

City looks at uranium removal

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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The Oberlin City Council asked the engineers working on the city's new water treatment plant to get some prices on what it would cost for a company to come in with equipment to take the uranium out of the water and then haul it off.

At the meeting Thursday, engineer Chris Miller, with Miller and Associates of McCook, said they had offered a possible solution to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to deal with the uranium in Oberlin's water. The department didn't like the proposal, which was to put in temporary holding, mix with domestic waste and feed it into Sappa Creek.

The waste water, said Mr. Miller, can't just be run out in the Sappa Creek or into the sewer plant because of the amount of uranium. It has to be disposed of in another way.

Mr. Miller presented five options to the council for uranium treatment and disposal.

The first was to blend the output and then put it back into the Sappa Creek. That would increase the amount of uranium in the stream, he said, so that's not allowed.

The second option is to put in a double-lined lagoon, similar to what the city has for the sewer treatment plant. That would hold the waste, but over the years the city would accumulate uranium, and would have to pay someone to get rid of it.

This isn't a long-term solution, said Mr. Miller. The city would need to provide financial security in case of a leak, so that option isn't practical.

The third option is to backwash the uranium waste out of filters and haul it to a disposal facility. Mr. Miller said he's checked and there are some facilities that are willing to take the waste. One is in northwest Nebraska. That facility has a uranium mine now, he said, but it will take about two years for them to be allowed to take the material because

Council Roundup

At a meeting last Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Asked the engineers to get some prices for a company to come in with equipment to take the uranium out of the water and haul it off as part of the new water treatment project. Story at left.

- Heard that reconstruction of the existing runway at the city airport has been rescheduled to 2012. Story on Page 12A.

- Approved a change to an ordinance to allow a place selling beer to be 200 feet or more from a library, school or church, allowing for possible beer sales at the new bowling alley on Main Street. Story on Page 3A.

- Approved a planning commission recommendation to allow communications towers up to 300 feet in the agriculture zone, although the members waited to decide on a proposed lease for a tower on city land south of town to gather more information. Story below.

they will need a different license.

The fourth option, said Mr. Miller, is an injection well to return the uranium to the ground, which would require another permit. Only .05 percent uranium concentration injected by weight can be uranium. For Oberlin that would be around 300,000 gallons of water injected a year which would contain the uranium that came out of the water.

The capital cost for this idea is around \$1 million with an annual operating cost estimated at \$30,000, he said, and that might not be too attractive.

There is one other city in Kansas, he said, going through the process (See COUNCIL on Page 12A)

City OKs raising size of towers, but waits on lease

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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While the Oberlin City Council on Thursday approved a planning commission recommendation to allow communications towers up to 300 feet in the agriculture zone, the members decided to wait on a lease for a proposed Verizon cell tower on the south side of town.

The planning commission met before the council meeting to discuss the proposed change. The property where the tower would be is zoned for agriculture, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch. The agricultural zone now has a 100-foot height restriction. In 1983 when the zoning code was adopted, he said, there was no such thing as a cellular communication tower.

As the landowner, the city, acting through the mayor, filed an application with the planning commission to allow communication towers up to 300 feet, said Mr. Hirsch.

The planning commission made a recommendation to allow towers up to 300 feet, he said, so now it's up to the council to change the zoning code if the members choose.

Councilman Rob McFee made a motion to change the ordinance, with Councilwoman Rhonda May seconding, and the council unanimously approving it.

Members expressed some concerns about the amount of insurance the company had on the proposed 280-foot tower, so the council put off a decision on the lease. (See TOWERS on Page 12A)

Angel Tree still has names of children in need

There are still several ornaments left on the Oberlin Jaycees Angel Tree, waiting for someone to pick them up and shop for a brighter Christmas for kids who might otherwise not have one.

As of Monday afternoon, the tree on Rocking R downtown, had attracted a total of 78 kids, with 21 still available for shoppers.

Abby Hissong, organizer, said she hopes people realize planners really do appreciate all of the support the tree gets each year from shoppers and those who give money.

Several clubs, organizations, churches, businesses and individuals have picked up kids' information to shop for them and others have given money.

