

Pool supporters ask city for help

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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Supporters of a new swimming pool for Oberlin asked the City Council on Thursday to set up an official committee to work on the project and look at a city sales tax to pay for it.

Swim coach Stephanie Blau told the council that the current pool, built in 1957, is getting expensive to run, has unsafe pavement and cracks and is not regulation size. The smaller (baby) pool has no sanitary filtration system, so must be drained and refilled daily.

A modern swimming pool is a draw for young families, she pointed out, and several surrounding towns already have upgraded

their pools.

She said she and an informal group have met with pool designers to see what can be done for Oberlin.

"We aren't looking for an aquatic park here," she said. "We just want a new swimming pool. We don't need all the bells and whistles here like they do in bigger areas."

Kyle McCawley of Larkin Aquatics, which is building a new pool in Phillipsburg, showed the council what that town is doing. He also showed cost estimates. The Phillipsburg pool will cost \$2.7 million, he said. It was moved from its old location to be near the former armory and will have a small indoor therapy pool attached, which

increased the price tag.

It takes 10 to 12 months to put in a new pool, he said. If the pool is being put back where the old one was, the company tries to start right after the summer season and finish before Memorial Day.

However, between plan and pool, he estimated, it takes one and one-half to two years.

Mark Dettler of Central States Capital Markets out of Wichita talked to the council about the benefits of a sales tax over increasing property taxes to pay for a new pool.

A 1-cent city sales tax would bring in \$151,000 a year, he said and a 1 1/2-cent tax would bring in \$226,500, according to figures from the state.

A countywide sales tax would actually bring in less, he said, because it would have to be split with the county and other towns.

He said that his company has helped several cities get a sales tax passed to help pay for improvements, such as swimming pools.

He said he hasn't seen a change in buying habits because a community has raised its sales tax. Sometimes people claim they will never shop there again, he said, but that doesn't happen.

He said he would suggest a permanent sales tax increase that would first be used to pay for a swimming pool and then could be used for other capital improvements.

Sarah Steele, an attorney with Gilmore and Bell, the company which has been Oberlin's bond agent for many years, said that while a sales tax could be permanent, the council could also eliminate it in the future.

State law limits special-use sales taxes to 10 years, she said, and she didn't feel that Oberlin could generate enough money from a 1-cent sales tax in 10 years to pay for a pool.

A general purpose sales tax, on the other hand, could be used for the pool and other things.

Cities, she noted, can't just go to the bank and get a loan. They have to issue general (See GROUP on Page 6A)

Airport plan to show up on ballot again

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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Oberlin voters get another chance to vote on whether they want to pay for upgrading the city airport.

It took an hour-long special meeting before the regular Oberlin City Council session Thursday, and another 30 minutes or so after most regular business had been conducted to decide what to do about the second phase of planned upgrades at the airport.

Phase I of the project is to remove a hump in the runway and put in new pavement on the runway, taxi way and apron. The city has budgeted \$76,000 to complete Phase I but that is about \$50,000 short due to increased costs.

The actual cost of Phase I, said Mayor Bill Riedel is \$2.4 million compared to the original estimates of \$1.4 million. The federal government is still picking up 95 percent of the cost, but that still leaves a lot more for the city.

Phase II is to build a new 5,500-foot runway to increase capacity for freight and business aircraft. However, the cost of this phase has gone up, partially because the federal government will now only pay for 90 percent of the price tag.

About a dozen proponents of the airport project came for the

meetings.

Sid Metcalf, chairman of the airport advisory committee, said that he understood that if the city could get federal money to put in a 4,800-foot runway, the state Department of Transportation would help the city take it to 5,500 feet.

Keane Wurm said 5,000 is what's needed.

"Five thousand feet is the magic number for insurance companies," he said, adding that that is what small jets and larger propeller aircraft need to land with plenty of room in case of an emergency.

The mayor, however, emphasized that the meeting was not about whether it would be a good idea to continue the project.

"This meeting is not to discuss whether the airport is a viable thing or not," he said. "It's how to pay for it. We need, as a city, to come up with \$850,000 to \$1 million to pay for the airport."

Raising property taxes is not the answer, he added.

"Our city - not the county - the city property taxes are one of the highest in the state," Mr. Riedel said.

Some of the work on Phase II has already been done, he said, since several of the studies for Phase I just (See VOTERS on Page 6A)



ASSHE "SLICKED UP" the last of a mid-morning snack, April Maye, the pet pig of Jacque Douglas of Dresden, enjoyed a nice scratch behind the ears. - Herald staff photo by Carolyn Plotts

Rescued piglet becomes woman's pet

By CAROLYN PLOTTS
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This little piggy went to market. Oh, no she didn't! Not April Maye, the pet pig of Jacque Douglas of Dresden.

