

Woman told to get rid of pet boa

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The mayor broke a tie vote Thursday on whether an Oberlin woman could keep her pet boa constrictor.

While a city ordinance bans boas and other constrictors inside city limits, Councilwoman Rhonda May made a motion to change the ordinance to allow for constrictor type snakes under 10 feet in length. Councilman Rob McFee made the second.

After a lengthy discussion among several audience members and the council, both Ms. May and Mr. McFee voted in favor of the change and Councilmen Bill Riedel and Ray Ward voted against it.

In a tie vote, it's up to the mayor to decide. Mayor Joe Stanley voted against the motion.

After his vote, he said that Aiyya Eaton would have to find another home for her snake. He said she could have 30 days to do that. Mayor Stanley added that in that 30 days, the town will have a new council and mayor, and she has the right to

Lions, tigers and snakes not allowed

It might be hard to believe, or it might not, that certain animals are not allowed to be kept as pets inside Oberlin's city limits.

The ordinance was brought up at the Oberlin City Council meeting last Thursday when discussion ensued over whether a woman could keep her pet snake, a seven-foot boa constrictor, in the city. The council said no, giving her 30 days to get rid of the snake.

Constrictor snakes are No. 10 on the ordinance list as one of the animals that aren't allowed.

There are 28 animals spelled out on the list, some that might be a little hard to hide.

The list includes:

- All poisonous animals, including rear-fang snakes.
- Apes: chimpanzees, gibbons, gorillas, orangutans and saimangs.
- Babbons.
- Badgers.
- Bears.
- Bison.
- Bobcats.
- Cheetahs.
- Crocodylians.
- Coyotes.
- Deer; including all members of the deer family, for example, white-tailed deer, elk, antelope and moose.
- Elephants.
- Game cocks and other fighting birds.
- Hippopotami.
- Hyenas.
- Jaguars.
- Leopards.
- Lions.
- Lynxes.
- Monkeys.
- Ostriches.
- Pumas; also known as cougars, mountain lions and panthers.
- Raccoons.
- Rhinoceroses.
- Skunks.
- Tigers.
- Wolves.

Animal issues, said Judy Scott from the audience, usually go through the zoning board for a variance. Why didn't this one?

This is different, said Mayor Stanley, because an animal of this kind isn't allowed in the city by ordinance.

After reading the ordinance, said Mr. Riedel, it seems the only time the council can make an exception is if it falls under article C, which would be for a pet shop.

True, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch, but the council can change the ordinance.

Mr. Riedel said he's had numerous phone calls from people who oppose a change.

That just opens the door to all the banned animals in article B, said Mr. Ward. Once a precedence is set, how does the council back off?

He said he's not in favor of it.

Mr. McFee said he is in favor of changing the ordinance. That snake is quieter than any dog in town, he said, and won't go to the bathroom in his yard. Besides, he said, the

snake is in a cage and isn't dangerous unless someone gets in the cage with it.

Unless it gets out, said Mr. Ward.

The snake can't get out of the cage, said Mr. McFee; it has to be let out.

Mr. McFee made a motion to change the ordinance to allow for permits to keep an animal on the list.

The motion died for lack of a second, which is when Ms. May made hers to allow boa constrictors under 10 feet in length.

Do the neighbors have a say in the decision? asked Ms. Scott.

"I do," said Shelby Hackney. "I live across the street and say no."

With a second to the motion from Mr. McFee, the floor was open for comment.

When she was at the council meeting, asking for permission to keep the snake, said Ms. Scott, Ms. Eaton didn't say that she had small children in her home. She had to (See MAYOR on Page 5A)

appeal to them if she wants.

In March, Ms. Eaton asked the council if she could get a permit to allow her to keep her seven-foot

red-tailed boa.

The council tabled the decision until Thursday night.

Mayor Stanley said the question

for the council on Thursday was whether they wanted to OK a permit for her to be able to keep the snake in town.

Governor picks Colby for bill signing

By **KEVIN BOTTRELL**
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Gov. Sam Brownback stopped at the Colby Municipal Airport on Monday morning to sign a bill creating incentives for people to move to 50 Kansas counties, including Decatur, that have bleeding population over the last decade or more.

