

Woman pleads case; city says no

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Through tears, the owner of a seven-foot red-tailed boa constrictor pleaded with the Oberlin City Council on Thursday to give her a permit to keep a pet that she dearly loves.

In the end, though, a motion made by Councilman Rob McFee to allow that died for lack of a second and Aiyya Eaton was given until Tuesday to find another home, outside the city, for her pet.

Miss Eaton first asked the council if she could get a permit to keep the snake at the Thursday, April 7, meeting. It's kept in a locked cage at her home, he said. That time, the decision came down to a tie vote that was broken by former Mayor Joe Stanley.

County Countdown

At its meeting last Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Held a 20-minute closed session for personnel, after which the members approved hiring a new cemetery sexton at \$11.50 an hour. Story on Page 3.
- Said good-byes to the outgoing mayor and two council members who are stepped down and watched the new mayor and two council members take the oath of office. Story on Page 5.
- Talked with the code enforcement officer about several

properties around town. Story on Page 3.

- Listened as Mayor Bill Riedel asked people from the audience who had a comment to talk only during the scheduled public comment session or ask to get on the agenda for the next scheduled meeting. Story below.
- Listened as the owner of a seven-foot red-tailed boa constrictor pleaded for a permit to keep her pet, but still said "no." Story at left.

The mayor said she could have 30 days to find a suitable home for the snake, although he noted that a new mayor and new council members would be sworn in the first May meeting, and she could appeal her case to the new council.

A few residents spoke out against

Miss Eaton being allowed to get a permit to keep the snake.

The boa constrictor is just one of many animals listed in an "exotic animal ordinance which states that people aren't allowed to keep in town.

This is a 22-year-old law, said

Miss Eaton. It bans every snake. She said her pet has never bitten anyone. It's domesticated. The snake was born in a cage and has lived in one his whole life.

"This is my pet," she said. "I love it. I had it before I moved here, and I want to keep it."

There is nothing about snakes, said Ms. Eaton, that makes them bad animals. Her snake is not poisonous.

"It will never grow a rattle," she said. "It will never grow fangs."

The snake isn't more dangerous because it has scales, she said, but people just don't understand snakes.

"I am an American, and I am taking a stance to keep my pet," she said. "That's my kids' pet, and they love him, too."

Councilman Rob McFee said his thoughts were pretty clear at the last meeting. He said he's in favor of giving her a permit so she can keep the snake.

New Councilman Rusty Addleman said he appreciates Ms. Eaton's rights as an American citizen, but

worried about the kids in the home and their safety. He said he's talked with around 40 people since the last meeting, and only two were not against having snakes in town. He said since he represents the people, that's the way he will stand.

Jim Miesner, the other new councilman, said he didn't have anything to say that hadn't already been said.

Mr. McFee made a motion to allow Ms. Eaton to get a permit. No one offered a second, so it died.

Mayor Bill Riedel said Ms. Eaton had until Tuesday to have the snake moved.

Judy Scott asked if the animal control officer or police were going to supervise the move. Mayor Riedel said they have some ideas on how to get rid of the snake.



Public to talk during set time at city meeting

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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After opening the meeting Thursday up for public comment, Oberlin's new mayor told the audience that this would be the only time during the meeting for the public to speak. That irritated one woman and prompted her to ask why.

Mayor Bill Riedel said if anyone had something they wanted to talk about after the public comment time, it could be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

"Are you telling us that at a city meeting, the residents, taxpayers can't make a comment?" asked Judy Scott, who also ran for mayor in the general election.

It is a public meeting, said Mr. Riedel, but not the public's meeting. It is a city council's meeting. The public doesn't own the meeting, he said; the council does. If someone has a comment, now is the time.

If later in the meeting someone has a comment, he said, it can be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

It's on the agenda for tonight? asked Ms. Scott.

What is? asked Mr. Riedel. The snake, she replied.

If there is any comment, he said, now would be the time. Otherwise, the meeting will follow the agenda.

So what is the council planning to do with this? asked Ms. Scott. Do it now, she said, because she said she wanted it in public comment. This is America, and people have the right to comment.

If someone has something to say about something on the agenda, said Mr. Riedel, they should say it now.

Gary Walter, a banker and former mayor, said he wanted to visit with the council last year and never did.

(See MAN on Page 5)

Schedule fills up at The Gateway

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The calendar for The Gateway civic center at the U.S. 36 and U.S. 83 intersection continues to fill up, city officials say. At the same time, the staff has cut expenses and started to hack away at the center's losses.

"We are here to serve the people," said City Administrator Karen Larson, "and are happy to take care of activities for people."

Mrs. Larson added that she and the crew are having a good time doing the job. Jeanette Diederich and Chris Ward do the cooking, with help from Connie Riedel, Shanna Long and Carolyn Hackney. The administrator said she also helps when needed.

Mrs. Larson said things are going well, and she credits that to a change

in attitude at the center. If there's an open date at The Gateway, said Mrs. Larson, and someone wants to hold an event, the staff will do the best they can to accommodate the customer.

In the past years, the city has made changes at The Gateway, but losses continued to mount. Since costs always outweighed the income, the council decided to make Mrs. Larson director of the facility and Mr. Ward the manager.

That cut out a full-time position with benefits. Mrs. Larson said they have been hiring more part-time help when needed, which has helped save money, instead of employing full-time workers. That also saves money, she said, and the crew has also been able to cut back on the

(See USAGE on Page 5)



Students have fun at track

AT THE HIGH SCHOOL TRACK on Friday morning, students in kindergarten through third grade took part in the annual Oberlin Elementary School Fun Day. Colton Ketterl (above) threw a bean bag while classmates (from left) Enoch Eaton, Kalen Townsend and Anna Carter watched. Adric Paul (left) jumped up high to catch a fake water balloon. In the afternoon, kids in the fourth through sixth grades took their turn at the track.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

Students to promenade downtown on Saturday

Decatur Community High School juniors and seniors will dress in their best Saturday before having pictures taken, walking down Main Street and then dancing the night away at The Gateway.

Seniors and juniors will walk in the annual promenade at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, starting at the Golden Age Center and heading south to Hall Street and back.

While in past years the promenade has started at 7 p.m., it's been moved up 30 minutes to allow for pictures, said teacher Jason Ketterl.

The promenade will be led by Carrisa Wentz, prom marshal, and her escort.

Those participating in the prom are asked to arrive at Golden Age at 6:15 p.m., said Mr. Ketterl. Follow-

ing the promenade, they will head to The Gateway for dinner at 7 p.m. The dance starts at 8 p.m.

The theme this year is "Masquerade." Prom goers will pick a king and queen during the dance.

Mr. Ketterl said the public viewing of the prom decorations at The Gateway will be from 5:30 to 6 p.m. Saturday.

After the dance, most of the teens will stay around for the after-prom party, sponsored each year by the Oberlin Rotary Club. The after-prom event, with snacks, prizes and games, will go from midnight to 4 a.m. Breakfast will be served at 3:30 a.m.



New mayor, councilmen sworn into jobs

Mayor Joe Stanley passed the gavel to newly elected Mayor Bill Riedel at the beginning of the Oberlin City Council meeting Thursday night.

Mr. Riedel was elected to serve as mayor during the city general election in April. Rusty Addleman and Jim Miesner were elected at the same time to serve as council members.

Both Councilman Ray Ward and Councilwoman Rhonda May said goodbye after serving the city for several years. Mr. Ward declined to run for another term, while Ms. May was defeated in a bid for mayor.

It's been an honor, said Mr. Ward, working with this council and the previous one. It's been an honor representing the people of Oberlin.

Ms. May said she's been on the council for five years. In that time, the city has gotten a number of things done and a number of projects started on the road. There's a lot more to serving on council than one would think, she said.

She added that she will enjoy having more Thursday nights at home.

She gave thanks to the people she's worked with and wished the new council and mayor the best.

Mr. Stanley said he's enjoyed working with all of the members and particularly has appreciated the times when Ms. May called the engineers to task. She often knew more than they did, he said.

Ms. May's knowledge will be missed, he said. Mr. Stanley added that Mr. Ward has been doing this job longer, nine or 10 years. His knowledge of what has happened in the past will be missed.

Mayor Stanley said he has a lot of respect for all the people who have been willing to serve on the council.

Before passing his gavel on, Mayor Stanley swore in Councilmen Addleman and Miesner. City Administrator Karen Larson swore in Mayor Riedel.

As the first act as mayor, Mr. Riedel, handed out appreciation plaques to the three stepping down and thanked each of them.



LETTERS ON THE FRONT of The Gateway have been taken down by the staff so they can be painted before the Memorial Day weekend. — Herald staff photo by Tim Davis

*Usage increases at city civic center

(Continued from Page 1A) amount of overtime needed.

Mr. Ward is the one to contact, she said, if someone wants to rent the center or one of the rooms. He is full-time, she said, and willing to work on what people want.

Prices to rent rooms at the center include \$175 for the arena, \$75 for the theater or meeting rooms one and two, and \$100 for the kitchen. The meeting room downstairs, room 3, may be used free during business hours. The cost is \$10 an hour otherwise.

