

Election to decide City Council seats

Pool project issues propel woman to seek council seat

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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It's no secret that Danielle Leitner is running for City Council in large part due to her involvement with the Oberlin Pool Committee.

"I want to shepherd the project through to fruition," she said. "I also feel like we need to be doing a better job as a community to be informing the citizens. I feel like we could be doing more to communicate with the public."

Mrs. Leitner, the former Danielle Diederich, grew up here and graduated from Decatur Community High. She said that aside from the pool, the electrical system and the decisions to be made regarding the power plant are important to her.

"I'm concerned with the steps and processes we should take to build off the existing plant that we've worked on so long," she

said. "I want to build on what other people put in place before us. This is something I feel like we need to move forward on and make sure we're continuing to invest in our infrastructure so we can survive as a community."

When asked why she is running for council, her answer was that it's all about pride.

"I seem to have the inability to give up on things," she said a little sheepishly. "I feel really passionate about making this a community to raise our kids in, and something we can be proud of. Not that it isn't now, but I feel like the more involved in the community you are, the more proud of it you can be. Being involved in the working parts of it gives you a kind of pride in ownership."

"I think the council should be a positive outlet, and approachable. We shouldn't be in place to stifle progress, and I feel that's what

it is like right now. I just feel we could be a better resource for the community if we weren't trying to prevent so many things from happening and standing in the way of progress.

"Of course, finances play a huge part in it. I just feel like we're not doing enough in terms of moving ourselves forward. We're not there to make all of people's dreams come true, but I feel that if something has been voted on and we've put the financing in place, then everyone should be on board. There's no question on that. I'm realistic on our financial situation, but there are also things that maybe we could do to make that better or different."

So what does she want people to associate her name with when they see it on the ballot come April 2?

"I hope they think of growth, energy and passion," she said, "and of getting things up off the ground."



Leitner

Only council incumbent wants to see projects finished

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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Of the four people running to fill three positions on the Oberlin City Council, Josh Williby is the only one seeking reelection.

"I think that it's good we got younger people in there that have a vested interest in the community," Mr. Williby said of his fellow candidates. "I got put on two years ago by former Mayor (Bill Riedel), and I think we've made some progress so far. We've got the pool and code enforcement under way and the water project is on schedule. So I think that the two years I've been on, things have been fairly productive."

When asked about how he felt regarding Mayor Rob McFee's refusal to sign off on any motions for the pool project, which then delays their effectiveness by two weeks, Mr. Williby said he worried that it will leave residents with a sour taste in their mouths.

"I disagree with him on that," he said. "It was something voted

on by the citizens, and the council has put it in place. We all understand that he's against it, but it doesn't prove anything when he drags his feet on it. That's why people don't like politics, when people do things like that. I think he should just let it go forward as it should."

And what are his priorities for the next four years?

"I think making sure that we keep the budget balanced and don't overextend ourselves with all of our projects is important," he said, "but it's also important to see our projects get finished. Water is definitely a priority, and Dan Castle is getting the numbers to us about the electrical stuff, and then of course getting the pool finished."

"I hope that with the new council coming in, we'll get more forward-thinking people on the council and get some vision. I think a lot of people think of Oberlin as a retirement community, and I hope we get some more people that want to see Oberlin progress

into the future. "The council has put a lot of stuff off that it shouldn't have, and it wasn't taken care of, and now it's falling on our plates. I think the city and county are going to have to work together on these issues, because both of us benefit."

So what does Mr. Williby bring to the table? "I guess I think I'm a very reasonable person," he said. "I can see both sides, but I want to be progressive for the town and see us move forward. You also have to keep in mind that you can't get everything you want. Money is a real issue right now. I think I'm a person that can balance our needs and wants and look at our current budget and figure out what it is we can afford to accomplish."

"My wife and I moved back here with the intent of raising our family here. We came back for family, and we feel it's a great town to live in. And we want to make sure that future generations have that same feeling about Oberlin, too."



Williby

Candidate thinks Oberlin needs to have a master plan

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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There are three words that Oberlin City Council candidate Rachel Johnson wants you to keep in mind when you think of her: character, commitment and community.

"I really cherish these words, because they sum me up, my values and ethics," she said.

