

Building group has first talk

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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Oberlin's new Public Building Commission, formed by the City Council to borrow money to build a new swimming pool, met for the first time on Thursday, April 18, but since only three of the five members were present, did not make any moves to advance the project.

The commission could have done three things that night, according to John Haas of Ranson Financial Consultants, a Wichita bond firm that is acting as the city's financial consultant for the pool issue. It could have elected officers, passed a resolution to establish its bylaws and considered a resolution of intent to issue the bonds for the pool.

Members of the commission, nominated by council members and appointed by Mayor Rob McFee, are Ken Shobe and Gaylord Shields, who will serve for three years; Abby Hissong and Colleen Gee, for two; and Bob Ross, for one. Present at the meeting were all except Mr. Shobe and Mr. Shields.

While voters approved a 1.5-cent sales tax to pay for the pool, Mr. Haas said, the new commission will need to issue general obligation bonds to the city to get the money up front and begin the project.

"The commission will have their own public meetings separate from

the council," he said. "When the question of whether or not to take bids or proposals for the sale of the municipal bonds (to get the money for the project) comes up, the commission and council will have a joint meeting."

The commission would issue bonds on behalf of the city for the pool, he explained, and the city would then enter into a lease agreement with the commission to run the pool. Until all of the bonds issued to build the pool are paid off, the pool would belong to the commission, he said, but afterward, the city will own it. While the debt is being paid off, however, the city will be responsible for all aspects of running it.

"The commission does not have authority to levy or collect the tax that pays for the pool," Mr. Haas said. "It's only a conduit through which to get money. Once the bonds are paid off, the city would buy the pool from the commission for something like a dollar."

Under this plan, he said, the city would pass a resolution to the commission asking it to issue bonds for \$2.15 million—the estimated cost of construction. The commission then has to agree to do so.

"If they do," he said, "then their resolution will need to be published twice in the paper so that anyone (See COMMISSION on Page 8A)

Hospital gets big screen for new unit

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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The Decatur County Hospital hopes to install a new chemotherapy unit for outpatient treatment in the next 60 to 90 days, said Administrator Johnathan Owens, and the Midwest Cancer Alliance, with which the hospital is a partner, is donating a new flat-screen television for the unit.

Dr. Roy Jensen, director of the University of Kansas Cancer Center, which is also a partner in the alliance, announced the gift while speaking to the Oberlin Rotary Club on April 17. The center recently won National Cancer Institute designation, which means it will have more access to clinical trials, specialized care and greater resources for research, he said.

The television is to be used for the

alliance's telemedicine program, Dr. Jensen said, allowing doctors to consult over the Internet and discuss cancer cases, and also to allow support groups to meet with professionals in other towns.

The alliance has 150 members and 15 member hospitals, Mr. Jensen said, including cancer specialists, researchers and everything in between. It trains staff, and is the largest certifier of oncology nurses in Kansas.

The center gets \$50 million a year in grants and contracts for cancer research alone, he said. One of its partners, the KU School of Pharmacy, has been the No. 2 pharmacy school in the nation for several years.

"The purpose of the alliance is to shift the delivery of care to your hometown," said Dr. Jensen, adding (See HOSPITAL on Page 8A)



Students usher in spring with burgers, hot dogs and jazz in the park

HELPING HER BROTHER BATTLE the breeze on Saturday, Melody Koerperich (above) held the music as Caleb Koerperich played piano with the Decatur Community High School band for "Jazz in the Park." Isabel and Melinda Grafel (left) were part of the serving crew. They made sure that picnickers enjoying their burgers and hot dogs knew their donation went straight to the band. The players warmed up beforehand behind the bandshell (below). — Herald staff photos by Stephanie DeCamp



New races to kick off speedway fun

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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Been itching for a race? Well Rick Salem's got the tonic.

