

## City may decide to trap, kill cats

By KIMBELRY DAVIS  
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Cats roaming the streets of Oberlin may soon have to be tagged or risk being put to sleep if caught.

At its regular meeting Thursday night, members of the Oberlin City Council tossed around the idea of asking people with cats to pay for licenses, similar to what dog owners have to do. The cat would then have to wear the tag. If the cat got caught, then the owner would have three days to claim the pet before it was put down.

There is a cat problem, said Mayor Joe Stanley, and something needs to be done about it.

There are four kinds of cats in the city, said Councilman Jay Anderson, a retired veterinarian: those that never go out, pets that go out

### Council Countdown

At the meeting Thursday, the Oberlin City Council:

- Talked about requiring licenses for cats so roaming felines would have tags or risk being put to sleep if caught. Story at left.
- Approved a charter ordinance allowing the library board to include up to two people who live outside the city limits at any one time. Story to come.
- Decided to table a decision about allowing beer in parts of Sappa Park

for an upcoming barbecue cook-off until the council could get more information and public comment. Story below.

• Approved a resolution urging Kansas legislators to approve a new statewide transportation program. Story to come.

• Heard plans for the Decatur Community High School senior class to spend next Wednesday working at Sappa Park. Story to come.

night, semiferal cats and feral cats that live in the storm sewers.

One problem, said Dr. Anderson,

is that people feeding these cats outside attract skunks.

The best thing would be for people

to keep their pet cats in the house, he said. The other option is that people could buy a license to allow their cat to roam. The city could then trap all cats, said Dr. Anderson. If people love their cats enough, they would purchase a license, then the owner can be contacted and come pick up their cat.

People wouldn't be able to buy a cat license, said Dr. Anderson, unless the cats have rabies shots. The city could charge for the licenses.

What happens to cats that get trapped? asked City Administrator Gary Shike.

"They go see baby Jesus," Dr. Anderson replied.

The city would have to hold them for a time, said City Administrator Gary Shike. Where would they do that?

The owner could be called while the cat is still in the trap, said Dr. Anderson. If the owner doesn't come get it, then...

What do you do if the owner comes to get the cat? asked Councilman Ray Ward. Fine 'em, said Dr. Anderson.

Cats shouldn't be able to roam, said Mr. Ward, it's just like dogs running around.

What about spaying or neutering the cats, then releasing them? asked Councilwoman Rhonda May. Actually, before making a decision, she said, the city probably needs more public input.

Over the years, said Councilman Ray Ward, the city has heard from a lot of people upset about the number of cats running around.

So what you're saying is every-

one knows there are lots of cats in Oberlin, everyone knows the city has feral cats and everyone knows those cats live in the sewer? asked Ms. May.

Whatever the city does, said Mayor Stanley, it won't be popular. The cat population though, is almost to a point where it is a health concern. He said a woman who runs a day care center called. Her neighbor feeds about 50 stray cats next door and all of those are using her sand box as a litter box.

Why do the cats need to be licensed to roam? asked Mr. Ward. If the cat goes outside and is caught, then the owner pays a fine.

Basically, said Mayor Stanley, there would be a leash law for cats.

If someone pays for a license (See CITY on Page 10A)



AT THE OPENING GALA Friday night for the High Plains Artfest, Herschel Betts (above) looked at an oil painting. Tony Marshall (below), one of the artists, talked with Barbara Dehlinger. — Herald staff photos by Kim Davis

## Rain and snow give wheat crop a needed drink

The moisture last week was a blessing for the wheat crop, just what the area needed, one expert said, saving it from a dry winter and early spring.

Of course, said Brian Olson, area agronomist with Kansas State University Research and Extension, as it grows and the weather gets warmer, the wheat will need even more rain. The good news is there is a chance in the forecast for the next few days.

The crop is starting to joint, Mr. Olson said, and in some areas already has. During that process, he said, when the wheat comes off the crown stage and really starts growing, the plant needs moisture.

