

Canvass results in no changes

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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 The canvass of votes for last Tuesday's close election for the Oberlin City Council is done, and the results stayed the same, even though some thought — maybe hoped — that the canvass might yield different results.

"Marilyn Horn, Dan Wasson and Sharleen Wurm all got one extra vote," said County Clerk Colleen Geihlsler, who serves as county election officer, "but none of the original results have changed."

The elections were held for three City Council seats, three Oberlin School Board seats and two members of the Twin Creeks Extension District board. The votes were counted by election officials last week and unofficial results were reported Tuesday night.

At the canvass Monday, county commissioners went through the tally books and the election abstract, comparing all of the numbers to make sure that they were recorded correctly. This second-checking certifies the election results as official, Ms. Geihlsler said.

The canvass is also when the commissioners and election officer decide whether or not they will accept provisional ballots. This year, said Ms. Geihlsler, there were three provisional ballots, but only one was accepted, since that person had forgotten their identification but later brought it in.

Ms. Geihlsler said that the only reason there would be a recount is if one of those running for office

wanted one, and then, they would have to pay for it.

"If one of them wanted a recount," said Ms. Geihlsler, "they would have to hire a counting crew to come in and count the votes all over again, so it would probably come up to a lot of money."

Ms. Geihlsler added that so far, no one had requested a recount.

The official returns for the Oberlin City Council were:

- Josh Williby, a current council member, was re-elected with 240 votes.

- Rachel Johnson, a school teacher and pool mom, was elected with 190 votes.

- Marilyn Horn, former Decatur County clerk, was elected with 188 votes.

- Runner-up Danielle Leitner lost with 186 votes, two behind Mrs. Horn.

The official returns for the Oberlin School Board:

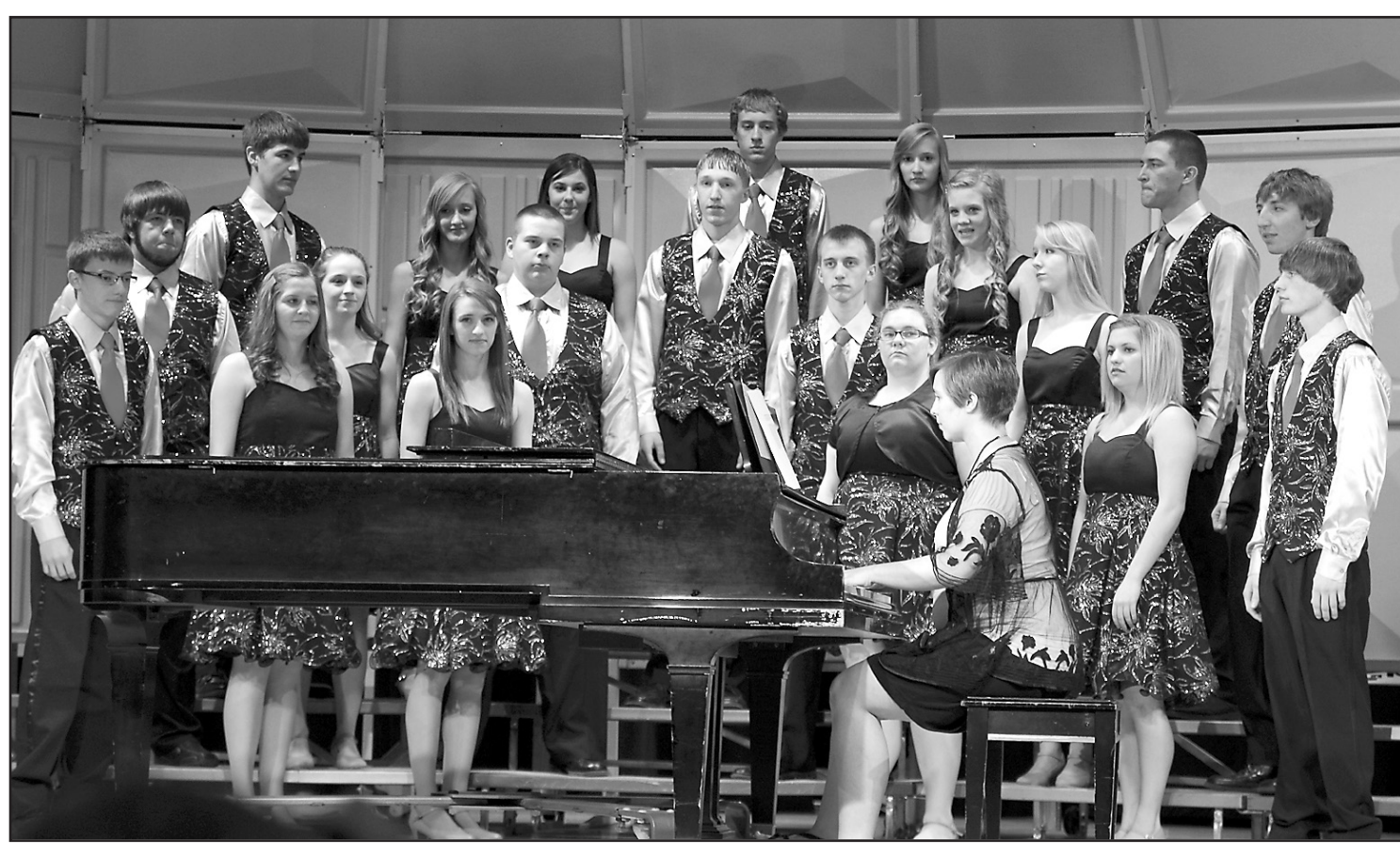
- Doug Brown, who works at The Bank and has served one term on the board, took the top spot with 364 votes

