

City discusses fixing bridge on Main Street

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
c.haynes@nwkans.com

The city knows the bridge over Sappa Creek at the south end of Penn Avenue needs fixing; the only questions are when, and whether to just repair or upgrade.

Wayne Hackney, owner of Oberlin Concrete, showed the Oberlin City Council photos of the bridge, just south of the railroad tracks near the Decatur Co-op, at its meeting Jan. 19.

The west side of the earth-filled bridge has a concrete foundation and is in fine shape, Mr. Hackney said. The east side, however, is timber. It has loose boards, holes and lots of debris, the photos showed. There are three large tubes running through the structure to move water.

Mr. Hackney said that his crew could repair the bridge but would need help.

"I don't have the equipment," he said. "You just don't know what is buried around there. I don't have the equipment to take care of this problem, but the county does."

He said he has talked to county Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman about the bridge.

"He's an expert on building bridges," Mr. Hackney said. "That's what he does."

Mr. Stallman suggested closing the bridge this spring before wheat harvest. The county could clean it out and Oberlin Concrete would put in a new east wall, which would include a curb to keep cars from running off but not be so high that it would be hit by farm equipment.

"Tim's bid is surprisingly low," Mr. Hackney told the council. He said the road boss told him it would cost about \$3,700 to clean up the bridge area and dig footings for the wall, then another \$1,900 to pack the dirt back in after the concrete work was done.

It would take three to four weeks

to do the concrete work, he estimated.

To repair the bridge would cost \$22,000 for the concrete and \$5,600 for the county, Mr. Hackney said, or about \$27,600. That includes reusing the existing steel tubes.

If the city wants the bridge could be widened four feet to allow two vehicles to pass on it. Right now, he said, it's pretty much one-lane.

The cost of widening would not change his bid but it would cost more for the dirt work. Extensions would have to be put on all of the tubes, and that would cost about \$4,000. Extra dirt fill would raise the cost of that work by \$2,500. So, to get a wider, more usable bridge, would cost the city \$6,500, bringing the total to a little over \$34,000.

While Mr. Hackney said the council didn't have to decide right away, he said Mr. Stallman is planning to put in an order for tubes soon and it would be cheaper to have him get what the city needs to widen the bridge.

Also, the county would like to have a timeline so that it can plan on having a crew available when the bridge work needs to be done.

City Administrator Karen Larson said it would be good to have an alternate route for grain trucks to keep as many as possible off the city's brick streets, and especially the block of Hall Street by The Bank and the LandMark.

"I think we need to get this fixed so that trucks will use it," she told the council, adding that that there would be no state help for the project.

"The state has disowned this bridge," she said. "They're not even inspecting it anymore."

Council members said they would think about the problem and probably discuss it at the next meeting, at 7 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway.



SEVERAL OF THE volunteer fire fighters in Norcaturn turned out Saturday to assemble 452 pizzas for delivery the next day. Every year, the fire fighters sell pizzas as part of their fund-raising efforts. Money is used to upgrade the department's equipment. On the assembly line (from right) were Galen Wentz, Doug Dempewolf, Troy Wentz and Sam Stapp. Below, right, future fire fighter Brenden Wentz did his part by stacking some of the pizzas ordered for the pizza sale. Brenden came to help with his dad, fire fighter Galen Wentz.

— Herald staff photo by Carolyn Plotts



Board considers Atwood clinic lease

The Decatur County Hospital Board talked about whether or not to keep the lease in Atwood.

For years, said Administrator Lynn Doeden, the Oberlin Medical Arts clinic had a satellite office in Atwood. When the lease was up, the hospital — which bought out the Oberlin clinic last year — took it over. There aren't enough providers on staff right now to go to Atwood, Jennings and Norcaturn and provide care here as well, she said at the board's monthly meeting Monday, Jan. 16.

The lease is \$350 a month plus utilities, said Mrs. Doeden. She added that she's heard that the Hoxie Hospital is no longer holding a clinic in Selden, so she wondered about going there.

What's the use in having clinics in Norcaturn and Jennings? asked board Chairman Gary Walter. Mrs. Doeden said the clinic in Jennings averages eight people a trip, but it's been harder to get people to the one

in Norcaturn.

Board member Pam Wilson asked if that's because they haven't had a clinic in Norcaturn for several years. There has been a clinic in Norcaturn, said Mrs. Doeden, and it's good for the providers to get there. The hospital and its Family Practice Clinic need to do some marketing, she said.

Someone asked how many patients were seen at the clinic in Atwood, but Mrs. Doeden said she doesn't have that information.

Wouldn't it be better to provide service in this county? asked board member Ruth Wolfram. Mrs. Wilson said she thought they should let the lease in Atwood go.

Mrs. Doeden said she thinks they need to give a 30-day notice. She added that when the doctors here were holding the clinic in Atwood, she isn't sure if there were as many providers at the Atwood hospital as there are today.

Water meeting planned

The Oberlin City Council plans to have a special meeting to discuss plans for upgrading the city's water system at 6 p.m. Thursday at The Gateway, right before the regular council meeting.

For several months, the council has been working to get test wells drilled in a search for good-quality water outside the city to pipe in.

Results from those wells should be ready that night.

Mrs. Larson said the city also received bids on a water transmission line on Friday. Those will be discussed at the regular meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday, upstairs in The Gateway. As always, the meeting is open to the public.

Chairman elected by commissioners for 2012

The Decatur County commissioners started the new year with a new leader.

Commissioner Stan McEvoy will serve as the chairman this year and Commissioner Ralph Unger will be vice chairman.

Commissioner Gene Gallentine was chairman last year.

The commissioners approved several resolutions to start out the new year:

- Designating *The Oberlin Herald* as the county newspaper.
- Approved the Bank of Oberlin, Norcaturn and Jennings, Farmers Bank and Trust and First National Bank as depositors.
- Set the 911 tax at 53 cents per line under state laws.
- Approved mileage reimbursement at 55.5 cents per mile, the state rate.
- Approved a meal allowance for

employees on business away from home at \$32 a day with breakfast at \$8, lunch at \$9 and the evening meal at \$15.

• Approved contracts between the county and the Good Samaritan Center and the county and the Decatur Health Systems for \$1. In case of an emergency, the county will provide a truck of nonpotable water to each place.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved the minutes from the previous meeting.
- Said they are taking applications for anyone who wants to serve on the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. board. Anyone interested can fill out an application in the county clerk's office.

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