

## Council sets budget hearing date

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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The Oberlin City Council voted Thursday to set a hearing on the proposed 2012 budget for 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 11, including a 9.113 cut in the city's property-tax levy.

Last year, the city levy was set at 87.069, and in the proposed budget, that would drop to 77.956. While that is up 2 mills from previous budget estimates, it's still a cut of a little more than 10 percent.

Before the meeting started, Councilman Rusty Addleman asked if the council could have a quick closed session.

"For what?" asked City Attorney Steve Hirsch.

"For the budget," said Mr. Addleman,

adding that he didn't want to discuss a particular line item, but things that have happened because of the budget.

Mr. Hirsch suggested a quick break so he and Mr. Addleman could discuss whether what he wanted to talk about was a topic that could be discussed in closed session.

Back in open session, Mr. Addleman said he was a little unhappy about the budget meeting the previous week because it seemed like the discussion was between three or four people and the new members on the council couldn't keep up.

The second thing he took issue with was an article in *The Oberlin Herald*. Mr. Addleman said he knows the meetings are public, but said he thought the article "backed the city into a corner" by reporting the amount

of the proposed tax cut.

The headline said the city might reduce the tax levy, he said, so now if the city doesn't do that, the council will look bad.

It is a public meeting and what is said is public knowledge, said Mayor Bill Riedel. If there are questions, he said, members need to ask them.

Mayor Riedel said he was in the same boat a few years ago. The budget was spit out by a computer program, he said; the council looked through it and said OK.

He added that as long as he has been on the council, the city has been "robbing" the electric fund to support the other activities, for the library, The Gateway and other things.

Property taxes and electric rates, said

Mayor Riedel, are the only ways for the city to get money. While the water and sewer departments make a little money, it's not a lot.

The electric department has saved the city for a long time, but that fund is diminishing.

It held in excess of \$1 million at one time, noted Mr. Hirsch.

The general fund has been cut to the bone, the mayor added.

As far as the story in the newspaper, he said, it was what was discussed at the meeting. The story also said that no vote had been taken and nothing was set in stone. It is a public meeting, he noted.

If there are any questions about the budget, said Mayor Riedel, it's time to ask

them.

One of the things that wasn't put in the budget, said City Administrator Karen Larson, is an estimated delinquency rate, designed to cover the shortage created when people don't pay their taxes.

The council agreed to 3 percent, which is just over \$15,000, and added 2 mills on the property levy. Last year, the city had 10 percent in the budget said Mrs. Larson.

The higher the delinquency rate, the higher the mill levy, said Mr. Hirsch.

Steve Zdrov, administrative assistant, who was helping with the budget, said he wouldn't be surprised if the actual rate isn't closer to 5 or 6 percent.

Mr. Addleman asked whether, if the city (See COUNCIL on Page 10A)

## Digital directory considered for city cemetery

The Oberlin City Council talked Thursday night about buying a new digital directory for the cemetery.

Administrator Karen Larson said the current registry is hard to read when it rains. The papers with the names are printed from a computer and then put in a display case, which leaks.

The new one, mounted on a pedestal, has a touch screen, she said. Her only concern is there might be a generation gap, making it harder for older visitors to use.

It seems pretty self explanatory, said Mayor Bill Riedel. A visitor would type in the first four letters of the last name of the person they are looking for. That will bring up an obituary and a map on where the person is buried.

Sexton Jeremy Tally is doing a great job, the mayor said. He is going to look into buying the equipment with memorial money and donations.

What's the cost? asked Councilman Josh Williby.

Mrs. Larson said \$20,000, but a roof or something needs to be built to cover the top. The actual directory is pretty small, she said, so a cover would help visitors be able to locate it.

The council noted that the nearest power source is by the flag pole.

The city can download information to the directory, said Mrs. Larson. There can be stories about the person and music added, though that costs more.

Councilwoman Fonda Farr asked what maintenance would cost. It's run off a hard drive, so if that went out, there would be some expense.

The information, said Councilman Jim Miesner, can also be accessed from the web.

It could be a hard explain without people being able to see it, said Councilman Rusty Addleman, but once it's installed, he said he thought it would be easy to get donations.

Half the money has to be paid with the order, he said, and the other half later.

Mayor Riedel said he thought the initial cost covers what is already on the directory. Additions depend on what the family wants added, he said; for example, a picture, a story or music.

So if someone passed away 10 years ago, noted Mr. Williby, a family could add a memorial now.

"Genealogists would love this," said Mrs. Farr.

The council didn't vote on the directory. Anyone who wants to make a donation can do so by contacting the city at 475-2217, said Mrs. Larson.

## Oberlin teacher wins state award

The Oberlin School District's band teacher has been named the state's 2011 Outstanding Young Bandmaster by Phi Beta Mu, a band sorority, and the Kansas Bandmasters' Association.

Sarah Bricker, who has been teaching here for the past five years, was honored on Friday, July 15, at the Merriott Hotel in Wichita. The award is given annually to a young director who has taught for seven years or less.

Those attending were her husband, Mark Bricker, and also Neal Russell, Oberlin; her parents, Duane and Debbie Reis, and her grandmother, Mayette Keith, Hoisington, and her brother, Shane Reis, Lindsborg.

Mrs. Bricker graduated in 2001 from Hoisington High School and received a bachelor's degree in music education from Bethany College in Lindsborg. Before coming to Oberlin, she was the director of band and vocal music for the Ell-Saline School District in Brookville.

At the Oberlin Elementary School, she teaches band to fifth and sixth graders and vocal music to fourth graders. Mrs. Bricker also teaches band for the students in seventh through 12th grades. At the high school, that includes concert, pep, marching and jazz bands.

"It was a very humbling honor," Mrs. Bricker said. "However, the (See BAND on Page 10A)



S. Bricker



ON SATURDAY MORNING, Jeremy Tally (above right), Michael Wasson and Judy Scott helped put one of the cars on the Tilt-a-Whirl on the midway at the carnival. The volunteers worked for several hours to get ready for

next week's fair. Candi Ketterl (below) helped clean out the concession stand during a work night on Thursday.

— Herald staff photos by Kim Davis and Cynthia Haynes

## Midway ready for fair

Workers are still needed for rides and games for the Decatur County Home-Owned Carnival, which starts on Tuesday at the fairground.

With the help of about 25 volunteers, all of the rides were put up on Saturday morning, said Judy Scott, president of the county Amusement Authority. It was nice to have so much help, she said. A job which has taken eight hours in the past, said Ms. Scott, took only 4 1/2 with the help.

She said several young farmers brought equipment to help and several teenagers showed up.

Ms. Scott said there are still openings in the schedule for volunteers wanting to operate rides and games during the carnival, which will be open from 7 to 11 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

People can sign up at the Business Entrepreneurial Enhancement Center downtown or by calling Ms. Scott at 470-7269 or the chamber office at 475-3441.

She said anyone who signed up at the center and needs someone to work with them should call her.



All of the rides and games need at least two people for each shift. The early shift goes from 7 to 9 p.m. and the second from 9 to 11, later on weekends.

Ms. Scott said she wanted to thank all the groups that stepped up to help work rides and games again this year. Friday and Saturday night schedules are always harder to fill, she said, because that's when families come in.

The schedule for the concession stand, said Ms. Scott, is filled and will be manned every night of the carnival.

No games have been added this

year, but the group plans to have at least two for next year and hopefully, if it can raise the money, a new ride for the middle age group. The authority has rented the large slide again this year.

Tickets cost 25 cents each, said Ms. Scott, and all the rides and games run off the tickets.

Generally, the bigger the ride, the more tickets it requires. The Duck Pond, Lollipop Tree and Ric-a-Sha cost one ticket; the Birthday Wheel, High Striker and Sinko cost two and the rest of the games are four.

The kiddie cars, kiddie swings

and merry-go-round cost one ticket to ride. The train, slide and moon walk cost three and the big rides five.

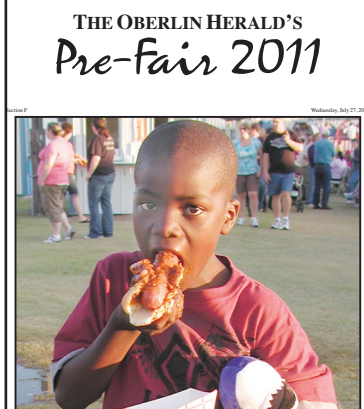
Ms. Scott said they found some old signs that say who helped buy the rides and they hope to get those set up so people can be informed on how it all started.

The group plans to tear the rides down starting at 8 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 7. Volunteers will be needed again that day, she said.

## Fair section inside

Inside today's Oberlin Herald is the annual special section featuring the upcoming Decatur County Fair and home-owned carnival.

The special includes a little history about the carnival, ideas for things to do during the fair and a complete schedule of activities.



# Chopping for a cause

## \*Council plans budget hearing for August date

(Continued from Page 1A) collects more money in electric bills than it budgets for, can it be spent. Mr. Hirsch said it could if the council amends the budget.