The Oberlin race promoter plans to kick off the season with the John Keenan Memorial Spring Sizzler on Saturday at the Decatur County Speedway, expected to attract drivers from Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska and Oklahoma.

The race will feature the 305 Sprint cars of the United Rebel Spirit Series, which Mr. Salem founded, along with kids' bike races and a special "chicken chase race," which will be run by the race car drivers themselves.

"You'll laugh until you have tears in your eyes

with this," said Mr. Salem. "This was a deal John and I talked about that we knew would really be entertaining for the whole family, and I thought it fitting that we include it in this special night for him."

The gates open at 5 p.m., with the races beginning at 7:30 p.m. The event is sponsored by Beaver Valley Supply Co., which Mr. Keenan, who died last year of cancer, worked for.

Mr. Salem's friend died Nov. 11 at age 64, he said. He was a 1966 graduate of Jennings High School, graduated from Fort Hays State University and served in the Navy.

"He never missed a race anywhere around here," Mr. Salem said. "He was a great race

fan and family man. He was just a super, super guy."

"John was a very loyal employee," the company said. "The only time he would take off of work was to be with his kids, grandkids or at the races."

Tickets for the races are \$12 for adults and \$6 for kids. Children under age 6 will be admitted free. Kids who bring a bike to the track to participate in the race also will get in free.

If you can't make it to the race, Mr. Salem said, it will be broadcast live with Mike Wilson calling the action at www.racinboys.com. If you would like to find out more about the racing series, go to www.unitedrebelsprintseries.com.

Tax program moves forward

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
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Decatur County commissioners decided Tuesday to back a tax-rebate program that has been proposed by those investing in a new motel for Oberlin, but owners who've already sunk some bucks into their property may be out of luck.

"You can't change stuff that happened yesterday," Commissioner Sid Metcalf said, echoing comments by Oberlin Mayor Rob McFee at a Thursday, April 18,

City Council meeting. "If you go back for one, then how far back do you go? The line has to be drawn somewhere."

Connie Grafel, marketing director for the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp., outlined the proposal to the council at its last meeting along with Greg Lohofener, a former Economic Development board member. The two are trying to get all three major taxing entities here — the county, the city and the Oberlin School

District — to participate. So far, she said, they have spoken only with the city and county, both of which were tentatively in favor of the idea.

The program, already in place in Norton and other nearby counties, would offer a 100 percent refund on property taxes to those who build new (or rehab existing) businesses and homes for their first year, Ms. Grafel said. Every year after that, the rebate would decrease, so that at the end of a set time period (Nor- (See REBATE on Page 8A)

Historian to visit school, museum

Civil War historian, author and speaker Debra Goodrich Bisel will speak Monday at Decatur Community High School and the Last Indian Raid Museum about the important role that Kansas played in that era's history.

The seventh-grade, eighth-grade and junior classes will attend an assembly from 9:50 to 10:20 a.m. in the high school auditorium, along

with other interested students. Afterward, Mrs. Bisel will talk and sign books at the museum from 1:30 to 3 p.m.

"We're just so excited to be able to feature Deb," said museum Director Sharleen Wurm. "I mean, she contacted us. We didn't reach out to her. She heard through mutual contacts about our museum and history here."

"We're especially happy to be working with the school as well." Mrs. Bisel will have two of her books for sale, the director said,

"Kansas Forts and Bases" and "The Civil War in Kansas." She has participated in more than 20 documentaries and has appeared on C-SPAN, PBS, the Discovery Channel and the History Channel. She is president of the Shawnee County Historical Society and the Civil War Roundtable of Eastern Kansas, and is a cofounder and on the selection committee of the Kansas Hall of Fame.

Right now, she is working on a biography of the Civil War's first (See AUTHOR on Page 8A)

A well-deserved treat



TACO SALADS WERE SERVED and Colleen Geihlsler (left) and Rhonda Manning were ready to enjoy theirs during the Administrative Assistant's lunch at The Gateway last Wednesday. — Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes