

Street construction set to begin on Columbia

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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City and construction officials came together Wednesday to discuss the upcoming streets project, which will begin Monday on three blocks of Columbia Street.

The project will include alteration or repair of curbs, gutters and neighborhood driveways as needed, said City Foreman Dan Castle, though which ones in particular will be affected he didn't know.

The city replaced the water line under the street earlier this year to avoid having to tear up any new pavement. In some areas, the base under the old pavement will be redone to correct the grade. Mr. Castle said that hopefully only one driveway will have to be altered.

"People should just be aware that they will need alternate routes while we're working on it," Mr. Castle

said. He advised residents on the blocks affected to use the alleyways for parking where possible.

Since Columbia is the primary access to the hospital, the construction will affect ambulance routes, he said. Patients going to and from the hospital and clinic will have to drive around the construction on Cedar or Victoria streets to reach the parking area as well.

City Administrator Karen Larson said that no water, natural gas, cable television or telephone lines should be affected by the construction.

Construction crews will be active Mondays through Thursdays, sun-up to sundown, until the project is finished, said Joe Bryant of Bryant and Bryant Construction out of Halstead, the general contractor for the project. The firm has a \$498,500 contract for the job, using city money and a state Community

Development Block Grant.

Lance Harter, the engineer supervising the job for Miller and Associates, said the work must be completed by Wednesday, Oct. 31.

"I don't think it will take them that long," he said, "but it could take six to eight weeks, which is coming close."

Future project meetings, which are open to the public, will be at 10 a.m. every other Wednesday at the Gateway meeting room No. 3, the small room on the main floor.

No decision has been made yet on which blocks will follow Columbia Street, said Mr. Castle, but they would like to get the most high-traffic areas done first, since they are the ones that definitely need to be done before winter. Mrs. Larson said she hopes to have that schedule by the City Council meeting on Thursday.

Water warning mailed out

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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Oberlin residents may have been surprised to receive a letter from the City of Oberlin Thursday that said the city's drinking water supply had tested positive for a surplus of arsenic, uranium and something called "net gross alpha" – but it seems unlikely.

There is no need to switch over to bottled water, the letter said, and if there were any immediate risk, residents would have been notified immediately. It's pretty much the same letter people have been receiving now for five years.

The City Council has been dealing with the problem of drinking water for a long time now. Initially, the city planned to build a water treatment plant to remove the heavy metals, but that was scrapped when the city learned that they would have to spend \$100,000 a year to dispose of the uranium the plant would collect. Even then, the city could be held accountable for that uranium later were it to be involved in an accident or spill of any kind.

Which brings us to the current

Water use staying down

Oberlin residents continued to keep water use under 700,000 gallons a day pretty much all week.

The city pumped:

- 586,400 gallons on Monday, Aug. 6.
- 674,500 on Tuesday, Aug. 7.
- 699,500 last Wednesday.
- 546,900 on Thursday.
- 765,000 on Friday.
- 609,000 on Saturday.
- 512,800 on Sunday.

The city continues to be on

water restrictions, however. Residents with odd-numbered addresses can water on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Those with even addresses may water on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

Outdoor water use is allowed only from 8 p.m. to 9 a.m., but the day changes at midnight. Swimming pools can be filled once a week, according to the ordinance.

plan of cultivating a "water field" of wells to pump clean water to town. As of the last council meeting, Miller and Associates, the engineering firm out of McCook that has been working on the project, reported that they had found three suitable drinking wells and had begun the process of filing permanent water rights for the city.

After a long time, it appears, the water problem could be solved.

And the letters, which have to be sent every four months – might stop coming.

And net gross alpha, well, that's a radioactive compound like uranium, and is a part of the uranium analysis, said Dave Sporn of the city water department.

He said that even the little bit of rain we've had has helped water consumption go down amidst the current drought.

Rep. Cassidy misses election night in Kansas

By STEVE HAYNES
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Rep. Ward Cassidy missed election day in Kansas last week – but not his re-election.

Mr. Cassidy retained his seat representing the 120th District in the Kansas House in a close race with Rep. Rick Billinger, a Goodland Republican. He and Mr. Cassidy, of St. Francis, were thrown together in the Republican primary when federal judges drew new district lines for the state with little regard for existing boundaries or incumbents.

Mr. Cassidy, it seems, had booked a Caribbean cruise for his entire family, including the couple's two daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren, over election week. Or his wife had. The couple celebrated their 43rd anniversary and her retirement from teaching.

"She planned this back when I didn't have an opponent," he said. "I told her I couldn't go ... and she

said, 'Yes, you can.'"

He said they were out of cell phone range, but had Internet access, so he followed the returns on the Web.

"I lost, I won," he said of the see-saw race. "It was pretty exciting. There were some pretty crazy elections."

He said he hated being placed in the same district with a colleague and friend but was glad he'd won.

"It was a good race," he said. "He's a good guy. The only thing better would be if we'd both be going back."

Mr. Cassidy said he hopes to improve his position in the House committee structure, but that depends on who is elected speaker in January.

His new district includes Cheyenne, Rawlins and Decatur counties from his "old" 120th and Sherman and most of Thomas from Mr. Billinger's 121st, plus Wallace.

Benefit planned

Decatur Tomorrow is sponsoring a day of games to benefit the city ballpark beginning at 8 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 25, at the ball fields.

