruise-in" from 7 to 9 p.m. on the south end of Main Street in Oberlin. Museum board members plan

to grill hot dogs and serve chips. The Oberlin Business Alliance will be selling root-beer floats.

Registration will be open from 8 to 10 a.m. Saturday. Museum Director Sharleen Wurm said a pancake feed will be held in the Bohemian Hall from 7 to 9 a.m.

The board plans to serve hot roast beef

sandwiches for lunch, she said, and there will be vendors on Main Street.

A poker run starts at 1 p.m. and the awards and trophies will be given out at 4 p.m.

The museum won't be serving dinner as part of the event this year, Mrs. Wurm said.

The cost to register a vehicle in advance is (See CAR on Page 8A)



*City answers questions on Gateway operation

(Continued from Page 1A) means there is money in both the electric and sewer reserve funds, but those have to be used on those utilities only.

Last fall, said Mr. Gilley, the council talked about a vision and mission for The Gateway. The discussion was about trying to target the facility as an event center to bring people to town and make money. At that time, the council approved using some of the Bremer money for operations, but in January decided to use that money only for improvements.

Another option is having one person keep a key and calendar. Then those who checked out the key would be responsible for cleaning and returning the facility in the same condition they received it.

None of this is a new problem, said Mr. Gilley, nor is this a personal agenda. The Gateway is an outstanding building, he said, and as manager, Kathy Brainard has done a great job.

He said his goal has always been and always will be to provide open and honest information, responsible financial management and to do what's best for the citizens.

It's to the point, said Mr. Riedel, that the city can't pay for everything with the electric fund, especially with big expenses coming up.

The question is, said Councilman Rob McFee, how high do people want their taxes, electric and water rates to go?

It's time to make some tough decisions, said Mr. Riedel.

Connie Grafel, the city's marketing director, asked what the major expenses are for The Gateway? Mr. Gilley said personnel costs are \$157,763, gas \$20,000, electric \$37,000, food at \$45,000 or less and professional services at \$10,000, which includes items like the elevator inspection.

Gaylord Shields asked if most of the utilities for The Gateway are associated with the city offices. Mr. Gilley said that really, the city should be paying rent to the Gateway account. That has been

discussed, he said.

If The Gateway closed tomorrow, Mr. Shields pointed out, the city would still have some of that \$200,000 expense.

"You are right," said Mr. Gilley, "but the council hasn't given any direction. The facility will always operate with a gap; it's just (a question of) what size."

Judy Cochran said she managed The Gateway for three years, and it was busy all the time.

"What happened to the facility being user friendly?" she asked.

One reason for having fewer users is that the building doesn't have the electrical capability needed for concerts and such, she said. Mr. Gilley agreed.

Someone questioned whether the city is charging enough for food.

Councilman Richard Kimble said \$2,500 was put in the budget to promote the building and only \$300 of that has been used.

"Why aren't we advertising?" he asked.

Mr. Gilley said he knows Ms. Brainard is working on that.

By his calculations, said Mr. Kimble, The Gateway will be out of money by the end of July. Possibly, said Mr. Gilley.

With that said, there isn't a lot of extra in the electric fund either, said Mr. Riedel.

The money could come from the Bremer fund, which was left to the city from the estates of Fred and Henrietta Bremer, said Mayor Joe Stanley.

Does the city wait until that happens? asked Mr. Riedel, or transfer the \$50,000 out of the Bremer money. Later in the meeting, he said, he was going to suggest the transfer, but with Councilwoman Rhonda May not there, he didn't make the motion.

If the number of events has dropped, asked Ms. Grafel, how much has the cost of operation dropped? Mr. Gilley said they can't see the numbers for that yet, but he thinks it will show up next year.

Someone asked if the Bremer money was earmarked for anything. No, said Mayor Stanley, just for the

good of The Gateway.

It's the big events that make money, said Mr. Gilley. The city doesn't make money on the small events, like when 20 to 30 people eat a meal. He said he hesitated to use the Rotary Club as an example, but that involves a meal and two full-time staff members. But, said Mr. Gilley, he wants to make it clear that the situation is pretty much the same in all towns. Doing some of these things is part of civic duty.

It's clear in the Morgan Agreement, when the money was donated for the building, said Ella Betts, that the city offices are supposed to be in The Gateway.

