

* Tour gives sides a view of old pool

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 “We don’t know how bad it is,” Mrs. Williby said. “We just know it could collapse at any minute.”
 Karla Ross, Mr. Ross’ wife, asked why the pool committee would hold swim meets in a pool that could collapse.
 “This is the only pool we have,” Mrs. Williby replied.
 Mrs. Ross added that the city is under water restrictions and questioned what effect a new pool could have on the water situation.
 “It doesn’t make sense,” she said, “to have a new pool if there’s no water in town.”
 Mrs. Williby said that the current pool is not handicap accessible, and she believes every facility should be open to wheelchair users.
 Marilyn Black, who attends most city meetings, asked if the city should just close the pool down.
 “If this pool is so bad,” she asked, “why is it still open?”
 Councilwoman Rachel Johnson, also a pool committee member, said she has kids who come to the city pool and asked Mrs. Black if she felt kids should have to give up something that has been a vital part of their lives.
 Swim coach Stephanie Blau, who was in the middle of a practice, came over to talk to the group.
 “This pool is these kids’ lives in the summer,” she said.
 Mr. Ross suggested that the kids could swim at the city lake. Susan May said she dared him to tell that to the children swimming at the time.
 Mrs. Blau suggested that the kids come over to the meeting, but Mrs. Williby stopped them in an effort to restore order.
 Mrs. Williby continued to explain why she thinks a new pool is necessary. She said the new pool could help entice people with families to move to Oberlin.
 Mrs. Black was not convinced. “I did not move here because of a swimming pool,” she said.
 Mrs. Ross said the same claim was made about The Gateway.
 “People who are low-income are not going to look at bringing in new families,” she said. “People are going to look at the increase in their water bill, electric bill and sales tax. We have no jobs for these families, but we need a pool?”
 Mrs. Johnson’s response was that sales tax will be in effect whether or not Oberlin has a new pool.
 “Wouldn’t you rather have something to show for it?” she asked.
 Mrs. Ross said she would probably be for the pool if it wasn’t for the water restrictions and the drought. She still questioned how a town with 1,700 people could keep up with the expenses of a new pool when inflation is factored in.
 A petition to stop bonds from being issued for the new pool was approved the same day the two groups met.
 Mrs. May said she thought the petition would cause hatred and division in the town and accused Mr. and Mrs. Ross of starting the petition.
 She added that Mayor Rob McFee had appointed people on the building commission who were against the new pool.
 Mrs. Williby said she believes the mayor has cost the city of Oberlin thousands and thousands of dollars with his “delay tactics” because of the increase in interest rates on revenue bonds and construction costs.
 The idea of starting a petition to remove the mayor from office came up during the meeting.
 Mrs. Black said she thought the mayor shouldn’t appoint just those who are for the new pool to serve on the commission.
 Mr. Ross, who was standing near the wall of the entrance, left the meeting sometime during that exchange, which Mrs. May found offensive.
 “If (Mr. Ross) can’t perform his duties,” she said, “then he needs to be replaced with someone who can.”
 Although Mr. Ross seconded the motion to issue the bonds for the pool project, Mrs. Williby and commission treasurer Sarah Howland both confirmed that he said his purpose for serving on the commission was to stop the bonds from being issued.
 Mrs. Williby said Oberlin may be making history as the only city to have someone on its building commission vote against a new pool after bonds have been approved.

Getting ready for some fun



WHILE THEY WORK A LOT, sometimes it’s fun to just check out the prizes. Amusement Authority members Sherri Kyte (left) and Charissa Huff took a break to make sure the stuffed toys used as prizes were in good shape for the carnival, which is held during the county fair in August.
 — Herald photo by Carrie Morford

* Petition could set pool project back a year

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 names, she said, the commissioners will make a resolution for an election.
 Mr. Shelton said although it would be ideal to have the election sometime this year, it would be costly for the city to have a special election.
 “To save money,” he said, “(the city) may have it put it on the ballot in the next election.”
 Mr. Hirsch said the soonest the petition could be placed on a general election ballot would be in November 2014, nearly 16 months away.
 Ms. Geihlsler said if the petition is approved, the clerk’s office will contact the city to determine what type of election to have and begin to work on setting it up.
 She said the city could choose to have a mail ballot election for around \$3,000 or a special election with voting booths at The Gateway, which would cost around \$5,000.

Pool committee member Danielle Leitner said when she heard about the petition, she found it discouraging. She pointed out that a special sales tax to pay for the pool won by a 2-to-1 margin last year, and said she believes the likelihood that a bond election could overturn a 2-to-1 vote is small.
 “It just seems like a big waste of money,” she said, “to see the vote go the same way.”
 Backers of the pool have said that Bob Ross, a member of the city’s Public Building Commission formed to issue bonds for the pool, and possibly Mayor Rob McFee are behind the petition. Both have opposed the pool, and Mr. Ross was quoted as saying the only reason he joined the commission was to block the bonds.
 Several messages were left for Mr. Ross and Mayor McFee to ask for comment on the petition, but neither returned the calls.

* Carrier retires after 33 years

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 “During the winter of 1985,” he said, “one of my customers driving a pickup pulling a cattle trailer ran a stop sign and struck my car, turning it on its side and knocking me out.”
 Mr. Helm said that he only missed one day of work because of the crash, something he takes great pride in.
 “My fondest memory of being a carrier in Oberlin,” he said, “were the customers who made cookies and left them in their mail boxes.”
 He said he and his wife Debbie have five children. Son Aaron and his wife Robie, both graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., are first lieutenants in the Army, stationed at Fort Hood, Texas.
 His daughter Rebecca and her husband, Jaron Cox, are both graduates of Kansas State University and live in Manhattan.
 He said his son Jacob is a junior at

the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.
 Matthew is freshman at Kansas State in the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps and Timothy is a sophomore at Decatur Community High School.
 Other achievements Mr. Helm said he’s proud of was the fact he recorded 34 years of safe driving and received an award for 1 million miles of safe driving.
 After retirement, Mr. Helm said, he holds a legislative consultative position in the Nebraska office of the American Legion and will be running for national commander in August 2014. For more information, go to www.helm4cmdr.org.

* Shows offer fun

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 Fourth, said he would continue that while providing fireworks for the laser show next year.
 Whether they can combine the shows may hinge on the city’s willingness to expand its insurance policy to cover pyrotechnics.
 He said he and Mrs. Diederich are checking to see if a license would be needed.
 Mr. Fick said he would ask the City Council to allow the two shows to proceed even if there is a burn ban in effect since this would be a professional setup.
 He and Mrs. Diederich said they will be working plans for the show on the Fourth.
 Mr. Fick’s show at the city ball fields June 29 was 80 feet wide and featured a finale with 20 shots per second.
 Mrs. Diederich said the firemen’s wives brought in \$3,000 in donations from the dinner served at the park, feeding around 800 people.
 She said \$1,850, the cost to prepare the dinner, would be set aside for next year’s event.
 “We wish to thank all who made that day possible,” Mrs. Diederich said.

* Harvest goes ahead

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 town won’t be a factor much longer,” he said,
 The drought has affected the fields north of town the most, Mr. Moore added.
 “The crop there is so dry,” he said, “and that area is really struggling.”
 Mr. Moore said the current drought has not only affected the wheat harvest, but has done irreversible damage to many area corn fields.

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