About 75 people turned out for the ceremony, the second of four the governor planned across the state.

The first was in Belleville, with others planned at Yates Center and Wichita State University.

Oberlin City Administrator Karen Larson and Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. Marketing Director Connie Grafel went to the ceremony. Mrs. Larson said she saw Jim and Ruth Miesner and Jay and Ann Anderson of Oberlin at the signing.

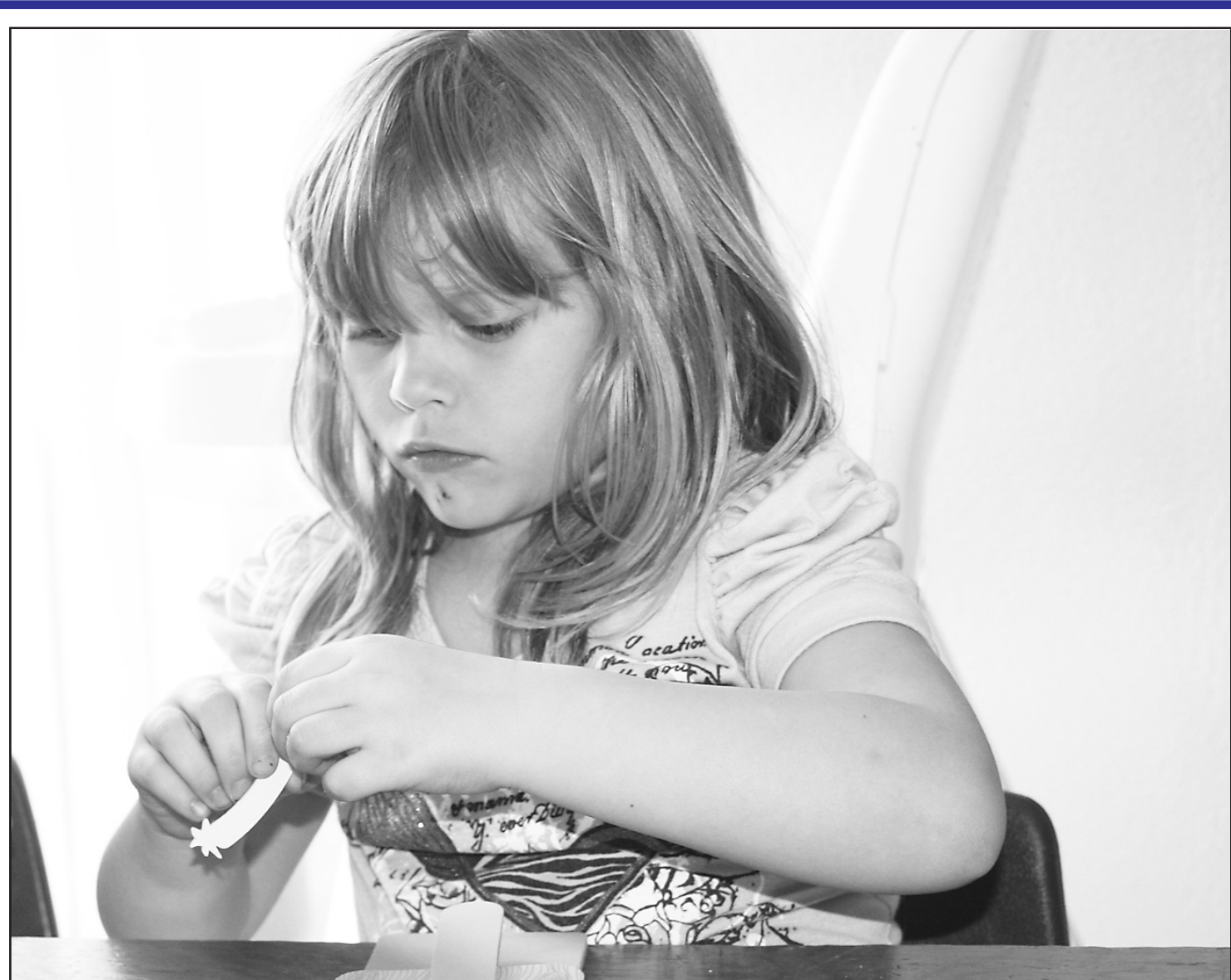
Gov. Brownback was accompanied by his secretaries of commerce, labor and revenue. Officials from