During jointing, he said, there is always the fear of a late freeze which would damage the crop.

While it's been dry, he said, precipitation from the rain and snow bought farmers with crops in the ground a few more weeks.

The moisture also is good for corn, said Mr. Olson, which some farmers are starting to plant. Others will wait three to four more weeks, he said, but by the end of the month, most people will be at least starting to put some of their corn in the ground.

With the moisture, he said, some farmers have decided to spread their corn out, planting some now and some later.

Of course, said Mr. Olson, the area always need moisture. This last storm was just really timely and will help the wheat continue to grow.

No one is saying whether an area is in a drought, but the numbers show Oberlin has received 1.66 inches less precipitation that it had through April of last year with a week left in the month.

Even with the 1.59 inches that fell last week, as of now the April is behind last year by 10 hundredths, said Kelly James, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Goodland. There has definitely been less moisture than last year at this time, she said; there were fewer snow storms in January this year, meaning less precipitation to date.

The Weather Service doesn't really declare a drought, said Ms. James. So far, she added, she hasn't heard anyone say there area is or isn't in a drought.

Starting today, the service is predicting a 20 to 30 percent chance of thunderstorms and rain showers every day for the rest of the week.

## Meeting next week on new rec center

By KIMBERLY DAVIS  
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Anyone interested in the new Golden Age Center, Sunflower Cinema and bowling alley proposed for downtown Oberlin is invited to a public meeting at 7 p.m. next Wednesday at the center.

Greg Lohofener, who has been working on the project, said Randy Hrabe with Northwest Kansas Planning and Development, Dave Barber with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Administration and Kevin Brown of Sappa Valley Construction will be at the meeting to answer questions.

Mr. Lohofener said they plan to

demolish the current building and build a new one at the same location to house the senior center, theater and a six-lane bowling alley.

Although the three would share a building, he said, each operation would be separate, though the bowling alley and cinema could share a snack area.

The plan, said Mr. Lohofener, includes a new digital projector, sound system and 110 new seats for the theater. The bowling alley would boast an electronic scoring system.

The Golden Age Center and Sunflower Cinema buildings, said Mr. (See PLAN on Page 10A)

## Couple asks council to allow alcohol in park

By KIMBERLY DAVIS  
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The Oberlin City Council decided Thursday to table a decision about allowing beer in parts of Sappa Park for an upcoming barbecue cook-off until the members can get more information and some public comment.

City Administrator Gary Shike said Griff and Cindy Lincoln told him a group they are involved with — they didn't give a name — would like to hold the cook-off at the park east of town, but it would go over better if people could have a beer. Mr. Shike added that beer is sometimes an ingredient in barbecue recipes.

For people to be allowed to drink beer at the park, said City Attorney Steve Hirsch, the council would have to exempt an area. Otherwise, he said, the law forbids drinking beer or alcohol on any public property.

Can that be done on a one-time basis? asked Councilman Rob McFee.

The problem is state law says no drinking on public property, said Mr. Hirsch. The city has exemptions for The Gateway and the golf course, Mr. Hirsch said, adding that an exemption probably can't be done on a temporary or one-time basis.

(See COUPLE on Page 10A)

## Gala gathers a crowd

By KIMBERLY DAVIS  
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Pottery, water color, oils, photography and even some computer programs were shown off by area artists over the weekend at the annual High Plains Artfest at The Gateway.

The show, which started four years ago, features all kinds of art from students and adult artists in the Tri-State region.

Friday night brought 175 patrons and artists to an opening gala to see the show, make a few purchases and enjoy hors d'oeuvres. As they walked around, each person had the chance to vote for the People's Choice awards for both the adult and student artists. Music was provided by the McCook String Quintet.

People's Choice winners were Anna Seeber Shaw's pastel painting of cowboy Gary Richards, titled "Finding 412," for the adult section and Brian Vollbracht, senior at Wheatland/Grinnell High School, with a colored pencil drawing entitled "Running on Empty."