April Maye is not just any pig. After she fell out of the back of a hog transport when she was just a wee piglet, April Maye had the good fortune to be rescued by Kathy Nauer of Jennings. Mrs. Nauer knew she couldn't raise the little porker, but she knew who could.

Ms. Douglas, the relief postmaster in Jennings, has a reputation for being an animal rescuer. The Dresden home of Ms. Douglas and Allan Hill, transplants from eastern Kansas, has a mini-menagerie that includes "fainting" goats, ducks, dogs of all breeds and sizes, bantam chickens, white silkie chickens, cats, pygmy goats, a regular goat, a pet mouse and, of course, April Maye, the hog.

You shouldn't say "hog" too loudly, though, because April Maye doesn't know she is a pig. Weighing less than 10 pounds when she first came under Ms. Douglas' care, April Maye lived in a big wooden box kept on the back porch. Thriving on calf milk replacement, she soon weighed 20 pounds and was moved to a fenced-in area in the back yard. Ms. Douglas

said all she had to do was whistle, and April Maye would come running.

She was good about staying close to Ms. Douglas when she was out of the pen, so April Maye followed her to the front yard one day. There she discovered new territory. Ms. Douglas said they were afraid she might get away, but April never left the yard. Still, that was the last time she was allowed in the front.

Once when April Maye weighed about 45 pounds, she was standing by an ant hill in the back yard. Mr. Hill said all of a sudden April Maye started squealing and running around the yard, dragging one of her legs.

"Jacque started yelling 'Come quick. April's pulled a 'hammie,'" he recalled. "She wasn't hurt. She just got bit by an ant. She would calm down, then, I guess, she'd get bit again and off she'd go."

A picky eater, April Maye liked her milk and didn't want to give it up. After she turned her nose, or rather snout, up at pig pellets, Ms. Douglas said, they tried to get April Maye to eat them by mixing them with milk. She finally weaned her by watering down her food so much she didn't like it. From there, April Maye's conversion to a diet of whole corn and dog food was easy.

Ms. Douglas said she started her on ear corn.

One of April Maye's little quirks was to eat the cob clean, then pile her "empties" up in a corner of her pen. She pulled the same trick with her food dishes. Ms. Douglas said April would stack the dishes, smallest to largest in the corner, ready to be washed. A good housekeeper, by hog standards at least, April Maye has made a comfortable wallowing hole in her pen and keeps her trough slicked clean.

That might explain her portly physique. By all estimates, April Maye, now almost 2 tips the scales at a whopping 700 pounds.

Ms. Douglas said she would like to get April Maye weighed but she doesn't have a trailer and walking her hog the two blocks to the Co-op scales doesn't seem like an option.

"What would I do if she decided she didn't want to go there?" said Ms. Douglas. "She's got a good disposition, but I don't want to take that chance."

Asked if they ever eat any of the animals they raise, Ms. Douglas said, "Oh, my no! I couldn't eat somebody I named."

So it looks like April Maye can live out her years with no cares or concerns. Except maybe who will scratch her back and when supper will be served.



BRITTANY JOHNSON HELD her service dog while waiting for the Oberlin City Council meeting to start on Thursday. - Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

Woman asks council for OK for fifth dog

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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An Oberlin woman would like to get another dog, but it will be up to the City Council to decide if she can

have it or not.

Brittany Johnson, who has a dog washing business, Wash a Pooch, asked the council on Thursday to allow her to have a fifth dog without getting a kennel license.

City ordinances allow only four dogs without a license. However, (See WOMAN on Page 6A)

Republican caucus Saturday

The Republican party presidential caucus will begin at 10 a.m. Saturday at the Golden Age Center in Oberlin.

Those participating must have registered to vote as Republicans prior to Friday, Feb. 17.

County Chairman Ralph Unger said the doors will open around 9:30 a.m., with the actual caucus starting at 10 a.m.

Those attending have to have a photo ID or their voter registration card, he said. People who don't live in Decatur County can caucus here

as long as they live in this congressional district.

The Republicans caucusing at the Golden Age Center will join others across the state who will be deciding the representatives for the party to go to the national convention.

Mr. Unger said any official representatives from the candidates will be given 10 minutes to speak. The order of the speakers is determined by the state. If the total 10 minutes isn't used by the representative, then supporters can have up to a minute to talk until the allotted time is used.

After that the voters will cast their ballots, he said.

Candidates on the ballot include Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum, Newt Gingrich and Ron Paul. Several candidates have dropped out of the running since the ballot was set including Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain, Jon Huntsman and Rick Perry.

Mr. Unger said the committee has no idea how many people will show. He added that there hasn't ever been a Republican caucus in Decatur County that he is aware of.

Clocks to spring forward

Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday, so be sure to "spring forward" and set your clocks up an hour.

While the official time change is at 2 a.m. Sunday, most people will set their clocks up either before going to bed, or in the morning.