There was some discussion about the council giving money to child advocacy and domestic and sexual abuse programs, more for the library or for the Chamber of Commerce, and where that would come from.

That money, said Mr. Hirsch, could come out of the economic development line in the general fund.

That is the fund that the city's contribution to the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. come from, said Mrs. Larson, but there is \$2,400 to use unless the city cuts what it gives to the corporation.

The city could increase the amount through taxes, said Mrs. Larson, or the council can give the corporation less. The corporation also receives \$7,600 from the electric fund, she noted.

Mayor Riedel said that was what he meant about using the electric fund as a revenue source. "What else do we take from electric?" asked Mrs. Farr.

Money goes to the general, special highway, library and debt service, to name a few, said Councilman Rob McFee.

Mr. Addleman noted \$27,000 budgeted for Sappa Valley Ranch, and asked what would happen if that money was taken out. He asked what it's for.

Mayor Riedel said those buildings are getting older and need work or eventually the city will have to demolish them.

That money is there so the city has authority to spend it at the former youth ranch, said Mrs. Larson.

"You have gone through the general fund and cut wherever you can?" asked Mrs. Farr.

Yes, said Mrs. Larson, she thought so.

The council talked about some of the other funds that have money in them and have to be spent for certain items. An example was the equipment fund, which is where money will come from to buy a new dump truck.

If the council wants to put another \$1,000 in Arts and Humanities, Mr. Addleman asked, it would need to come from one of those funds or they would have to raise taxes. Yes, said Mr. Hirsch.

Mr. McFee commented that he

thinks the city is going to see a lot more requests for help as services come up on the state and federal chopping block.

The Chamber asked for money, as well as child advocacy and domestic and sexual abuse, said Mayor Riedel. There is a fund set up to support those under economic development. There is no way to control or see what the city is getting for a dollar spent, however.

Mayor Riedel said he would like the organizations to come to the council with a business case and then give out the money, and when it's gone, it's gone. The city is giving the same amount to civic organizations it did years ago, when the population was larger.

Without economic development, said Mr. Addleman, Main Street will dry up and the town will go down the tubes. Without Arts and Humanities and other programs, he asked, what will draw the professional people?

There was some talk about what the city can do to help stem the decline in population.

Absolutely nothing, said Mr. McFee. People moved here to get free ground. Now, driving through the country, farm houses are empty and there are no people living out there. Guys can farm section after section with big machines; he said; they aren't coming to town to buy parts and equipment, because it can be ordered. There aren't as many people in the country.

The only ones who are left in the country are the ones moving to town to retire, he said, and every time the city raises taxes, it takes that bite.

"The city isn't raising its taxes," said Mr. Addleman.

Not this year, Mr. McFee said, but it will have to next year.

Mayor Riedel said he disagrees that the taxes will have to go up next year.

"This is an opportunity to reign in the taxes," he said.

There was some more discussion about the money given to economic development, but nothing was voted on.

The council gave the clerk permission to publish the budget with the 3 percent tax delinquency rate.

Mr. Hirsch said at the hearing the budget can be reduced, but not increased unless the council starts over, so in essence, it was being set that night.

Permission to publish was approved in a 4-1 vote with Mr. Addleman against.



**EMMA GREEN** smiled Friday as Chris Dempewolf cut her hair to donate to Locks of Love, which provides wigs for children with cancer. This is the third time Emma has cut 12 inches or more of her hair to give to the group, said her step-father, Bill Cathcart.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

## 'Halftime update' released about courts

By **KEVIN BOTTRELL**  
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While the Blue Ribbon Commission study of the Kansas court system won't be completed until January, Chief Justice Lawton Nuss released what he called a "halftime update" this month.

He said the 25-member commission reached its halfway point with a meeting in Topeka. The commission is conducting a study — which Justice Nuss named "Pegasus" after the winged horse from Greek mythology — on ways to make the court system more efficient. It will submit recommendations to the state Supreme Court in January.

The commission has been reviewing the court system and gathering ideas and concerns from the public across the state.

"Over the course of a two-month period, the commission conducted 19 meetings at 18 locations from Norton to Pittsburg and from Atchison to Garden City," the justice said. "They drew over 600 invited attendees and members of the general public."

A meeting April 26 in Colby was led by commission members Cal Williams, a Colby lawyer; John Wheeler, a Finney County lawyer; and Judge Patrick McAnany, the chairman. Attending were area lawyers, judges, court personnel and business owners.