In fact, the city voted to accept some responsibility when it accepted the Morgan bequest, said Mr. Shields. Maybe those documents need to be reviewed, because if the conditions of the estate were violated, the money would have gone to the Shriners.

Mayor Stanley said he's never read or seen those. Mr. Gilley said he hadn't either, but would like to.

While the group talked about having a vision or mission for the building and fielded more questions, the council didn't make any decisions.

When the council first talked about turning the building into an event center, said Councilman Ray Ward, he was against it because of the way it was explained that the local users would have to take a back seat to outside events. He said he wanted the taxpayers to be able to use their building.

There's only two ways for the city to raise money, said Mr. Ward, through taxes and utility charges. When the utility bills are raised, everyone who is on city water, electric and sewer gets an increase, even renters. When the taxes are raised, only those who own property get an increase.

After the council held almost an hour of closed sessions, Mayor Stanley said he thought there had been some good questions and answers for the issue at hand.

Group wants county money

A volunteer with Northwest Kansas Domestic and Sexual Violence Services asked Decatur County commissioners for \$1,000 for operations again next year.

At the meeting Tuesday, May 18, Karen Bolt of Atwood said she understands money is tight, but the group would like the same financial support it got this year.

Sexual and domestic violence problems happen every day, said Ms. Bolt. A lot of abuse is never reported.

The group, which operates a safe home in Hays, has done a lot of cost cutting, she said. The agency also runs a hotline manned 24 hours a day out of the same house.

She said the group has had a hard time finding volunteers to work at the home and on the hotline. They have to have 40 hours of training, she noted.

Last year, she said, they were re-

ally blessed to have someone come in and help update the home with new beds. The building can house 12 people, adults and children.

Commissioner Gene Gallentine asked what it takes to operate the home and hotline for a year? Ms. Bolt said she thought it cost around \$500 a day to operate the shelter and around the same amount to operate the hotline.

The commissioners asked for financial reports. Ms. Bolt said she would ask that some figures be sent to them.

Last year, she said, the agency helped 276 domestic abuse victims and 66 sexual assault victims. Of those, 11 were from Decatur County.

Money from counties, grants and other means help pay for everything from toilet paper to cleaning supplies to heating bills, said Ms. Bolt. She said she likes to tell people "if

it happens in your house, it happens in our house."

Commissioner Stan McEvoy asked if the number of victims have picked up with the down economy. Yes, said Ms. Bolt. It's also getting to a real volatile time of the year. The holidays are over, it's getting hotter outside and people are going to have to start providing three meals a day for their kids, she said.

The program at the shelter has changed, said Ms. Bolt. It used to be that people could only stay for 30 days, but it's hard for women to get on their feet in 30 days, especially if they have relocated to move into the shelter.

They often need more than a month, and that's now allowed, she said.

The commissioners said they will look at the request during budget time this summer.

Business class planned for June

Anyone who wants to learn about starting a business should join in a three-hour class to be offered in Oberlin the third week of June.

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., said the class will be led by Dennis Fenner, the new business consultant

at the Bird City Outreach office of Small Business Development Center out of Hays.

Anyone interested in the training can call Ms. Grafel at 475-2901.

The class is limited to the first seven people.

Registration is \$10.

The time and date haven't yet

Council plans to review

The Oberlin City Council plans to meet at 7 p.m. Thursday, upstairs in The Gateway.

City Clerk Karen Larson said the council plans to review city projects, including the roofing at

the city warehouse downtown, a reminder that the city taking bids for a new cemetery wall and other projects.

The meeting, in the upstairs meeting room, is open to the public.

Three Birger Sandzen
Paintings At Auction
Sunday, June 6th at 12 Noon
Lone Jack, Missouri
30 miles east of Kansas City, MO
816.697.3830
www.DirkSoulisAuctions.com

A windy Monday



IN THE WIND last Monday, a large branch fell across U.S. 83 just south of Hall Street. City lineman Ron Beneda cut other limbs out of the same tree before they, too, fell across the highway, blocking traffic.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

*Highway study is finished

(Continued from Page 1A) area, an average of nearly 70 per county. This kind of impact would be incredible in an area where nearly every county is losing jobs, population, farmers and schools.

"The area along U.S. 36 was left behind with the construction of the Interstate system. It became a sort of economic backwater. Now, with Missouri set to dedicate a four-lane U.S. 36 across that state this summer, Kansas has an opportunity to get on the bandwagon and capture the traffic — and the economic benefits — of a four-lane road that bypasses congestion in St. Louis and Kansas City.