Colby attended the event. He was met by representatives from Thomas, Decatur, Sherman, Rawlins and Trego counties, as well as board members from Colby Community College and administrators from the Northwest Kansas Technical College.

Three of the area's state legislators, Reps. Rick Billinger of Goodland and Don Hineman of Dighton, and Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell, all turned out.

The law provides a five-year state income tax exemption to anyone who moves to one of the rural counties. Former Kansans must have lived outside the state for at least five years. A person has to live in the county for the entire tax year, starting in 2012; file their taxes on time; and sign an affidavit confirming residency.

Counties that sign on can participate in a state matching program to (See GOVERNOR on Page 5A)



AT DAYCARE on Monday, Malia Bishop (above) made a door-hanger craft project to kick off the Week of the Young Child. Sage Bryan (below) held up a piece of his project. — Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Changes made to new runway plans

The Oberlin City Council talked briefly at their meeting Thursday evening about changes in the classification of the new runway planned for the municipal airport which would limit use to planes weighing 30,000 pounds or less.

Councilman Bill Riedel, who also sits on the city's airport advisory committee, said the new runway would be changed from class C to class B, which means air ambulance and corporate jets could use it, but not larger aircraft such as jet transports or anything over 30,000 pounds.

By doing this, the Federal Aviation Administration has eliminated the need for long-term plans for a 7,000-foot runway, he said. That length won't be needed for smaller airplanes.

He said someone probably needs

to get in touch with the federal agency and BWR, the engineers planning a project to build a new, longer runway at the airport, to see why the classification has changed. There wasn't any explanation in the plan.

The 5,000-foot runway would still be good, said Mr. Riddle, but that is only the first phase of the city's plan. A 7,000 foot runway in the second phase wouldn't be needed because of the class change. The class B runway would handle air ambulances and corporate aircraft.

Mr. Riedel said he and City Administrator Karen Larson would follow up on the change.

He added that the project to re-empt the current runway had been postponed, but things have changed and the work should start this year.

Daycares celebrate children

Oberlin daycare centers are taking part in the Week of the Young Child this week.

The week, observed across the country, has a theme this year of "Early Years Are Learning Years," said Marie Berls, who runs a daycare operation at her home.

Each day, the kids will be doing different activities with their providers, she said.

Tiffany Witt, owner of Small Steps Daycare, said Monday was set as arts and creative day, Tuesday science day, today is bubble day, Thursday will be nursery rhymes and Friday teddy bears. The kids decorated posters are displayed in the window of the former Adleman Drug Store.



Sports tab in paper

The annual Spring Sports edition is inside today's Oberlin Herald. The keepsake edition includes team pictures from Decatur Community Junior High School and Golden Plains Middle and High School, and individual pictures of the Oberlin Red Devils track and golf team members.



Board offers principal contract to Derby man

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Oberlin School Board voted unanimously Monday night to offer a two-year contract to a Derby man as principal of Decatur Community High School.

After the meeting, said Superintendent Duane Dorshorst, he planned to call Ben Jimenez of Derby to tell him about the offer.

Over the past few weeks, the board and Mr. Dorshorst interviewed three candidates, including Mr. Jimenez, Jess Buller of Wray, Colo.; and Brenda Breth, who teaches English and journalism and is the counselor at the high school.

The position came open when Principal Charlie Haag announced that he planned to retire at the end of July.

Board Member Dan Wasson made a motion to offer Mr. Jimenez a contract.

Mr. Dorshorst said Mr. Jimenez is a seventh-grade assistant principal in the Derby School District. His wife is a speech pathologist. The couple have three children, two boys and a girl.

