

Oberlin council questions delay on fiber optics

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The Oberlin City Council talked briefly at its last meeting about the Nex-Tech fiber optic project, which has been delayed.

At the meeting Thursday, March 3, Councilwoman Rhonda May said she thought there was more to the delay in the project than the firm had indicated, and some questions need to be asked.

When did the plans change from burying the cable to hanging the fiber on the utility poles? she asked. She said she was flabbergasted when Nex-Tech representatives came to a recent meeting and said that the poles weren't tall enough and the project was on hold.

She said she saw men in the alley behind her house marking underground utilities so that a line could be buried. She added that she thought the plan was to bury the fiber-optic cable as the company had in other towns.

"I think we as a city or someone with the Economic Development Corp. needs to see what gives," said Ms. May. "Why is this not happening?"

Administrator Karen Larson said she wrote a letter to Nex-Tech asking for "fiber support" to The Gateway, the hospital and downtown.

Some may have noticed on their way to the meeting, said Mrs. Larson, that the old cafe and gas station at the Oberlin Inn motel is gone. With the landfill bill, the dirt bill from Oberlin Concrete and a bill from demolition contractor Dave Bose, she said the project will cost around \$10,500.

Ms. May asked if the structure had a basement. Yes, said Mrs. Larson, and the cement had to be pulled out of it.

Mrs. Larson said she received information from Fredrickson Insurance about liability insur-

ance for the city. The premium last year was \$53,773 and this year it will be \$59,276. The increase is because of claims, she said.

The insurance, she said, covers liability on the houses at Sappa Park, city structures, the power plant, warehouses, electrical substations, the water towers and property on the airport, to name a few.

The city takes bids for the insurance every three years, she said, the last was two years ago.

In other business, the council:

- Heard that the red lights on top of the water tower had been replaced.

- Heard that Midland GIS Solutions will be here next week to finish the mapping of all the water meters, sewer lines and power poles using a global positioning system. The total project cost is \$36,000.

- Heard a thanks from Councilman Ray Ward to Mrs. Larson for getting the emergency lights in The Gateway working. The building has been without them for some time, she said.

- Moved the next meeting from Thursday, March 17, to the following Thursday, March 24, because several people won't be able to make it.

- Heard that the Decatur Professional Women have tentatively scheduled a forum for council candidates for Tuesday, March 22. Mrs. Larson said she thought the mayoral forum had gone well. She was happy that a lot of people showed up and everyone did a good job.

- Heard the trees planted last year at The Gateway that died will be replaced.

- Held a 30-minute closed session for non-elected personnel with the mayor, council, administrator and attorney. There was no action taken.

Council OKs hire of assistant clerk

The Oberlin City Council approved hiring a full-time deputy clerk/treasurer during a special meeting last Monday.

City Administrator Karen Larson said Jan Elliott, who serves in the position now, is leaving. The city didn't advertise for the job, said Mrs. Larson, because it had just advertised for an administrative assistant, and the council hired a previous applicant.

The council approved hiring Sandy Rush, who had been working at the Oberlin Medical Arts Clinic. She will take over some duties from Mrs. Larson, who kept the title of city clerk, and some from the treasurer.

The administrator said Steve Zodrow, the new administrative assistant, also will get some of the treasurer's work.

Mrs. Larson said the council also approved a bid from a Texas firm to rebuild the broken radiator for

diesel engines at the power plant for \$20,000 to \$22,000. She said if that works, the city probably won't need to buy a new radiator. The estimated cost for that is about \$45,000.

The council held a closed session for non-elected personnel for 15 minutes, with no action taken.

While the council would normally meet Thursday night, since it's the third week of the month, the meeting has been postponed until 7 p.m. Thursday, March 24, because of spring break this week at Oberlin schools.

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Preparing for Lent



ON ASH WEDNESDAY last week, Whitney Witt (center) received a traditional cross on her forehead

from the Rev. Linda Willey (right) at the Oberlin United Methodist Church as Kariah Castle waited her turn. —

Officials see lack of mental health help

The Decatur County commissioners talked last Tuesday with a sheriff's deputy, who serves as one of the county representatives to the High Plains Mental Health board, about lack of emergency service recently.

Deputy Jay Tate said representatives from High Plains plan to be at a commissioners' meeting later asking for money, adding that he thinks the board will ask for a 5 percent increase from all 20 counties.

Mr. Tate said he wanted the commissioners to know that he hasn't been impressed lately with the service for emergency screenings. He said he will tell High Plains management about the problems also.

Hopefully, said Mr. Tate, it's not a shift in policy, just a few people. It's important, he said, that when someone needs an emergency screening, it is available.

He told commissioners he thinks it's important to keep a satellite clinic in Oberlin. People aren't always able to travel to the office in

County Roundup

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Approved giving the duties of the noxious weed department secretary to the road and bridge department secretary. Story on

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- Talked with a sheriff's deputy, who serves as one of the county representatives to the High Plains Mental Health board, about a lack of emergency service for assess-

Norton to see someone, he said. If the satellite office here closes,

said Commissioner Ralph Unger, it might be that most of the county's

contribution would go away, too. In other business, the commis-

sioners:

- Appointed Jesse Carter to the Decatur County Fair Board for a two-year term, until January 2013.

- Signed the paperwork to apply for a \$12,695 grant for the Health Department.

- Held a five-minute closed session for attorney-client privilege, with the commissioners, Mr. Tate, county attorney and county clerk.

County checks on delinquent loans

The Decatur County commissioners agreed to pay annual dues of \$2,630 to the Northwest Kansas Planning and Development Commission, which prepares and administers Community Block Development Grants.

The county received a report of micro-loans managed through the commission. Commissioners

noted, three are delinquent.

During the meeting Feb. 15, Commissioner Ralph Unger called the owner of one business to ask for a payment. Another loan is being paid back through an employee's paycheck, Nora Urban, deputy county clerk, said.

Health Administrator Marilyn Gamblin asked the commissioners

to sign a resolution telling the state how important it is to have the Local Environmental Protection Group, which enforces the sanitation code. The group's budget is on the chopping block in Topeka.

The commissioners said they would look at the resolution and have County Attorney Steve Hirsch look at it, too.

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