"Kansas has a start, the first eight

miles of freeway, west of St. Joseph. Now we can see the benefits of continuing this work west."

The Docking study was done over the last year by Dr. Gilson, a senior fellow who worked on a similar study of widening U.S. 50 west of Hutchinson, and Dr. Brinker, director of the institute, under a contract with the association. Money for the study came from many of the counties along the highway and from a grant from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation of Logan.

"We appreciate the support of the counties which joined this effort and especially of the foundation and Cy Moyer of Phillipsburg," said Mr. Haynes. "I thought it fitting, since

Mr. Hansen made his fortune as a road builder, that his foundation would support this project.

"Having the study is just the start, however. The real job is ahead of us, pushing improvements in a part of Kansas that in many ways has been left behind by state transportation efforts. The association and our supporters must be as dedicated to this task as were the supporters of a four-lane U.S. 81 a decade or more ago."

After hearing the Docking report, members and directors of the group will hold a business meeting and elect officers. For information, call the association at (785) 476-3196 or Mr. Haynes at (785) 475-2206.

*Car and tractor show planned for Selden

(Continued from Page 1A) Food and drinks will be served all day, including hamburgers and barbecued pork for lunch.

Attractions will include barrel train rides for the kids and a parade at 3:30 p.m. The owners of the top five tractors, top five cars and top two small engines will receive plaques.

Sunday will be the 17th annual Selden Antique Tractor and Classic Car Show, offering events throughout the day for the entire family.

Other events include:

- A horseshoe-pitching competition at 10 a.m.
- A kiddie tractor pull at 1 p.m.
- A barrel-roll competition at 2:30 p.m.
- A "washer drop" competition at 3 p.m.

There's no admission fee.

been scheduled.

Advertisement for Bids

The City of Oberlin, Kansas will receive sealed bids for the Oberlin Cemetery Ornamental Wall. Bids prepared in accordance with the Plans and Specifications will be accepted at the Office of the Clerk, 1 Morgan Drive, Oberlin, Kansas 67749 until 2:00 P.M. CDST on June 15, 2010 and then will be immediately publicly opened and read aloud.

The project consists of a concrete and masonry wall and associated work as described in the Plans and Specifications. Contractors will be required to bid all items on the project bid form.

All bids must be made on the Proposal Form provided with the Plans and Specifications as prepared by W DESIGN ASSOCIATES, Consulting Engineers and Architects. Bids received after the closing will be returned unopened and shall not be considered.

Contractors may obtain Plans and Specifications from W Design Associates, 214 East 1st Street, McCook, Nebraska 69001 upon payment of \$40.00 for each set requested. One half of the deposit shall be refunded if a bid is submitted and the Plans and Specifications are returned in good condition within ten days after the bid opening. Electronic copies of the plans and specifications may be obtained at NO COST by calling 308-345-2370.

Each bid shall be accompanied by a certified check, cashiers check or bid bond in an amount of not less than five percent (5%) of the total bid amount, and shall be made payable to the City of Oberlin as security that the bidder to whom the contract may be awarded will enter into contract to construct the project and give bond in the sum of the total contract amount for the construction of the project. Checks accompanying bids not accepted shall be returned to the bidders. Performance and Payment Bonds will be required for this project.

No bid shall be withdrawn after opening the bids without the consent of the Owner for a period of 45 days.

The Owner reserves the right to accept, reject or negotiate any or all bids and to waive any irregularity in the bidding.

Date: May 20, 2010

Karen Larson, Clerk
City of Oberlin



NOTICE OF 2010 ANNUAL MEETING

This is your official notice of the Annual Meeting of the Decatur Cooperative Association, to be held at the Gateway Convention Center in Oberlin on Tuesday evening, June 15, 2010.

The agenda is as follows:

6:30 p.m.	Serving meal Entertainment
7:00 p.m.	Business Meeting Audit Report Election of Directors President's Report Manager's Report

Directors terms expiring are those now held by Gerald Benda and Paul R. Nauer.

The floor will be open for nominations at the meeting. Financial Statements will be provided at the meeting for year ending January 31, 2009.

Please mark Tuesday, June 15, 2010 on your calendar and attend your Cooperative Annual Business Meeting.

Sincerely,
Decatur Cooperative Association
Kurt Anderson, President