Kids whose forms that are not picked up by someone will still have a present or presents for Christmas. Mrs. Hissong said coordinators



Dear Santa, I want..

ON MAIN STREET, Landon Kneutzer (above) got ready to mail his letter to Santa Claus. Gracie Tate (right) peeked in the big mailbox outside Stanley Hardware while she put her letter in. The letters will appear in *The Oberlin Herald's* Letters to Santa section in two weeks and be forwarded on to Santa.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



New lanes will raise cost of bowling alley

While the Oberlin Decatur County Economic Development Corp. is close to its original fund-raising goal for the new bowling alley, the project is changing to help add years of life to the facility.

Greg Lohofener, a board member who has ramrodded the recreation center project for the corporation, said Monday afternoon they have raised \$140,300 of the original \$150,000, but after talking about using the lanes from the old bowling alley, as planned, the group has decided to order new ones.

Mr. Lohofener said the old lanes have a life expectancy of about 15

years and would need \$20,000 to \$25,000 in maintenance in that time. It would cost around \$7,000 to make it so the old lanes can be used for moonlight bowling, he said, which allows for bowling at night with a black light.

While ordering new lanes adds around \$22,000 to the cost of the project, bringing the total to about \$175,000, new equipment would have moonlight bowling capability built in. Mr. Lohofener added that new lanes have a 25-year expectancy and don't need the same maintenance as the older ones.

Up front, the corporation will

save \$2,000 that won't have to be paid to Jayhawk Bowling Supply for supervising removal of the old lanes from the former bowling alley.

Including that fee and the maintenance, he said, the savings will be \$22,000 to \$27,000.

Mr. Lohofener said the backers appreciate everyone who has contributed to the project so far with a donation to the corporation or to one of the numerous fund raisers.

Over the weekend, he said, a beer tasting raised \$1,750 before expenses. That money hasn't been added into the total.

The next fund raiser will be a

potato bar feed sponsored by the Oberlin Royal Neighbors at 5:30 p.m. Thursday at the Golden Age Center, in the south end of the same building.

Mr. Lohofener said Sappa Valley Construction is already working on the inside of the building. Before the end of the year, Jayhawk will be here to start on the lanes.

If anyone wants to help the corporation reach the finish line on the project, they can call him at 475-3322 or Connie Grafel, marketing director for the corporation, at 475-2901.

Hardware's food drive needs 1,679 more items

The annual food drive at Stanley Hardware has a week behind it and a little over three weeks to go.

Each year, owner Joe Stanley has set the goal as 2,000 items of food, cleaning supplies, personal hygiene items or other things to supply the Decatur County Food

Pantry at the United Church. As of Monday afternoon, there were 321 items in the south window at the store on Main Street. That leaves 1,679 items needed by the year.

Anyone who wants to donate items can bring them to the store, Mr. Stanley said.



*Council decides to get figures

(Continued from Page 1A)
to create an injection well.
The nearest one in Nebraska is McCook, said Mr. Miller, although there haven't been any discussions about Oberlin taking waste there.
Mr. Miller said he has talked with the state about Oberlin joining up with some other town and hauling the uranium waste for injection. There aren't any commercial wells for this kind of disposal yet, he said.

work for the city staff. The estimated cost is around \$110,000 a year.
When the city first looked at the idea, he added, it was going to cost around \$250,000 a year. That was four years ago.
The cost estimate for operating and maintaining the water treatment plant was \$143,000 a year, said Mr. Miller, and it would probably cover this or at least come close.

The fifth and last option, he said, is for the city to pay someone to come get the uranium waste and haul it away.
This option, said Mr. Miller, has been checked into before and was expensive. Since then, more companies are getting into that business. The price has gone down.
Companies that come and get the waste and haul it, he said, want to have an idea of the amount. All of the waste would go through the filters the hauling company would set up, said Mr. Miller, so all the uranium waste would be hauled away.
The advantages of hiring someone to haul the waste away, he said, is that it transfers all the liability to them. There wouldn't be any extra

There was some discussion on whether it would be better to just put in an injection well at \$1 million. If the hauling costs around \$100,000 a year, said Mr. Riedel, the well would be paid for in 10 years.
Councilwoman Rhonda May said she didn't want to spend \$1 million more for an injection well unless there was some possibility for a grant.
Would the city have any liability with an injection well? asked Mr. Riedel. Yes, said Mr. Miller, things could go wrong. Hopefully, that doesn't happen, he said, but it could.
The council decided to move forward with the fifth option, asking Mr. Miller to get some prices for someone to put filters in to catch the waste and then haul it away.