- Abby Hissong, who works at Fredrickson Insurance, also won re-election with 359 votes.

- Farmer Dan Wasson was re-elected with 336 votes.

- Newcomer David Blau, who works for Miller and Associates, drew only 177 votes.

For the extension board, both Sheryl Unger and Sharleen Wurm maintained their positions, with Mrs. Unger getting 366 votes and (See **VOTES** on Page 12A)



The birds aren't the only ones singing...

THE DCHS SINGERS (above) performed on the auditorium stage at Decatur Community High during the Regional Music Festival on Saturday. Dr. Gary Fredrickson (at right) accompanied Zach May for a solo performance.

— Herald photos by Sarah Fredrickson



Springtime brings rain and lightning

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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 Spring weather swept in over the weekend as thunderstorms scattered precipitation across Decatur County and lightning strikes set at least two field fires near Norcatur.

"The lightning started fires (Sunday) afternoon around 4 p.m.," said Norcatur Fire Chief Carl Lyon. "They weren't too bad. They could have been really bad, but the rain came in and helped us a bunch. Then it was all mud, and we had to get the trucks pulled out."

Chief Lyon said that about 20 acres burned in each fire, the first of which was a mile south of the Lyle Church and a half mile east of Lyle road. The second was two miles south and one mile west of the church.

The whole thing, he said, only lasted about two hours, but it could have been much worse.

"We could have big problems without any rain," he said. "There's a lot of dead grass from last summer out there that could be burnt."

Mr. Lyon stopped short of suggesting a burn ban, however.

"It's started to green up," he said.

"It's not going to be as bad right now as it was last summer ... people just need to be cautious and aware that

things can happen."

Jeremy Martin, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Goodland, said that the storms Sunday were fairly weak compared to the one he expected to blow through Monday night and Tuesday. The service issued a hazardous weather statement predicting possible severe thunderstorms, hail, high wind and even a few tornadoes.

"There is a much larger one coming through that will impact (the area Monday) through Wednesday," he said. "It will change to snow and freezing drizzle (Tuesday) and then all snow by Tuesday night."

"We're not really expecting to see a great accumulation, maybe a few inches. The rain will vary greatly with the thunderstorms, so we don't know exactly how much rain will fall in the area. Total liquid when it's all done should be about a quarter to a half an inch."

"Unfortunately, a lot of the storm we had over the weekend didn't make enough rain, so the dry lightning crept in. We don't expect that to be a big threat with these coming storms, but it definitely could happen if they're moving fast enough. The most important thing tonight is to keep an eye on severe storm warnings."

County faces decisions on future of Good Sam

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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The Decatur County commissioners talked recently with the administrator of the Good Samaritan Center and the director of operations for the national Good Samaritan Society about the future of the county-owned home in Oberlin.

Commissioner Stan McEvoy said he met with Hospital Administrator Johnathan Owens and he doesn't want the hospital to be on the committee that decides what happens to Good Samaritan. One suggestion has been to have the hospital take over running the center.

Commissioner Sid Metcalf told Good Sam Administrator Janice Shobe that the commissioners had more or less decided to not talk about naming a committee until they see what the society wants to do.

While the county owns the building, the Good Samaritan Society has operated the nursing home for more than 50 years.

Mrs. Shobe asked if there was a possibility of using money from the Shirley and Laura Cochran estate that was left to the center for operations. Mr. Metcalf said he was OK with that, but wasn't sure how the other commissioners felt.

If it came down to where the

county has to take over the center, said Mr. Metcalf, it might take awhile to get tax money and the Cochran money would be needed.

Mrs. Shobe said she didn't think there was any stipulation on how the money could be spent.

The commissioners called Randy Fitzgerald, director of operations for the society, to get everyone up to speed on the situation.

The center in Oberlin has run at a loss census for a couple of years, said Mr. Fitzgerald, last year losing about \$130,000.

He said they started to talk with the commissioners about lower occupancy and loss of money. Maybe, said Mr. Fitzgerald, it's time for the society to let the county or hospital take over.