While the district hasn't offered two-year contracts in a while, Mr.

Jimenez said he was interested in a two-year deal. One of the items yet to be negotiated is what the district will pay him, Mr. Dorshorst said.

While the contract has been offered, as of Monday night Mr. Jimenez hadn't accepted the job. If he does, he would start on Aug. 1.



*Mayor votes no to break tie about snake

(Continued from Page 1A) leave her last home because of the snake, Ms. Scott said. There is a church catty corner from her house and grade school kids walk back and forth between school and home.

"I can assure you he won't be in the yard," said Ms. Eaton. Linda Weber spoke about a television show she had seen where a pet constrictor grabbed onto the hand of the person who had opened the cage to feed it. The feeder had to call 911, said Mrs. Weber, and the fire department had to take the snake off of her.

What about the three children she (Ms. Eaton) has in her house? asked Mrs. Weber. "I have four kids," said Ms. Eaton.

"It's none of your business if she has four children in the house," said Mr. McFee. "They aren't your children, and it's none of your business. This is still the United States of America, whether you like it or not."

Ms. Weber replied that she was brought up to be concerned about everyone.

Mr. McFee said he was brought up to help if someone asked, not to stick his nose into other people's business.

Ms. Hackney said she had done some research on constrictors, who can live from 25 to 30 years. When a snake kills, she said, it suffocates its victim. When a snake gets from eight to 10 feet, she added, it needs to be handled by two people.

The thing is, said Ms. Hackney, the council wouldn't allow a miniature pony to live in town, but will consider a snake. This whole idea is terrible, she said.

The city might as well get a sign that says "zoo" on it and charge admission, said Ms. Hackney.

"This will be decided tonight," said Mr. McFee, "but what you are doing is saying how someone can live in their own home."

Government, said Tim Bowen, continues to take away personal freedoms. That is wrong, and it needs to stop.

Ms. Scott said she would remind people that there are reasons for this ordinance.

Fears, replied Mr. Bowen.

Ms. Eaton's mother said that her daughter got the snake 2 1/2 years ago, and it actually hasn't grown at all. The snake has a double glass custom cage, she said, adding that snakes are afraid of people. The cage is so large that the person feeding the snake doesn't have to open the door near it.

She said she's not sure how this issue got so "wildfire spread." No one knows how many people in this town have this kind of animal or worse. It's not an aggressive snake.

Has the city ever had an issue before with boa constrictors? asked Kem Bryan. How was it handled?

Mayor Stanley said he wasn't aware of any. There were some rattlesnakes that people were raising in town. They had to get rid of those.

Ms. Eaton said it's recommended that when Goliath gets to a certain length, he should be donated to a zoo. She said she doesn't have a problem with that, but until then she wants to keep him, raise him, feed him and scratch him on the chin.

Mr. Riedel said he's been listening and believes in peoples' rights as much as anyone, but thinks the neighbors have rights, too. He said he's had at least a dozen people call him about this snake.

This law was written for a reason, he said. It was adopted in 1989, so it's not that old. He said he's sure there has been a time that boas, even pets, have done harm to someone. He added that he isn't saying that this one will, but he is in office to serve the majority of the citizens, and the ones he has heard from are against the snake staying.

Mr. Riedel said his position is that they need to uphold the law.

Then barking dogs need to be gotten rid of, said Ms. May, and cats need to be on leashes.

The council voted on the motion to allow boa constrictors under 10 feet to live in town, which resulted in a tie that Mayor Stanley broke with his "no" vote.

That made it 3-2 that Ms. Eaton has to get rid of Goliath and within 30 days, barring an appeal to the new council next month. By that time, though, Mr. Riedel will be mayor.

Council approves employee insurance

The Oberlin City Council approved continuing with employee health insurance through Blue Cross/Blue Shield, including a \$62 per person increase.

City Administrator Karen Larson said that next year they might try to get bids from another company also.

The city pays all of the employees' insurance and half of the rest of each plan, she said. Probably 10 to 15 years ago, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch, the city stopped paying for all of the family coverage.

