

Pool group ready to make a splash

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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The city now has a swimming pool committee looking at what it will take to get a possible 1-cent sales tax passed to help build a new pool for Oberlin.

An unofficial pool committee had been working with Larkin Aquatics, a firm which designs pools and has helped get new pools for Phillipsburg and Cimarron. Members asked the council earlier in the month to name a committee to work on

getting a pool.

At that time, the council asked the group for a list of names of those interested in serving on the committee.

At Thursday's council meeting, the list was approved with the addition of Councilwoman Fonda Farr.

Serving on the committee will be Oberlin Swim Club Coach Stephanie Blau, pool organizer Shayla Williby, Willard Perrin of the city water department, and four mothers, Valisha Raile, Erica Fortin, Danielle Leitner

and Sarah Howland.

Mrs. Williby told the council that there is money in a special account with the Chamber of Commerce to start work to get a sales tax and a bond issue passed to pay for the pool. There is a little less than \$23,000 in the fund, raised by previous supporters of a new pool, she said.

The first phase of the pool project she said, including evaluation, design and community meetings, will be paid out of that account.

She also told the council that a bond firm they will be using charges a 2 percent fee and the bond lawyer will cost between \$20,000 and \$25,000. Norton, which is also looking to build a new pool, is using a company that charges 3 to 5 percent of the total bond amount to do the same type of work, she said.

Mrs. Williby said that the committee will try to get back to the council with two to four designs for a new pool as soon as possible.

Mayor Bill Riedel suggested that the group look at private donations as well as the sales tax to help build the pool. He said he thought that it would be easier to get a sales tax passed if there is private money in the pot, noting that people responded well to the bowling alley project.

It was also noted that the state is looking both at lowering its sales tax and removing the sales tax on food. Both moves could affect how much money Oberlin could bring in with a 1-cent tax.

City needs cash

Directory fund is a little short

The City of Oberlin needs another \$3,500 to order a computerized directory for the city cemetery on East U.S. 36.

Sexton Jeremy Tally talked to the members of the Oberlin Convention and Visitors Bureau on Thursday about the project.

Mr. Tally said the computerized directory costs \$20,000, but it can be ordered and put in with only \$10,000 and then the city will have a year to come up with the other half.

So far, he said, \$6,500 has been raised for the project.

Mr. Tally said he has talked with various groups about the directory, and many have given to the fund.

He said supporters might have a fund raiser around alumni weekend in May, something like a history walk at the cemetery.

City Administrator Karen Larson said the city could send out letters asking people to give to the project. Mr. Tally said he also has been in touch with the funeral home.

Ruth Miesner suggested showing the video Mr. Tally has on the project in the lobby of The Gateway (See MONEY on Page 12A)

Only four dogs allowed

By CYNTHIA HAYNES
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Four dogs is all that the city will allow, officials told an Oberlin woman who had asked for a waiver to add a fifth dog to her household without getting a kennel license.

Brittany Johnson, who has a dog-washing business, Wash a Pooh, asked the council at its meeting on March 8 to allow her to have a fifth dog without getting a kennel license.

City ordinances allow only four dogs without a license. However, Ms. Johnson said that one of her dogs, a Yorkshire terrier which she brought with her, is a service dog and should be exempt from the rule. The other dogs, she said, are therapy dogs.

At that time, the council said it would look into the matter. However, the council turned the problem over to City Attorney Steve Hirsch and City Administrator Karen Larson for resolution.

Since the ordinance doesn't make any provision for specialty dogs, Mrs. Larson said at the City Council meeting on Thursday, she and Mr. Hirsch turned the request down.

In another animal incident brought before the council, Mrs. Larson said that she had taken care of a claim by Torrey Morford because Police Chief Wade Lockhart had shot one of his calves, which the chief thought was lost and not saveable. Mr. Morford had requested compensation from the city because, he said, he felt that if the chief had called him, he could have gotten the calf and possibly saved it.

Mrs. Larson said that she agreed to pay Mr. Morford \$500 because she felt that was the right thing for the city to do.

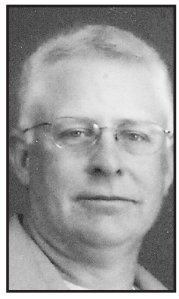


KEVIN BROWN (above) helped unload materials for the Sunflower Recreation Center during construction in 2009. The center (below) in downtown Oberlin, built by Sappa Valley Construction of Oberlin, brought owners Kevin and Jackie Brown national awards from Wick Buildings and from the National Frame Builder Association for "Building of the Year."

Business owners earn two awards

By MARY LOU OLSON
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A Decatur Community High School graduate who decided in 1984 to start his own business in Oberlin has built it into a successful construction firm and now has been honored for one of his buildings with two national awards.



