

Visitors' bureau decides to spend ad dollars at home

The Oberlin Convention and Visitors Bureau looked at advertising options to get the word out to people about what Oberlin has to offer.

In the past, the bureau has tried to advertise in publications which are dispersed outside of town, including a hunting guide in which they had the inside front cover to promote businesses here.

Last Wednesday night, Dave Bergling, advertising manager for *The Oberlin Herald*, asked the bureau members if they wanted to advertise in the paper's Spring Hunting and Fishing Guide, which is done jointly with

Nor'west Newspapers, which operates papers in St. Francis, Bird City, Colby and Goodland.

The guides are sent to homes all across northwest Kansas, placed at state tourism centers for people entering the state and at Chambers around the area. Mr. Bergling said with the popularity of the lake in Norton, there are many people who pass through here to fish and this is a chance to hit that market.

Last year, the bureau paid \$40 for a colored banner on a page filled with Oberlin ads. Connie Grafel, marketing director of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp.,

asked if there would be a page filled with ads from the city again. Mr. Bergling said he could do that.

Helen Gee, manager of the chamber, said she sends the guides out when people call for information about the area.

Ms. Grafel said they also needed to decide if they would advertise in the *Abilene Chronicle* again this year.

The board members didn't know if advertising in the *Chronicle* had brought anyone into the area. The board decided to not advertise with the *Chronicle* and agreed to do a \$40 ad with

The Herald.

The bureau set their budget for 2001 during the meeting based on what amount of bed tax they brought in last year. They said the total income for the year would be around \$6,100 and their carryover from this year is about \$1,300.

In that budget will be a yearly rental fee for the land in between Hall and Commercial on U.S. 83, owned by the Assembly of God Church, where the bureau will be putting an Oberlin sign they agreed to pay \$400 a year.

Fonda Farr, museum curator, said she had contacted the state Transportation Department

to see if they needed to OK it since it is off the highway. She said the bureau received paperwork back which she said she would fill out.

Along with the sign project, members are organizing a tourist center in the old police station at U.S. 36 and U.S. 83. The group had some leads on desks and chairs which might be donated. Mrs. Gee said she had called the Oberlin School District to see if they would have any bookshelves.

She said she has found one woman who qualifies for Green Thumb to work in the center and another one who is interested in the position.



EVEN DURING THE ANNIVERSARY PARTY, the work didn't stop at R&M Service Center. Kathy Brainard (above) helped Bryan Loker look at Step 2 prices over the lunch hour celebration of 20 years in business. Owner Robert Groneweg (below) talked about laundry machines with Judy Shirley.

— Herald staff photos by Jeanette Krizek

Business celebrates 20 years

With a 20-foot sub sandwich and the sales tax on purchases on the store, about 150 people helped R&M Service Center celebrate 20 years in business on Friday.

Owner Robert Groneweg said he started the business out of his home in the late 1970s, doing service work for appliances. About five years later he started to sell appliances also.

The business ran out of his home for the first 13 years and then was moved to Main Street. Mr. Groneweg said it was expensive to come downtown, and without leadership and business experience it can be scary.

The firm's success since then was celebrated Friday at lunch. The event, originally planned for Thursday, was postponed because of the blizzard, but that didn't stop people from spending time in the store on Friday.

For the anniversary, Mr. Groneweg said, he was paying the sales tax on appliances purchased during the sale. During a noon social hour, he helped customers pick out the store they thought they wanted and what they sold six items, mainly washers and freezers.

Each 20 years in business was repre-



sented by a foot of sandwich made at Raye's Grocery. Mr. Groneweg said it was supposed to serve about 160 people.

Since he went into business, he said, he has seen a lot of changes. When he started, appliances came in several colors including greens, yellows and others. Now it is black, white or almond.

The machines are also becoming more computerized, when 20 years ago you hardly saw a computer on an appliance.

The store is run by him, one full-time and a part-time employee.

Mr. Groneweg said the best advice he can give to people starting out in business, especially downtown, is not to be afraid to ask for help.

Blizzard hits town hard, disappears fast

Oberlin woke up Thursday morning to blizzard like conditions, with snow and heavy winds cutting visibility, but by the afternoon most of the snow had melted and the streets had been cleared by sun.

The area received about an inch of snow in the spring storm, which forecasters said was suppose to miss the county and hit harder to the east.

Snow closed businesses downtown, but Oberlin schools were on spring break. Jennings students went to

classes in the morning on time.

Johnny Medcalf, crop specialist with Servi-Tech, said the moisture hasn't hurt the wheat planted during the drought last fall.

Although there is a thing as too much moisture, he said, the area hasn't received that much.

