

Search continues for better water for city users

The Oberlin City Council doesn't have any information yet on the search for better water for the town.

At a meeting Thursday, a report from Miller and Associates, the McCook engineering firm conducting the search, was on the agenda, but the council was told there was nothing to report so far.

Earlier this summer, the council voted to search for a better water source in irrigation wells fairly close to town, instead of just moving forward with a \$4 million water treatment plant.

The city is under orders from the federal and state governments to do something about high levels of arsenic and uranium in its well water.

Councilman Jim Miesner, who has helped with the project, said some of the wells weren't where the city thought they should be. Others aren't being pumped right now, but there are a few other wells that can be tested.

Mr. Miesner said he and Councilman Rusty Addleman talked with driller Dick Kelley about what areas near town might have enough water volume to handle the city. Mr. Kelley knows a lot about the quantity of water in the county, he said.

"So the search continues," said Mr. Miesner.

Mayor Bill Riedel thanked Mr. Miesner and Willard Perrin, head of the city water department, for their help on the project.

Mayor Riedel said engineer Don Klappmeyer had been in Oberlin on Thursday afternoon to discuss the airport project. The city is taking bids for rehabilitation of the existing runway, taxiway and apron area to be opened at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 24.

The city will take the lowest bid, he said, and that will be submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration for approval. The federal agency is paying for 95 percent of the project. The agency had been shut down for two weeks, but is back in business after a compromise by Congress.

Mayor Riedel said the contractor probably won't break ground until spring.

Mr. Addleman, who was also at the meeting, said he's not sure how it can be done, but the money has pretty much been guaranteed.

The money is there, said Mayor Riedel; the government has already earmarked it for Oberlin, but it's still up to the agency to get it here and keep things moving.

In other business, the council:

- Signed and approved resolutions asking to keep the post offices in Herndon and Norcatu open.
- Received an invitation to Sappa Park at 3 p.m. today, when the Modern Woodman of America will be giving the park committee a check from a recent raffle.
- Heard that the mayor is thinking about doing a Facebook page with information about city meetings to let people know what's going on.
- Heard that the mayor would like to start holding a breakfast once a

month to create a forum for a round table discussion with the other groups in town and anyone who wants to come. Maybe, said Mayor Riedel, it could help get everyone to start working together with a common goal. It would be nice if the city would be the host, he said. He also said he thought they could have it at The Gateway, with the first one possibly in September. There was no action taken.

• Heard that Jeremy Tally, cemetery sexton, and city crew members spent time at Sappa Park working on the foundation for new playground equipment with several volunteers.

• Heard City Administrator Karen Larson bought about half the city's natural gas for the winter in advance at a price of \$5.20 a million british thermal units.

• Talked about updates needed for the electric department. Foreman Dan Castle said they had a conservative estimate last year of \$20,000 to update the lines, poles and transformers in just one block. Some things need to be done at the power plant, he said, but that might need to be discussed with the city attorney present. The Environmental Protection Agency says the city needs to put a catalytic converter on the diesel engines which drive the generators, he noted. Each catalytic converter is \$50,000 a piece and the city needs five.

There's going to be some expenses at the power plant and substations, he said.

• Heard a suggestion to repave one section of asphalt street and one section of concrete street in the city. Mr. Castle said he needs the council's OK to move forward with the project.

• Heard the city has been pumping 380,000 to 420,000 gallons of water a day, though on four days since the last meeting the flow has been over 650,000 gallons in a day. Mr. Perrin said the wells are down about 8 inches, but that isn't much for this time of year.

When water use reaches 700,000 gallons per day, the mayor can declare a water emergency and put everyone on water restrictions. This will be the second summer Oberlin has avoided restrictions after several years of every-other-day watering.

• Heard that the water department changed a valve on Marks Street that day. It's on a two-inch pipe that serves several blocks, Mr. Perrin said, but it's probably more like half an inch by now because of corrosion and deposits, and the water pressure has been an issue. He said the city may want to replace the line.

• Heard that the fair had gone well for the city police department, with no trouble to report. Mayor Riedel asked about a case involving 90 counts of criminal use of a financial card. Chief Wade Lockhart said that was someone who was using a credit card for the co-op and it was over \$5,000 in charges.

Putting in cups



AT THE SOUTH END of Main Street on Friday morning, Kem Bryan helped put in more black and blue plastic square cups into the fence south of Decatur Implement. The cups are in the design featuring several cattle and two cowboys to depict the Western Cattle Trail, which ran near Oberlin.

— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

County discusses budget

The Decatur County commissioners looked over the proposed budget for 2012, which includes an increase in the property tax levy because of a decrease in the county's valuation — and a pay raise for county employees.

At their meeting last Tuesday, the commissioners talked about the budget, but didn't make any decisions. The proposed budget includes a 3 percent general raise for all county employees.

The proposed budget has a total property tax levy of 76.387 mills while this year's is 72.475. That includes an increase of 4.21 mills, or about 5 percent.

Clerk Colleen Geihlsler said not a lot had been added into the proposed budget. Most of the department heads tried to keep their budgets the same, she said, although there are a few that had a slight increase.

Basically, she said, everyone is trying to stay steady.

The increase in the levy, said Ms. Geihlsler, comes because the county's valuation dropped. This year's valuation is \$34,033,544 and next year's is \$33,191,651. That's a drop in the valuation of \$841,893, or about 2.5 percent.

Basically, said Ms. Geihlsler, that means it will take a higher tax rate to raise less money.

There was some question on whether the \$26,000 for the Rural Opportunity Zone program was in the budget. Mrs. Geihlsler said it's in the general fund.

The commissioners also talked about the \$50,000 the county promised for airport expansion several years ago.

Commissioner Gene Gallentine said it sounds like the project won't be done this year or next, but work to rebuild the existing runway could start in the spring.

If the county were to put \$50,000 in the budget for the airport project, he asked, how does that work? Would that money go to the city's general fund?

Commissioner Stan McEvoy said he thought the county would hold it until it was needed.

No decision was made on the airport project.

The county's valuation is down, said Commissioner Ralph Unger, so it takes a higher levy to raise the same amount of tax dollars.

"Did you factor in any kind of cost of living raise?" asked Mr. McEvoy.

Yes, said Ms. Geihlsler, 3 percent for everyone.

She said she also put in a new computer system, including software and maintenance, the commissioners have discussed this year. It will cost around \$33,000, said Ms. Geihlsler.

City OKs budget with tax cut

The Oberlin City council passed the budget for next year, cutting the property tax levy more than 10 percent, after a brief hearing Thursday which produced little public comment.

The budget includes a cut 9.113 mills in the city's property tax levy. This year, officials said, the city paid off bonds used to finance the old youth ranch, the Gateway and

street improvements, which saves the city a payment of approximately \$125,000 a year.

Sid Metcalf was the only one with questions or comments about the proposed budget.

Mr. Metcalf, a pilot and member of the Economic Development board and the city's Airport Committee, said he wanted to make sure the budget had \$70,000 in it for the

airport project.

Mayor Bill Riedel said the project has a budget of \$1.47 million, with \$1.4 million coming from the Federal Aviation Administration and \$70,000 from the city.

With no other comments, the council passed the budget in a unanimous vote.

Work day planned for park

Volunteers are needed later this month to help put up the rest of the playground equipment, move sand and clean up limbs at Sappa Park.

The park committee has set the work day for 8:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 27. Please bring work gloves, chain saws and rakes.

The committee really appreciates everyone who has been willing to

come help with the recent work days, said member Kimberly Davis. Each work day or evening has had a great turnout.

"Without the volunteers and help from the city crew," she said, "the park wouldn't be looking as good as it is."

Many limbs knocked down by storms this summer need to be

cleaned up, Mrs. Davis said, and the committee has several pieces of smaller playground equipment that need to be assembled and other jobs to do at the park.

She added that the committee plans to start meeting at 5:30 p.m. the second Tuesday of the month at the LandMark Inn. Everyone is welcome.

Teens for Christ needs drivers

Oberlin's Teens for Christ needs drivers and helpers for its kickoff night at the end of the month.

The first meeting starts at 6 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 28, for students in seventh through 12th grades.

The kick-off event will be "Giant Monopoly," with the town of Oberlin serving as the game board.

"It'll be a fun race to the finish," said Doug Mason, who heads up the group.

Mr. Mason said he needs team

help should call him at (785) 505-7395 or 475-4021.

Council might receive irrigation well results

The Oberlin City Council hopes to get a report on the city's search for water at its second regular meeting of the month at 7 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway.

The council met last week, too, since the members decided to push the first meeting of the month off a week because the county fair and carnival.

On the agenda for the meeting Thursday night is a report on the results of the water-well testing with by engineer Chris Miller of Miller and Associates.

The staff has also been seeking prices for asphalt vs. concrete street paving and might get some figures

on that. The meeting will be held upstairs in The Gateway and is open to the public.

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