Mrs. Larson thanked the council for continuing the insurance, since several of the employees wouldn't be able to afford it if the city didn't help.

After a 15-minute closed session for non-elected personnel, the council decided to give David Sporn of the water department a \$1-an-hour pay increase, as he just passed his test and earned a wastewater-treatment plant operator's license.

In other business, the council: Approved appointment of Rick Pauls to the Sappa Park Committee and Councilman Bill Riedel and Marie McKisson to the Tree Board.

Votes OK'd after canvass

The Decatur County commissioners canvassed the votes in the city and school election Friday morning without finding any irregularities.

Clerk Colleen Geihlsler, who serves as the county election officer, said the school board members will take office July 1. City council members and mayors will take their oath and start their new jobs at the first meeting in May.

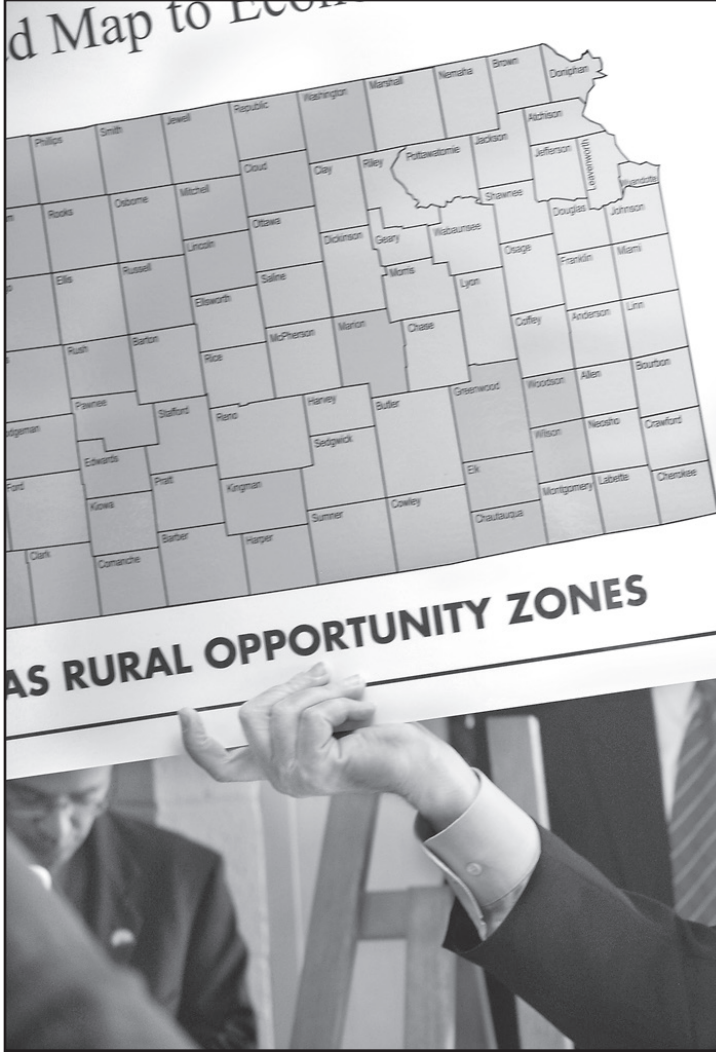
- Heard that the street crew has started to work on some of the pot holes in town.

- Heard that next week, Deputy clerk/treasurer Sandy Rush and Administrative Assistant Steve Zoder will attend a budget workshop, as the city budget will have to be done soon.

- Talked a little about the proposed fiber-optic communications system planned by Nex-Tech. Councilwoman Rhonda May asked again what happened to the original plan to bury the fiber. Did the company run out of money? she asked. She added that she thinks the council is due an explanation.

- Mrs. Larson said she asked for the firm to come talk to the council and a representative she talked to said they might be able to come in June.

- Heard that a contract had been signed with Verizon for a cellular phone tower on city land south of town, and the city should start receiving rent soon.



GOV. SAM BROWNBACK held up a map highlighting all the counties included in the state's new tax incentive program. Gov. Brownback stopped at the Colby Municipal Airport on

Monday to sign the bill, aimed at increasing population in 50 rural counties.

