

Officials want to replace streets

By STEVE HAYNES

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Cracks, potholes, exposed earth in the subgrade, high crowns and a pavement edge that's been built up above the gutter — leaving a drop-off of four to six inches in front of some driveways.

That describes nine blocks of streets, some of the worst in town, that Oberlin city officials want to replace using a \$394,979 Community Development Block Grant from

the state of Kansas. The city would put up \$131,660 from street funds, paying for all engineering and about 17 percent of the construction cost. That could be up to \$526,669 if all the paving is concrete.

Steve Zodrow, administrative assistant at the city office, talked about the grant application, which he said took two months to write, at the Oberlin Rotary Club's meeting last Tuesday.

The city's application totaled

about 50 pages, he said, including a recap of regulations for the grant program, administered by the state Department of Commerce. Other sections document the condition of the streets involved, Oberlin's street maintenance program and city income, engineering reports and the like.

To show it's eligible for the grant, Mr. Zodrow said, the city had to prove that more than half of its residents were in the low-to-moderate

income range under federal guidelines. Though the city had done an income survey a few years ago, the figures had to be updated.

"You may have seen me out walking around your neighborhood, carrying a clipboard and survey forms," he said.

In the end, the city came up with 51.22 percent of the population in the required income groups, the report shows. It also notes that Oberlin lost 599 residents between the 1980

census and 2010, about 25 percent of its population. Fully 30 percent of the population — now 1,788 — is 65 or older.

"City leaders find it a challenge to pay for all the needed infrastructure repairs and improvement and still make it affordable to live here," the report says. It details all the money the city has borrowed and spent to meet federal environmental regulations, including new water and sewer plants and plans for a \$5.5

million water project.

The nine blocks, a little more than half a mile, represent only about 3 percent of the city's 17.5 miles of streets. Of that total, the report says, 26.6 percent is paved with brick over concrete put down in the 1920s and 22.3 percent (mostly newer streets) with concrete. About 9.3 percent is asphalt, most of recent construction.

The streets to be replaced all (See GRANT on Page 5A)

City dims lights downtown to save power

If you think it's a little dim downtown on Penn Ave. or out on U.S. 83, you're right. Half the street lights are out.

Oberlin has turned off the lights on the east side of Penn Ave. downtown and on the east side of the highway to conserve power while repairs are being made and a substitute transformer replaces the one damaged in a fire a few weeks ago when a wayward raccoon, not-so-affectionately named Sparky by city workers, got into the main substation and put the lights out all over town.

"We were going to try to conserve with those light that are easy to switch off and on," said City Administrator Karen Larson, noting that both Penn and U.S. 83, have two sets of lights, one on each side of the street, so the area would not be dark.

On Saturday, the downtown also experienced a short blackout as the city's temporary replacement transformer was installed. In fact, most of the east side of town went from 15 to 45 minutes with no electricity.

City crews tried to contact businesses that were open, Foreman Dan Castle said, but the workers had to be at the substation by 8:30 a.m. to get started on the changeout.

"We tried not to cause too many problems for too many people," Mr. Castle said.

At Raye's Grocery, workers were warned of the blackout and were telling customers that everything would be back up shortly. With no electricity, they said, it was hard to get much done.

The outages started about 8:45 a.m. and ended at 9:38 a.m., Mr. Castle said.

Later this week, the west side of town will have its turn, Mr. Castle said, but he expects the time to be shorter with most people only noticing a blink in their electricity. After that, he said, the city will be off of the Prairie Land Electric system and back onto Sunflower, using the rented temporary transformer.

It will probably take between four and six months to get the city's transformer fixed and back in service, Mrs. Larson said.

Eight puppies living under a shed rescued by men

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Eight puppies were rescued from under a utility shed at the Decatur Community High football practice field and taken to the McCook Humane Society for adoption.

Oberlin Police Chief Wade Lockhart told the City Council at its meeting Jan. 5 that he has had reports for months of two large black coyotes, or dogs, running loose in the southeast part of town. While the department got calls about "black coyotes," he said, the animals aren't coyotes, but they are wild, and one of them had puppies.

The four- to five-week old puppies were discovered living under the utility shed on Dec. 31, he said. To get to them, Mick Glaze took a tractor with bucket and lifted up one end of the shed while helpers scooped the puppies out.