The society is willing to stay on, he added, but not at a loss. It will need some financial support.

In the first two months of this year, he added, the center lost just \$5,000, which is better than it had been, thanks to the staff and Mrs. Shobe.

"We can't have the Good Sam organization stay and operate with losses," he said, "but with financial help, we are willing to stay."

He added that he's not sure in the long term if the hospital oper-

(See **COUNTY** on Page 12A)

Electric plant poses some big questions

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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After the City Council raised the cost of electric power by about \$10 per month for each household to help pay for a price increase and improvements at city's power plant, you might be wondering just what's going on down there.

The hike in electricity rates actually came out of a larger conversation about the plant, where the city faces a lot of decisions, issues that the council has to navigate.

The council talked about putting \$50,000 a year into the budget for next year to begin overhaul and maintenance on the plant's big diesel engines, but not making repairs necessary needed to comply with the Environmental Protection Agency rules so the plant could run more than a few days out of the year.

The idea was put on the table after City Foreman Dan Castle made the first of three reports to the council about the plant, electrical lines and equipment and power usage. The subjects are so loaded, he said, that it's a lot easier to break them up over several meetings to be sure the council can cover it all.

"The cost to make our five engines compliant with the (federal rules) will be about \$50,000 per engine," said Mr. Castle, "and that gets you a catalytic converter and

piping for ventilation. That could cost as much as \$250,000 total, but it's up to you how many or how few you want to do."

Mr. Castle said that for the same cost, he could just work on two engines every two or three years, and he'd like to do one small and one large one at a time. He said it would be a permanent fix for the engines, which are 40 to 50 years old. The diesels are a type developed for Navy submarines during World War II and later applied to railroad locomotives.

Mr. Castle said the mechanical updates he wants to do are mostly "upkeep things," go through the oil and filters, the air system and installing some extra cooling to expand capacity so the plan could carry the whole town when it needs to.

"If we do all this, it will increase the longevity and reliability of the plant," he said. "If we don't take care of it at all, it will dwindle down to nothing in 10 years. To do all this will be about \$150,000 over ... 2 to 3 years. Then at the end, we've not just Band-Aided the plant, but improved the quality of the plant, at a lower price."

This would also give him the chance to train some new people to run the engines, he said, because right now, he's the only one who can run the plant, and he won't be (See **CITY** on Page 12A)

Stores plan to have a 'tax-free' day on Monday

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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Oberlin merchants are going to start a "tax-free day" promotion with Oberlin merchants, starting Monday, which happens to be Tax Day, April 15, and continuing on the 15th of every month thereafter.

The idea was brought up by the Oberlin Business Alliance, which joined forces with the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce last fall. Seven business members have agreed to participate in the promotion, though each will set their own rules in regards to what gets the "tax-free" treatment and

what doesn't.

"Every business will determine how the tax-free will be applied," said Chamber President David Swank, "so some people might do it on specific items, or some will do it on a dollar amount, and so forth. Every business will determine how it will be applied and on what items."

The businesses that have decided to give it a try, he said, are the Bargain Box Plus, Carman Computers, Crown Trophy, the LandMark Inn, Penn Ave. Boutique, the Dresser, the Last Indian Raid Museum and Oberlin Automotive.

The Chamber will track the promotion, the group decided, so that members can come together down the road and see which businesses benefitted most and why.

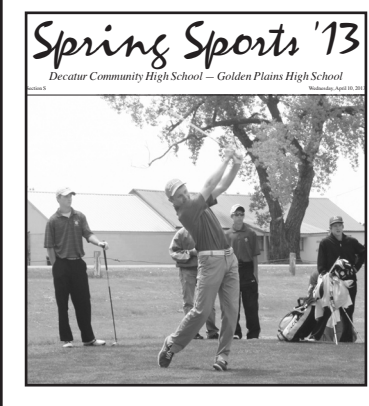
In other business, the Chamber: • Will hold the annual "Job Well Done" luncheon from 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. Wednesday, April 24, at The Gateway to celebrate Professional Assistants Week. Tickets are \$15, and if you are going to send one of your employees, you'll need to sign them up and pay the fee by next Wednesday, said Chamber board member Sharleen Wurm. There will be entertainment and

prizes, and the menu will include taco salad, strawberry shortcake, coffee and tea.

• Heard that 27 orders have been placed for flowers for the flower boxes on Main Street. The Chamber will be collecting money for the flowers at the end of the month, and planting will be the week before Mother's Day in May.

• Heard from board member Whitney True that the residents at (See **CHAMBER** on Page 12A)

Special Spring Sports section included in this week's issue



The annual Spring Sports section is inside today's *Oberlin Herald*. This keepsake edition includes team pictures from Decatur Community Junior High School and Golden Plains Middle School and High School, and individual pictures of the Oberlin Red Devils' golf players and track team.