

Hanging out at 'the Rec'



ON MONDAY, Emma Anderson played the Wii video game at the Sunflower Recreation Center on Penn Avenue. The center is open from 1 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday for kids and teens to hang out.
— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Council tables decision on financing water work

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Oberlin City Council tabled two resolutions on how to borrow money to pay for a new water treatment plant Thursday, one for a general obligation bond issue and one for a revenue bond issue, until the full council could be present.

John Haas with Ranson Financial said his company is assisting the city with the water treatment project. It's a big project, he said.

It's his understanding, said Mr. Haas, that the city will be financing with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development. The first part of the project, he said, is estimated to cost \$4.5 million and the second \$1.2 million.

He had two resolutions for the city to sign, one for general obligation bonds and the second for revenue bonds. Neither resolution would lock the city into doing either type of bonds, but passing both would give the council the ability to choose one.

Basically, he said, with general obligation, the city issues bonds and the Department of Agriculture buys them at a 2.75 percent interest.

Mr. Haas said, though, that he recommends the revenue bonds because of the size of the project. Those need just a majority of the council to vote for them, he said, but the revenue bonds need two-thirds of the council to pass.

With revenue bonds, he said, there's a 15-day protest period. If 20 percent of the registered voters sign a petition, the issue would go to an election.

Only the revenue of the water system would be pledged to pay the money back. An annual debt service amount would be set aside. Water rates would need to increase about \$1.50 a month per user.

Mr. Haas said his recommendation is to charge the extra \$1.50 and go with the revenue bonds.

The city is applying for some grant money for the project, too. If the council chooses to do revenue bonds, said Mr. Haas, that amount could be higher.

Councilwoman Rhonda May said the council had been told by the former city administrator that Ranson could help the city find a way to take extra money out of the sewer rates currently being charged. The new sewer lagoons were supposed to cost \$2.5 or \$2.6 million, she said, and only cost \$1.8 million. The city is charging rates to pay back the \$2.5 or \$2.6 million, she said, so the reserve fund just keeps growing.

She added that they were told that some of that money set aside for sewers could be shifted to water.

Mr. Haas said they did agree to do a water rate analysis. If there is excess money in the sewer rates, he said, then maybe the city could

reduce those rates. City Attorney Steve Hirsch said they did discuss dropping the sewer rates.

Dave Barber, with the Department of Agriculture, said he believes it is a budget issue on what the sewer reserve money can and can't be used on.

With the water rates, said Mr. Haas, the city is going to get grant money, but the grant would be based on the water rates.

Cities transfer money out of utilities to other areas all the time he said, but if there is something showing that money can't be transferred out of sewer fund, it can't. He added that he doesn't want to mess up any covenants with the sewer, but also doesn't want to not get grant money.

"Point well taken about the grant money," said Ms. May. "I just want to make sure the rest of us can continue to live here."

Right now, the city isn't committing to anything said Mr. Haas, not until the bonds are actually sold.

Ms. May said she thought the decision should be tabled until the full council was there.

Mayor Joe Stanley and Councilman Bill Riedel were absent. She said she would hate for the council to go into that much debt for an issue not in the interest of public health, and the water plant has no real health benefit.

District to look for a used car

The Oberlin School Board gave the superintendent and transportation director the go ahead to look for a midsize car for the district at the monthly meeting last Monday.

Superintendent Duane Dorshorst said often one or two people are taking a suburban to a meeting out of town, and a midsize car would save some money on fuel. The car the district has now has 180,000 miles on it.

He said they want to look for a car with less than 20,000 miles on it at a price of no more than \$15,000. Mr. Dorshorst said the district could go through the two dealers in town and see what they can find, then basically flip a coin. Then, he said, the next time the district is looking for a vehicle again, it could go with the other dealer.

The board approved letting Mr. Dorshorst and director Brian Simonsson handle it.

The board approved a supplement-

tal insurance option for catastrophic insurance for students at \$450 a year. Mr. Dorshorst said the policy would cover a gap between what individual insurance covers and before the Kansas State High School Activities Association would help, in the \$10,000 to \$20,000 range.

There's never been a claim in this range, he said, but you don't want one, and this is pretty inexpensive.

In other business, the board:

- Set a special meeting at 7:30 a.m. Wednesday, June 30, to clean up details at the end of the fiscal year.

- Joined the group Schools for Quality Education for \$325 a year. The district has belonged to this for some time. It's a small price to pay to have lobbyists representing small schools, said Mr. Dorshorst.

- Nominated board member Dan Wasson to continue representing the district on the Northwest Kansas Technical College board.

- Heard that the summer staff has been pulling wire at the grade school to get more access points for laptop computers.

- Heard about a plan to put up digital signs at the high school with some of the Townsend money to let students and staff know what's going on.

- Heard that lights in the parking lots at both schools have been repaired and are working.

- Approved the information that needs to be sent in for the No Child Left Behind and the state Quality Performance Accreditation reports that have to be done each year.

- Heard that graduation for the Class of 2011 will be on Sunday, May 22.

- Discussed the need to get a handicap accessible bus for a high school student who will need transportation. Mr. Simonsson, said Mr. Dorshorst, has called the state to see if a van will work.

Board nixes black for school colors

The Oberlin School Board talked about the possibility of adding black as part of the school colors at the meeting last Monday, but by consensus decided to keep things the way they are.

In the late 1980s, said Superintendent Duane Dorshorst, silver and grey crept into the red and white school colors. That was partly, he said, because washing red uniforms with white trim was a pain. Now, he said, the school is starting to see black creep in.

Some coaches want to do black on the uniforms. It used to be that Hoxie, Atwood and Oberlin were all red and white, said Mr. Dorshorst.

He said he's not terribly opposed to doing black trim, but to add black into the school colors, he wasn't so sure.

Mr. Dorshorst added that he's been told one of the head basket-

ball coaches was going to buy new warm-ups in black. Member Dan Wasson said he thought the board had discussed having parents raise money to buy new uniforms and warm-ups for the school at a past meeting. Those items have to go through the athletic director and the superintendent, said Mr. Dorshorst.

Member Dan Nedland said he asked his wife, Rhonda May, an Oberlin graduate, about the black idea, and she said stick with red and white because that's the way it used to be.

Speaking as a parent, said member Abby Hissong, just don't order white shorts for any of the uniforms.

There are some uniforms that have some black on them, Mr. Dorshorst pointed out.

There was some discussion about

asking the students what they want and talking to the alumni.

Board President Monte Moore said he doesn't see the school colors as the same as letting the senior class choose if they want to graduate on a Saturday or a Sunday.

"As far as I'm concerned," said Mr. Wasson, "why follow Hoxie and Atwood?"

One member jokingly brought up changing the colors to purple, but nobody made a motion on that idea.

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