In May, Mrs. Larson said, the city has 17 events planned for The Gateway, including the weekly meeting of the Oberlin Rotary Club, a bridal shower, City Council meetings, recitals, the annual Decatur Community High alumni banquet, the high school prom and more.

Mrs. Larson said in 2010, the center brought in \$44,294 through catering and \$13,270 from

rent for a total of \$57,564. Expenses were \$213,795 last year, she said, making the total loss about \$156,000.

Five years ago, in 2006, said Mrs. Larson, The Gateway brought in \$69,174 in catering and \$14,475 in rent, a total of \$83,649, nearly \$26,000 more than in 2010.

Costs total \$56,925 for the first four months of this year, she said, including \$8,000 in salaries, food and utility bills.

In the first four months of the year, she said, The Gateway has brought in almost \$19,000 in catering and \$5,605 in rent, a total of \$24,600. That amounts to a loss of about \$32,315. At that rate, the loss for the year could be as much as \$60,000 less than last year.

This year, the center has had \$1,400 in overtime, while in all of last year the total was about \$10,000.

The Gateway staff, said Mrs. Larson, has

really been willing to help and is doing a great job.

One of the projects they have been working on is painting the letters of the sign on the front of the building with the slogan, "Gateway to the Future: Window to the World."

Some may notice that the metal letters, mounted about the front doors, are missing. Mrs. Larson said the staff took it down to try to sand it, rough it up and then spray paint it red.

The city got a bid to paint the sign, she said, but it was going to cost quite a bit. Mrs. Larson said they decided to try and do the job themselves.

She added that they are also getting new awnings to go over the front doors.

They hope to have those up before the Decatur Community High alumni banquet at the end of the month.

*Man asks others to help clean city

(Continued from Page 1A)

It appears at times, he said, that the community seems to be unkept. He said he knows it's not just the council's responsibility to make sure that weeds are controlled. The citizens could buy a little weed spray, operate a mower and pick up a little trash.

Mr. Walter said he saw City Foreman Dan Castle out with the sprayer, and he appreciates that. He said he also appreciates that the council is working on the dilapidated build-

ings. If we want to bring people here, to bring a doctor here, he said, the town needs to look nice. Hopefully, everyone can be aware and share the responsibility of keeping Oberlin looking like a place people want to live in.

Shelby Hackney said she wanted to know if the snake on the agenda has ever been reported missing. The owner said it's never escaped or been reported missing, she was told.

Ms. Hackney asked the council to "double think" their decision. She said she wants people to feel safe in their own homes.

Linda Weber, too, said she was still against the snake being in Oberlin.

"Is there an ordinance or is it against the law for a citizen to speak during a meeting?" asked Ms. Scott. "Certainly would hate to break the law or an ordinance."

City Attorney Steve Hirsch looked, but didn't see anything.

Mr. Riedel said they aren't trying to take away anyone's right to speak, but he would like to keep order in the meetings.

Oberlin Lions Club plans to hold food drive

The Oberlin Lions Club plans a community food drive for the Decatur County Food Pantry next month at the United Northwest Federal Credit Union, 117 S. Penn Ave. in downtown Oberlin.

Canned goods, paper products, household items and cleaning supplies may be dropped off during

office hours, 8:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Donations will be on display in the south window and the club will keep a tally of the total, as Joe Stanley does each year during the holiday food drive at Stanley Hardware.

Lion Jack Benton will use an electronic sign to give a running tally each week, said Pastor Charlotte

Stecker-Baseler.

The need is great at this time for food, cash, frozen or nonperishable food and household items. These may be left at the pantry, in the basement of the United Church, 109 N. Griffith, from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.



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RAWLINS COUNTY HEALTH CENTER COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 Dr. Rubowitz Oncology	3	4	5 Brandi Ihrig Dietician	6	7
8	9 Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab	10	11 Dr. Frankum Surgery	12 MRI'S	13 Cardiac Rehab	14
15	16 Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab	17 DEXA Bone Density	18 Dr. Curtis Cardiology	19 Dr. Saba Orthopedics Dr. Reeves Podiatry	20 Dr. Reeves Podiatry	21
22	23 Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab	24 Dr. Frederick C. Miller Cardiology	25 Mammograms Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab Diabetic Clinic	26 MRI'S	27 Cardiac Rehab	28
29	30 Ultrasounds Cardiac Rehab	31 Nuclear Stress Test	<p>We Remember HONORING THE HEROES OF MEMORIAL DAY</p>			

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Mother's Day
May 8th