"We were in so much of a deficit that we are just starting to get caught up," he said.

Some wheat fields are starting to break dormancy and are greening up,

he said, but others have also experienced winter kill, when the wheat gets burned by the cold. Mr. Medcalf said with some exceptions, wheat which was planted earlier seems to be looking better than the later-planted crops.

There is no snow forecast for the week, but the area has a chance of rain today through Friday.

Mr. Medcalf said as long as the temperatures don't drop below zero and as long as it stays in the 20s, the wheat could handle more snow.

Business group questions Chamber fees

Oberlin Business Alliance members questioned why people who join the organization have to be members of the Oberlin-Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce at their meeting last Wednesday.

The question was brought up because alliance members were hearing details about their social on Friday, where if people joined the group they had \$25 off the usual \$75 membership fee. The question was, do those people have to join the Chamber at that time too?

None of the alliance members knew why the fees were set up that way, although Pharmacist Rusty Addleman said he remembered it was set up by the

Chamber years ago.

Some alliance members agreed it was an issue which needs to be looked into further.

For the second half of the meeting, members heard a presentation by Wayne Billinger, of Cable Network Advertising Inc. Mr. Billinger said the company is a division of Classic Cable which allows local businesses to put ads on ESPN, TNT and CNN.

He said he serves Colby, Oberlin, Oakley, Plainville, Phillipsburg, Norton, Smith Center and Stockton. Basically, the company comes out and shoots commercials and then inserts them into those cable channels.

The company allows businesses to

stretch into other towns through advertising, he said. The average cost for one business to do one town is \$252 per month with 168 minimum commercials, and for all eight towns Mr. Billinger said the cost is around \$568. That doesn't include the production base rate, which is \$150.

In other business, alliance members:

- Agreed to hang spring banners downtown at 10 a.m. Saturday.
- Heard that the Oberlin Jaycees will host diamond skills at 3 p.m. on April 22 at the ballfields. The project is for kids 7-14 to test their skills in batting, fielding and throwing skills.
- Heard the Oberlin Lions Club is planning an Easter egg hunt April 14.

City looks at outline, pay raise for Gateway marketing director

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

The Oberlin City Council discussed having an outline of the job responsibilities for The Gateway marketing director after a sub-committee reviewed Connie Grafel's contract, which is up every two years.

The council agreed to a 3 percent raise for Ms. Grafel, the same as the city gave other city employees for cost of living, at the regular council meeting Thursday. Members heard a report from Councilman Marvin Matchett, who sat on a sub-committee to discuss the contract.

Mr. Matchett said they discovered that there was no outline for what the director's duties are for The Gateway, so a proposed outline was presented to the council members to look over. It was discussed, but no motion was made to approve it.

Councilman Stan McEvoy asked if the outline had been shown to other employees to make sure there isn't any conflict. Mr. Matchett said he left that up to the city administrator.

He told the council the economic development board members were recommending a raise of \$200 a month for Ms. Grafel from its budget. The increase would be from \$1,750 to \$1,950 a month, plus the city's budgeted 3 percent raise, which would be about \$53. That would bring her to \$2,003 per

month total. The entire salary will be paid by the city, which will take the \$200 a month out of the \$10,000 a year it gives the development group.

Mr. Matchett said this means that Ms. Grafel would get a little less than what was budgeted for 2001. All council members but Mr. McEvoy agreed.

The outline states the marketing director will sell advertising, develop media materials, distribute a Gateway calendar and report twice a year to the council, among other things. The outline was not adopted at the meeting.

A motion was made to name City Treasurer Deanna Castle a deputy city clerk, but then was retracted because City Attorney Steve Hirsch said there is an attorney general's opinion which says one person can't hold both jobs.

The request for Mrs. Castle to be named deputy clerk was made because she is taking classes to be certified as a clerk, which she can't receive credit for unless she holds the title. City Clerk Martha Nemeth said Mrs. Castle's next classes aren't until November so the council may have time.

In other business, the council:

- Received a letter from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment saying that the city needs to do something about about nitrates in the water at the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch. One well read 16.12 on nitrates on

March 1 and it should be below 10.

Mr. Matchett asked if the blending system being installed for the city wells will help lower the nitrate level. City Administrator Gary Shike said it won't because the ranch is on a separate system. Councilman Jerry Fidele asked if the city could put a reverse osmosis system in at the ranch. Mr. Shike said that might work, but every point source has to be below the nitrate limit.

- Discussed sidewalk repair for downtown. Mr. Shike said Oakley has an ordinance which sets prices at \$2.50 for a square foot for new walks and about \$4 a square foot to rip out old ones. City Administrator Gary Shike said to redo all the walks from Hall to Commercial downtown on both sides it would cost about \$80,000.