They expressed concerns about losing jobs and access to court services if judge positions were consolidated among the northwest counties. Thomas County Attorney Kevin Berens in particular emphasized that the rural poor would have a tough time having access to a judge if they had to travel to another county.

The meeting, like the other 18 around the state, also produced some ideas. Chief Nuss listed several that caught his eye. Using technology to bring work from urban courts to rural areas was suggested at the Colby meeting. Mr. Berens suggested eliminating positions in high-population areas where there are more judges already, and having western Kansas judges handle first

appearances by teleconference.

Other ideas included an electronic court filing program so lawyers wouldn't have to go to a courthouse to file cases, expanding the use of video conferencing for first appearances from prisons and in mental competency hearings from the state hospitals at Larned and Osawatomie; increasing technological compatibility among the courts, county government, agencies and law enforcement; and using video conferencing for Court of Appeals and Supreme Court hearings.

Chief Nuss said some of the information gathered at the meetings was contradictory.

"For example, there were numerous people asking to increase the use of video technology for conducting some hearings and court appearances," he said, "but others are convinced that face-to-face encounters with the judges are still needed, especially in juvenile-offender cases."

"Still others commented that receiving forensic testimony via

video technology from the Kansas Bureau of Investigation or other crime labs could do much to speed up their work, while saving a lot of time and money by not requiring the witnesses to drive many hours for relatively short periods of trial testimony."

The justice said the commission hasn't said yes or no to any of the proposals, but has asked staff members to do cost analysis of some of the ideas.

"The encouraging part to me is that Kansans really do care about how their courts are operating," he said. "Many people have put a lot of thought into how we might do things better and more efficiently while still maintaining the public's access to justice."

The commission is also looking at weighted caseload studies. Judges and court personnel throughout the state have kept detailed time sheets. Chief Nuss said that data is still being looked at by the court-appointed Judicial Needs and Staffing Needs Assessment committees.

## \*Band instructor receives award

(Continued from Page 1A) honor really goes to the school and community for their never-ending support to make the band program successful."

Mrs. Bricker is a member of the Oberlin Area Concert Band, the Flatlands Jazz Band, the Oberlin Arts and Humanities Commission and the Bethany Alumni Council.

She is a member of the Music Educator's National Conference, the Kansas Music Educators Association and the Kansas Bandmasters.

The area band plans a "Salute to Sarah" free concert at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 1, at Sunflower Cinema.

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AUGUST 2011

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(Please clip out this calender and post it in a convenient place, for your reference) Decatur Health Systems is committed to providing continued health care to the community. We are happy to have Dr. Hardison, Dr. Kubacz and Dr. Carrigan from Docs Who Care, as well as Robin Williamson PA-C, Sean Conroy PA-C and Tricia Carney ARNP. The Family Practice Clinic at 902 W. Columbia, west of the hospital, has adjusted its hours to help those who work. (see hours below) Also, our hospital is fully staffed 24/7, for your emergency needs. Cedar Living Center residents are seen by Ms. Williamson, PA-C and Dr. Steven Bear from Colby. Please watch for our calender every month, as we want to keep you informed.

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	8 <b>Judy Mago PA-C</b>  Robin Williamson PA-C	9 <b>Robin Williamson PA-C</b>  Sean Conroy PA-C	10 <b>Sean Conroy PA-C</b>	11 <b>Robin Williamson PA-C</b>  Sean Conroy PA-C	12 <b>Robin Williamson PA-C</b>  Sean Conroy PA-C	
	15 <b>Dr. Kubacz</b>  Sean Conroy PA-C	16 <b>Dr. Kubacz</b> <b>Robin Williamson</b> Sean Conroy PA-C	17 <b>Dr. Kubacz</b> <b>Robin Williamson</b> Sean Conroy PA-C	18 <b>Dr. Kubacz</b> <b>Tricia Carney ARNP</b>	19 <b>Dr. Kubacz</b> <b>Robin Williamson</b> Sean Conroy PA-C	
	22 <b>Dr. Carrigan</b> <b>Robin Williamson</b> Sean Conroy PA-C	23 <b>Dr. Carrigan</b> Sean Conroy PA-C	24 <b>Dr. Carrigan</b> Sean Conroy PA-C	25 <b>Robin Williamson PA-C</b> Sean Conroy PA-C	26 <b>Dr. Carrigan</b> <b>Robin Williamson PA-C</b>	
	29 <b>Robin Williamson</b> Sean Conroy PA-C	30 <b>Robin Williamson</b> Sean Conroy PA-C	31 <b>Robin Williamson</b> Sean Conroy PA-C			

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