Kevin Brown

"When Greg Lohofener approached us about the Sunflower Recreation Center project," Mr. Brown recalled, "it was not a typical request for a post-frame building."

"Looking back, we could not begin to calculate how many hours went into this project. It was challenging and rewarding, and that is what keeps us doing what we do."

"It is phenomenal to think that a need for this community was not only recognized but met. Even though Sappa Valley Construction was the recipient of (these awards), this project could not have been accomplished without the numerous dedicated people focused on seeing it completed through generous donations and countless volunteer hours."

"It isn't often that one of our projects benefits so many. Our community is very fortunate to have this facility in Decatur County."

Kevin and Jackie Brown, owners of Sappa Valley Construction, received the Wick Building of the Year Award in the category of commercial buildings over 15,000 square feet at a meeting in Scottsdale, Ariz., last month. Then on March 1, they traveled to the National Frame Builder Association Conference in St. Louis, where they received the 2011 Builder of the Year Award.

Both awards were for the Sunflower Recreation Center project, built for the Oberlin-Decatur Area Economic Development Corp. and the citizens of Decatur County.

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ty, and everyone who contributed should be very proud of what they have accomplished."

Mr. Brown said that his interest in construction goes back to when he graduated in 1979.

"I enrolled in the carpentry program at Northwest Kansas Area Vo-Tech in Goodland," he said. "It was there that I met my wife, Jackie, of Waldo, who graduated in computer programming."

The couple married in 1981 and he worked for Norman Luedke Construction of Atwood, and Mike Machart Construction and Brad DeKnight (OK Electric) in Oberlin before starting Sappa Valley three years later.

He said he became a Wick Build-

ing dealer soon after starting his own business. Wick is located in Mazomanie, Wis., and they offer wood frame buildings, which provide a variety of options for customers. He is a materials-only dealer, he said, which means that his firm provides the crew that builds each building.

"We have always maintained a crew of at least three to six," he said, "but at our peak times, we do subcontract to a crew from Wisconsin."

"We have had great employees over the years. Our crew presently includes Coley Hackney, Brett Smith, John Mosier and Brent Stallman, with Bruce Wendelin and Rusty Montgomery helping

us when needed. Coley has been with us for 11 years and Bruce has worked for us off and on since the 1980s.

"Over the years, we have had the opportunity to hire high school and college students for the summer months and over spring breaks. Our crew traveled quite extensively in the early years, but now we prefer to work closer to home. This business does require some travel, so it is a great feeling to have such dependable people working for us."

Mrs. Brown added, "We are so grateful to our family and friends who have contributed so much to our success. They are always (See COUPLE on Page 12A)

Hometown heroes honored in section

Inside today's Oberlin Herald are stories featuring Decatur County's "Hometown Heroes," people nominated by their friends, neighbors and relatives for deeds big and small.

After Christmas, the newspaper staff started asking for people to nominate their heroes. Eleven nominations were submitted and those people are including in the special section inside.

THE OBERLIN HERALD'S Hometown Heroes '12



Two more file for county offices

By KIMBERLY DAVIS
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Two more candidates have thrown their names in the ring for county offices. And with the filing deadline not until Friday, June 1, officials say, there is still time for anyone who wants to run for a county job to do so.

Both Bob Jones of Jennings, a Republican, and Brad Long of Norcat, a Democrat, have filed to run for commissioner in District 3, which includes Jennings, Dresden, Norcat and generally the east half of the county, but none of Oberlin.

Commissioner Gene Gallentine of Clayton, who has served one term, has said he will not seek reelection.

The primary election will be Tuesday, Aug. 7, and the general election Tuesday, Nov. 6. Candi-

dates can file either by paying a fee or getting signatures on a petition.

Others who have filed include:

- Ken Badsky, Republican incumbent for sheriff.
- Kari Ketterl, Republican incumbent for register of deeds.
- Ralph Unger, long-time Republican incumbent for commissioner in District 2, representing Finley, Logan, Liberty, Sappa, Bassetville Townships and Oberlin City Precinct No. 1, generally the west side of the county and the west side of town.
- Sheriff's Deputy Jay Tate has filed for magistrate judge, a post held for many years by John Bremer. Judge Bremer says he will retire this year and has not filed.

With proposed changes in state law, however, there's no guarantee the county will continue to have a

judge.

- Steve Hirsch, Republican incumbent for county attorney.
- Colleen Geihlsler, Republican incumbent for county clerk.

Treasurer Jean Hale, also a Republican, has not yet filed for reelection.

All county offices are up for election this year with the exception of commissioner in District 1, held by Stan McEvoy. Mr. McEvoy was re-elected in 2010 by the voters in Oberlin City Precinct No. 2.

Anyone interested in filing for a job can get information in the clerk's office on the second floor of the courthouse, she said.