- Elected Mr. McEvoy as the council president until the election.

- Thanked former Mayor Charles Frickey for the hard work and service for the last six years.

- Heard from Jack Benton, Sappa Park restoration committee chairman, who said shingles have been ordered for the shelter house. Work days have been scheduled for Saturday, April 28 and May 5.

- Declared National Library Week for April 1-7.

- Held a closed session for non-elected personnel for 20 minutes.

Commissioners take office tour

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

Decatur County Commissioners toured county offices and buildings Tuesday on a recess from their regular meeting.

The commissioners went on tour to familiarize Commissioner Pat Glenn, who has only held office for a few months, with the county facilities, and also because they try to tour the county every year. Commissioners visited the ambulance building, rural fire department and the noxious weed building.

Before leaving, they held a quick meeting to talk with several people. County Health Administrator Marilyn Gamblin had three grant applications for Chairman Ralph Unger to sign. The applications, due Thursday, were for immunization, in which Ms. Gamblin said she asked for money for a new refrigerator since the one which holds the vaccines now is making funny noises, and a new alarm for the unit.

Commissioner Doyle Brown asked her if the clinic got in its flu vaccine and if they got the entire shipment. She said the clinic did receive the vaccine, although later than normal because of the nationwide shortage.

Ms. Gamblin said because it came in so late, people went other places for the shot or decided not to get one, so they have 100 doses left.

Ms. Gamblin said the county health fair is coming up from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday, April 20. There will be several displays, including a cardiac one, and something provided by living independently in northwest Kansas.

She said they are offering blood tests again during the fair, although the blood has to be drawn beforehand and the test costs \$25.

Commissioners also talked with Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman, who said two employees had quit and he is running an ad looking for new hires.

The road crew has experienced some problems with the 1988 Dresser grader, said Mr. Stallman. The problem was narrowed down to a radiator defect, which their other Dresser has had before.

Mr. Stallman said he thought they needed to start using distilled water in it. Mr. Stallman said the water doesn't need to be drinkable, but better than city water, so he will look for some type of distiller.

The road crew checked a muddy road which Leslie Urban talked to commissioners about on March 6, he said. Mr. Stallman said they tried to get the water which was pooled on it off and clean up some of the ruts. Until the roads in the county dry out, he said, all they can do is blade them to try to get rid of the ruts, but the roads will remain soft.

In other business, commissioners:

- Talked with Courthouse maintenance man Bob Berls, who said it

would coast about \$80 to put a railing on the stairs from the third to fourth floor in the courthouse.

- Heard from Register of Deeds Judy Gaumer, who said she attended a seminar for her new job last week.

- Heard from County Attorney Steve Hirsch, who said he read the bill on the 911 tax and it says nothing about counties having to name all the roads nor are they required to get enhanced 911.

Both topics were brought up when Rep. John Faber and Sen. Stan Clark were in Oberlin last month for a tour at

which time people were told Decatur County officials would have to name the roads.

- Heard that Commissioner Glenn had received a complaint that the county overdid the employee recognition dinner because of the number of plaques given away. Mrs. Glenn told them that since it was the first time, there were more and the next year there will be minimal plaques.

- Held five-minute and 10-minute closed sessions for non-elected personnel. No action was taken.

NEW LISTINGS!



305 N. Wolf. FABULOUS 4-LEVEL LIVING! 4 bedroom, split-level home located in an idyllic neighborhood. Built in 1980, the home boasts beautiful carpet throughout its spacious rooms. The U-shaped kitchen opens to a dining area w/quality patio doors leading to a lush lawn enclosed with chain link fence. The lower level offers a family room, lg. laundry room and newly remodeled bathroom. The 4th level showcases a bedroom suite ideal for a teenager's retreat or guest suite. This one will go quickly!



119 S. Rodehaver. CHARMING 1940's brick revival Colonial w/4 bedrooms, 2 baths on 2 levels of living and all new windows, storm windows and storm doors throughout. The formal dining room features newly-finished hardwood floors and lg. brick fireplace. The great room, newly painted, also offers a lg. brick fireplace and new patio doors leading to a backyard surrounded w/a new wood privacy fence. Huge, eat-in kitchen is a chef's delight! A custom bar opening to a family room is featured in the fully finished basement. See this TODAY.



310 N. Martin. IMMACULATE, 3-bedroom stucco home lovingly remodeled on a lg. corner lot w/garden spot and detached double-garage in quiet neighborhood. Priced to sell quickly, this home features open living for easy access on one level.

For an appointment to see these homes or any of our other listings, call:

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