*Towers allowed

(Continued from Page 1A)
Kurt Anderson, general manager, of the Decatur Cooperative Association, said he was concerned about the height of the tower, which would be just southeast of the firm's complex. If there is a mishap, he said, it could damage a significant amount of property.
He asked if the co-op could be named as an additional insured on the company's policy so that its assets could be replaced if damaged.
Mr. Anderson said his other concern is whether the tower would be removed at the end of the lease.

Mr. Hirsch said that the company would have 90 days to remove the tower, but that assumes that the company has the financial ability to do it.
The co-op's current insurance value is about \$6.2 million, which includes the inventory, said Mr. Anderson. It would be less if the elevators were empty.
If the tower was to be laid on its side, he said, it would touch the co-op's largest grain bin.
Mr. Hirsch said insurance coverage for the tower would be \$1 million. Someone suggested that Verizon could increase the liability insurance.

Councilwoman Rhonda May said while she is in favor of the tower, she also understands Mr. Anderson's concerns.

It was suggested that Mr. Hirsch negotiate with the company about higher insurance liabilities. Maybe \$10 million, said Ms. May.

Judy Scott, who serves on the city planning commission, said Mr. Anderson was at an earlier meeting but didn't say anything. She said it would have been nice to know about the liability issue or the potential for the company to walk away from the tower. The commission might have made a different decision, she said.

Mayor Joe Stanley said the council could hold off on making any decisions about the lease until they could get some more answers.



IN SUNFLOWER CINEMA on Saturday, Shawn Carney, with the Modern Woodmen, got ready to fill out a giant check while Marie McKisson held down the corner.
— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

Oberlin woman wins \$2,500 for alley

Around 15 came to be in a community picture Saturday afternoon when an Oberlin woman received a \$2,500 check for the new bowling alley—and one for herself—for an essay she wrote.
Shayla Williby wrote the short essay about the community project to build a new bowling alley. For two weeks in November, people were asked to vote for the essay on a website.
Shawn Carney, with the Modern

Woodmen's office in Colby, said the essay received just under 3,000 votes. Each person could only vote 15 times for their favorite, he said.
What that showed him, said Mr. Carney, is that "Oberlin is small in numbers but big in dreams."
He said when they received this project, he knew it would work for the Gathering Place giveaway sponsored by the Modern Woodmen, a fraternal insurance and

financial service based in Rock Island, Ill.
Mr. Carney and Larry Stutz of Norton came to present the checks. Mr. Carney said they were proud to give the money to the Oberlin community for the bowling alley.
"Your community is getting things done," he said. "Thanks to everyone who voted."

Runway upgrade waits on paperwork

Reconstruction of the existing runway at the Oberlin airport scheduled for this summer has been pushed back until 2012 while the Federal Aviation Administration waits on a document.
Councilman Bill Riedel told the City Council on Thursday that a letter from the federal agency said they are waiting on instrument landing documentation. The Oberlin airport hasn't ever had an instrument landing procedure and doesn't have plans to have one.
While the work was scheduled for next year, said Mr. Riedel, it's been pushed back a year and there is some confusion as to why.
The city airport committee is going to contact the agency to see why this information is needed and

where it's going to come from, since it hasn't been done in the past.
There are a lot of questions, said Mr. Riedel, and the committee is working on getting some answers.
Since Interim City Administrator Karen Larson was home sick, Mayor Joe Stanley announced that a grant has been received for playground equipment at Sappa Park for \$24,650.
In other business, the council:
• Held a 10-minute closed session for attorney-client privilege with the council, mayor and city attorney. There was no action taken.
• Held a 20-minute closed session for non-elected personnel with the council, mayor and attorney. There was no action taken after that session, either.

YEAR-END

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DEVENY

ZOOM IN—ZOOM OUT

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