The mother has not been caught, the chief noted, but the babies have teeth and, while young, are able to eat and should find good homes through the shelter in McCook.

The chief told the council that the new patrolman started work last

week but likely will have to go to the state academy sometime this year.

The officer, Beau Downing, has taken a course in police work through Oklahoma Panhandle State University, the chief said, adding that he doesn't think that Kansas will accept that for certification here.

The state gives the city a year to get new officers through the academy, he said, but really wants them to go with the first available class. However, he said, the schooling can probably be put off until later in the year.

In other business, the council:

- Heard from Mayor Bill Riedel that he had toured the damaged electrical substation and that the half-million dollar repair estimate may be conservative. It's amazing, he said, the havoc one raccoon can cause.

He suggested that each council member go out and look at the damage for him or herself.

Councilman Rob McFee suggested that the council should tour all the city properties, noting that he (See MAYOR on Page 5A)

Hospital hires nurse practitioner

By CAROLYN KELLEY-PLOTTS

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Lynnetta Ward, a nurse practitioner, is the newest addition to Oberlin's medical community.

She began her career in 1977 after graduating from Pittsburg State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing. She was certified as an Advanced Practice

Registered Nurse from the University of Kansas through the Hays outreach program.

For 10 years, Mrs. Ward said, she ran the rural health clinic in Moline, a town of 500 about an hour's drive east of Winfield. She worked with nursing-home residents, obstetric patients and their babies, managed-care patients and everyone else who walked through the clinic's doors.

The clinic was short on staff and the hours became longer and longer, Mrs. Ward said, and she took a job (See NURSE on Page 5A)



Chamber holds banquet

AT THE CHAMBER annual banquet Thursday, Judy Scott (above) and Amanda Grafel served dinner to Joe Stanley. The banquet at the Golden Age Center ended with an auction with Lynn Johnson (right) calling the bids and Ken Shobe helping show items to the audience.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis



Candidates file for spot in county offices

Several people have already filed for a chance at public office in the 2012 elections.

All of the county seats, except commissioner district No. 1, will be up for election this year. That makes Commissioner Stan McEvoy the only official who does not have to run this year.

So far, those who have filed include:

- Kari Ketterl, incumbent, for register of deeds.
- Sheriff's Deputy Jay Tate for

magistrate judge.

- Ken Badsy, incumbent, for sheriff.
- Judge Preston Pratt, incumbent, for District No. 17 judge.

Other jobs that will be included in the 2012 election include:

- Commission district No. 2, currently held by Ralph Unger.
- Commission district No. 3, currently held by Gene Gallentine.
- County clerk, currently held by Colleen Geihlsler.
- Treasurer, currently held by

Jean Hale.

Ms. Geihlsler, who serves as the county election officer, said anyone wanting to run needs to file for office by June 1. Anyone who wants information on how to register should talk with Ms. Geihlsler in the clerk's office on the second floor of the Decatur County courthouse.

The primary election, if needed, will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 7. The general election is scheduled

for Tuesday, Nov. 6.

Also up for election this year are federal offices, including president and members of Congress. Kansas does not have a U.S. Senate seat up for election, and most state offices were filled in 2010.

Candidates for state representative and state senator file with the secretary of state, as do others running for state offices.

Council to discuss water

When the Oberlin City Council meets at 7 p.m. Thursday, the members will be dealing with water, a bridge, the airport and the city's electrical problems.

City Administrator Karen Larson said that the test wells the city plans to dig have been located and drilling should start this week.

The council will decide whether to work on a bridge over Sappa Creek on South Penn Avenue near

the Decatur Co-op or if the project could be put off.

The city has gotten the contracts back for rebuilding the main runway at the airport, so the council will get an update on that, Mrs. Larson said. She said the city hopes work can begin in March.

City Foreman Dan Castle will be at the meeting to update the council on the city's damaged transformer and the progress of repairs.

Sports tab is inside

The annual Winter Sports section is inside today's *Oberlin Herald*. The keepsake edition includes team pictures from Decatur Community Junior High School and Golden Plains Middle School and High School, and individual pictures of the Oberlin Red Devils' basketball players and wrestlers.