Mrs. Johnson is a member of the Oberlin Pool Committee and a teacher at Decatur Community High School.

"The pool is a part of what I see as the larger picture," she said, "and the word I would use is infrastructure. For me, I would really like to see a long-range master plan developed for Oberlin."

"I look at the community, and I think they've been very reactive to situations, rather than being proactive. I'm a planner, and what I would like to see is a master plan, so instead of just, 'Here's an issue, what can we do?' we can plan for them and continue to build infrastructure. So instead of putting Band-Aids on things that arise, we can build a stable community for the future."

"I think that the airport is another possibility for Oberlin to grow

in the future. I've heard incredible stories of businesses that used to be here. For example, there used to be a boat manufacturer here. We should be asking ourselves, 'Why did they leave?' and, 'What can we do to get them back or bring something new in?' So I think the airport could be a part of that solution."

Not to say that she doesn't understand that money is hard to come by these days.

"I understand where people are coming from," she said, "because there is an immediate impact of having a street to drive on and having safe water for your families. That's where a long-term plan comes in—so we wouldn't be two decades behind on the water situation, we would have been dealing with it all along. You can't live in the moment, you have to think in the future if you want to sustain a rural community in this time."

Mrs. Johnson said that she was born and raised in Fowler, Kan., moved to Oberlin with her family five years ago and says she intends to stay here for good.

"I think the fact that I am an outsider is actually a good thing," she said. "I bring a fresh set of eyes and perspective to it. I think

we get caught in a rut sometimes, and I have excellent organization skills, very good communication skills and more than anything, I have passion for our small community."

"I lived my whole life in a community of 500 people before I moved here, graduated with 12 in my high school class, and I just have a passion for this life and living here."

The one thing she would change about the council, she said, is its transparency.

"In terms of communication," she said, "I think it's a key component—letting people know what's going on and getting the word out. Some people are scared of change. Different can equal bad (in people's minds), and I think transparency would eliminate that from the equation."

"I want the voters to know that I am committed to Oberlin and all of its residents. I want what's best for the community, not just a select few. This is where I'm going to raise my family, my parents moved here two years ago, and I have a vested interest in making sure that this community doesn't just survive, but thrives."



Johnson

Experience seen as asset by former county clerk

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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The one thing City Council candidate Marilyn Horn says she wants is for people to have a solid range of choices, and when it comes to the council, that's what her campaign is all about.

As the oldest of four people running for three seats on the council, Mrs. Horn is most adamant about her experience, especially as a long-time county clerk.

"There are young ones (running) and that's good," she said, "but sometimes I think you need a little level head and a little more maturity. I have served in office for quite a few years. It's my experience that is important. There's not just one of them that I'm running against, of course; I wouldn't pick on any of them. They're wonderful people; it's just that I would like to give people another choice."

Of the four running, Mrs. Horn

could also be considered the most conservative—she said she is against the airport and pool projects, primarily because of the cost.

"With Mayor McFee (refusing to sign off on motions for the pool, thereby delaying every motion by two weeks in protest of it), I understand how he feels," she said. "I think he wants to give more time for people to really think about it. I don't know if he's stalling on it exactly, but he wants to make sure they're all thinking it through well. And I hope people do. I'm really not in favor of the project."

"I don't believe (the longer runway at the airport) is necessary; a helicopter can go to the hospital and pick up people. If I had to be flighted out, I would see nothing wrong with it. Of course, now we have a new (hospital) administrator, and I saw he's in favor of it. He's new, and I imagine from where he came from, that's

the way they thought there. But I just really am not sure that the money is warranted to have a longer runway."

"The other night someone mentioned that these problems were thrown on us, like it was something new, but they've been talked about before. People wanted to sweep it under the rug. Just like a house, if you don't keep up on repairs, then things fall behind. That's what happens. You have to keep up on your maintenance, the water, the pipes and electricity—those are very important."


And speaking of electricity, Mrs. Horn said that she is in favor of investing in the city power plant.

"I'm in favor of working our own," she said, as opposed to buying electricity from outside the county. "I've heard from other people that Atwood gave up their substation, and they're having to pay for very expensive electricity now. I want to invest in the basics of our city."




Horn

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