Activities will kick off with a co-ed softball tournament, said organizer Deanna Castle. It will be open to the first eight teams to register. Afterward, there will be a bean-bag tournament. Concessions will be available throughout the day.

Another Decatur Tomorrow project, "City Slickers," runs through September, she said. The group will divide the town into four quadrants and pick up litter to keep our community clean. If you would like to join in the fun of keeping the town beautiful, give Decatur Tomorrow a call and they will help set you up for one of the teams. Call Mrs. Castle at 475-3227.

Oberlin welcomes a new postmaster to town

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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Oberlin has a new permanent postmaster, if not a new resident.

Phyllis Ziegelmeier lives in Gem with her husband, Pete, about 40 miles south and west of Oberlin, just outside of Colby. She has been working for the U.S. Postal Service since 1987.

"I started my career as the postmaster relief in 1987 in Gem," she said. "Then I became the postmaster of Gem, then the

officer in charge of St. Francis, then came back to Gem again, then the postmaster of Selden, and now I'm here.

"The Postal Service has changed a lot over all these years," she said. "Mostly it's a lot more technology, but it hasn't made it any easier."

Mrs. Ziegelmeier said she has lived in Gem since 1980, and outside of work enjoys playing with her grandson, Nash, who just celebrated his first birthday in July. She is the mayor of Gem, which

only has 85 people, and a member of the Lions Club, which will be holding a hog roast on Aug 22 that she says everyone is invited to.

Mrs. Ziegelmeier said she has one son, Pete Jr., 31, and also raises cattle and farms. She said she's always been a small-town resident and loves the lifestyle.

"I like the atmosphere of a small town," she said. "It's where people watch out for each other and care about each other."

Every vote counts



ELECTION NIGHT had Colleen Geihlsler, the county election authority (above) keeping the room informed on the giant dry-erase board in front of her office. Seated below her (from left) are Sheriff Ken Badsky, candidate Jay Tate and editor Cynthia Haynes.

— Herald staff photo by Stephanie DeCamp

Herald editor wins two prizes

The Oberlin Herald has won two first-place awards in national competition, both for articles written by Publisher Steve Haynes.

Mr. Haynes won one first-place award for editorial writing and one for humorous column writing in the National Newspaper Association's annual Better Newspapers Contest.

The winning editorial appeared in *The Herald* on April 27. Titled, "A whole lot of good ideas can threaten our liberty," the editorial talked about how things like police checkpoints, photo ID requirements and other security procedures might seem like a good idea, but they erode personal freedom bit by bit.

The judge commented that the editorial was "clear, concise and passionate writing on that topic most basic to our lives – liberty."

Haynes' winning column, "Many lines divide country," appeared June 1, 2011. Haynes wrote about some of the more obscure lines that divide the United States, such as the Sweet Tea Line, which divides north and south based on serving tea sweetened or unsweetened, and the Firefly Line, which falls somewhere between St. Francis and Atwood and divides the High Plains based on where kids can catch "lightning bugs."

The judge described it as the "funniest and wittiest of the bunch. He got the sweet/unsweet dividing line just right! Liked the firefly line, too."

Goodland Star-News Editor Kevin Bottrell won second place in feature writing for a story he wrote last year while editor of the *Colby Free Press*.

The article – which appeared in the paper Feb. 11, 2011 – chronicled the experiences of Charles Cook of Colby, who was a technical sergeant in the Army Air Corps during World War II.

"Mr. Cook came in to see me one day," Bottrell said. "We got to talking about his experiences during the war. It was fascinating how clear his memories were 67 years later."

Cook, who was the flight engineer and manned one of the machine gun turrets on a B-17 bomber, recalled his missions over France and Germany, the time he shot down a German fighter plane and the time he and his crew crashed and were picked up by actor Jimmy Stewart, then a colonel in the Army Air Corps and their base commander.

The judge called the article a "clear and vivid journalistic tribute to a member of 'The Greatest Generation.'"

Bridge construction to start soon

County commissioners had little on the agenda this week outside of the election results Tuesday, but heard a report on the status of three new bridges and renewed a contract with AT&T.

Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman reported on the bridges now being built. On the city bridge south of the Decatur Co-op, he said, the retaining wall has been poured, but they're giving it two weeks to cure before his crew can do the backfill.

Reece Construction of Scandia is in the county, he said, and has started on the first of three steel bridges in the southwest corner of the county, about eight miles west and 8 1/2 south of town. They will move to work on the other two in two and three-week intervals. Their locations are three miles west and five south and 13 miles south and one west.

Commissioners also approved payment of a 911 maintenance contract with AT&T. The county received a 10 percent discount for renewing the five-year agreement for another two years, which came to a total cost of \$16,813. Decatur County has had AT&T maintain the county's 911 system since 2007, said ambulance director Linda Manning.

Senator Roberts to visit

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts will make an appearance at the Decatur County Farm Bureau's annual dinner meeting at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the Oberlin American Legion Hall.

State Rep. Ward Cassidy will also

be at the meeting. The guest speaker will be John Schlageck, senior editor and columnist for the Kansas Farm Bureau in Manhattan.

Reservations for the dinner were due by Friday.



Ziegelmeier

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Saturday, August 25, 2012 10:00 a.m.

802 N. Penn, Oberlin

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- * Collectible Plates
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@ 10:00 A.M. CT

Auction Location: 4-H Building, N. Hwy. 25, Atwood, Kansas.

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