*Governor stops at Colby airport

(Continued from Page 1A) help pay down student loans up to \$15,000. Gov. Brownback said this covers anyone who moves to one of the "rural opportunity zone" counties, including those who move from inside Kansas.

The governor said small towns have good quality of life and great community. The bill is designed to be a recruiting tool to help them combat the population decline.

Concentration of the rural economy in agriculture and young people moving away were some of the primary culprits, he said.

"Well, I'm the governor and I'm not going to stand around," he said. "We need to turn that trend around, and I think we can do it."

Gov. Brownback himself originated the bill. He said the idea came out of a campaign stop in Winfield while he was running for office.

"There were about six people there, and four were from southern California," he said.

He said he asked the Californians why they had moved to Kansas, and they told him that while on a motorcycle trip through the area, they decided they liked that town and wanted to retire there.

"If this can happen in Winfield, why couldn't it happen everywhere?" he asked. "We've gotta do more; we gotta attract people."

Gov. Brownback said the state has to create opportunities and make it easy for people to move here.

He showed off a chart that highlighted the counties included in the zone. It covers most of the western half of the state, excluding Ellis and Barton counties (Hays and Great Bend), and eight counties from Ford to Stevens, including Garden City, Dodge City and Liberal.

"We have 50 counties, and I think about half of them are in Ralph Ostmeyer's district," he joked.

Not quite, but all 18 counties in Sen. Ostmeyer's district are covered. Out of northwest Kansas, only Ellis county is not. The senator said he was encouraged to see how many people turned out for the signing. The bill has merit, he said, and people already are interested.

Pat George, secretary of com-

merce, flew in with the governor. He said the state is trying to partner with rural counties to give people a reason to take a look at Kansas.

In addition to the tax incentive, Gov. Brownback said, advances in technology can help rural areas bring in people or keep them from moving away.

"Many jobs, you can do from anywhere now," he said.

He pointed to several people in the crowd from Northwest Tech, which has partnered with Apple to loan iPads to every student and staff member.

"Google came to Kansas City; Apple came to Goodland," he joked.

Business group schedules burger/fish fry

Members of the Oberlin Business Alliance plan to hold a burger and fish fry on Good Friday, April 22, downtown.

The fry will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the drive thru just south of the Business Enhancement Entrepreneurial Center.

At the group's monthly meeting last Wednesday, Chairman Kurt Vollertsen, owner of Ward Drug Store, said they are asking members to donate items for the fund raiser, including fish, burgers, buns, foil,

ice and napkins.

The money raised by the event will go for a project to put plastic cups in a design on the fence across the street from the Last Indian Raid Museum.

The members plan to hold a community breakfast from 7 to 8 a.m. on Wednesday, May 4, in the parlor at the museum. Members of the business alliance, the Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Economic Development Corp. and others are invited.

The alliance has once again organized the purchase of flowers for planters along Penn Avenue downtown from Mona's Market in Dresden. Any businesses interested in buying the flowers for the planter in front of their store should contact Carolyn Hackney, Chamber manager, at 475-3441.

The garden club will plant the flowers before Alumni weekend.

In other business, the alliance members:

- Heard the Santa Bucks expired

at the end of March, although several hundred dollars worth have not been used.

- Heard Keaston Grafel had won the basketball championship contest.

- Heard that Mr. Vollertsen talked with contractor Wayne Goltl about getting a price to fix the gutters on the canopies downtown, which leak when there is snow or it rains.

Rummage sale starts Saturday at the museum

Members of the Last Indian Raid Museum staff, board and volunteers have gone through the "gently used" items donated for the museum's annual rummage sale and are ready for shoppers to select their treasures.

The sale will be open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday and from noon to 3 p.m. on Sunday.

Anyone still wanting to donate

items can take them to the museum up until 3 p.m. on Friday. The sale doesn't accept large appliances or exercise equipment.

The event is sponsored by KFNF Radio, but all proceeds go to the museum.

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See more of the Robinson family story at www.gshs.org.