Mary Henzel, with the Oberlin Arts and Humanities Commission, said 22 pieces of art had been sold for a total of \$7,165. The show boasted entries from 100 artists, including 57 adults and 43 students.

Anyone who missed the gala



on Friday could walk through the show on Saturday and Sunday. Mrs. Henzel said 186 people visited over those two days.

The judges, Barbara Waterman Peters and Larry Peters of Topeka, chose a pastel called "Daily Commute" by Emily Slattery of McCook High School, and a pastel monotype called "Gift of Maize"

by Victoria Westch of McCook and Montana as the student and adult Best of Show winners.

Area artists displaying their work included Jennifer Kastan and Susan Breen, Herndon; Tony Marshall, Norcatar; Roger and Linda Fuller, Norton; and Cameron and Hunter Nedland, Mrs. Shaw, Al-freda Seeber, Neil Marshall, Jared

Marcuson, Jennifer Ploussard and Lacie Alstrom of Oberlin.

"The expertise and vision of Anna Seeber Shaw," said Mrs. Henzel, "has made the show possible. She saw the potential of area artists and had the experience of how to organize and show the art in a positive way. Without her help, the show would not be possible."

# \*Plan for center would add bowling alley

(Continued from Page 1A)  
Lohofener, are deteriorating and need expensive repairs. The theater's equipment and sound system need to be replaced.

Another idea for the new building is to use it for an after school day care center, he said.

Decatur County has been without much all-ages recreation since Centennial Bowl burned down in 2005, he said, adding that the planners hope to salvage as much of the heating and air conditioning units at both the theater and center as possible.

The estimated cost for the plan around \$900,000, including demolition and all construction. The group is looking for money, said Mr. Lohofener, and that will be discussed at the public meeting.

The first idea, he said, is to apply for a state program in which a person gets a credit on their state income taxes equal to 70 percent of the amount donated to a project. The group has to apply for this program by the first week in May, he said, and it will help the application process if some people make pledges before then.

There will be pledge forms at the meeting, he said, or people can call him at 475-3459, Connie Grafel with the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. at 475-2901 or Dorothy Moore with the Golden Age Center at 475-

3222.

Another option is to apply for a state-federal Community Development block grant for between \$100,000 to \$200,000, he said. Block grants and others will be discussed at the meeting.

The county does have \$35,000 in an account from a senior-citizen tax levy, he said, money that has been carried forward from previous years. Mr. Lohofener said this is only for the Oberlin portion, since the county actually collects the tax for senior centers in Oberlin, Jennings, Dresden and Norcatar.

Through fund raisers, the center has been able to raise around \$12,000, he said.

Part of that \$900,000 cost is demolition work, said Mr. Lohofener, and hopefully some of that could be done by the city or county.

Another money source would be a loan from the Department of Agriculture, he said, and that is the only source which would require a debt to be repaid. At the meeting, said Mr. Lohofener, he will have an income and expense projection for the new building.

This project, he said, so far has received help not only from Mr. Brown at Sappa Valley Construction, who worked up the plans and drawings, but in the initial stages from Rex Olson, a Decatur Community High School graduate who is now an architect in Colorado.

## A day volunteering



AT THE RUMMAGE SALE Saturday afternoon at the Last Indian Raid Museum, Chris Koerperich looked at a radio. Mr. Koerperich was one of the many volunteers at the sale. — Herald staff photo by Kimberly Davis

# \*City may require licenses for cats

(Continued from Page 1A)  
for their cat, asked Mr. Shike, can the city really fine them if the cat is caught? Probably not, said Dr. Anderson, not if the cat is licensed.

Maybe the cats shouldn't be treated the same as dogs, said Ms. May. Normally, she said, dogs they can be contained in a back yard with a fence or a leash. Cats really aren't the same, but if they're wearing a tag showing a license, it would separate pets from the wild cats.

Can the city say on July 1 they will throw poison in the sewers to get rid of the ferrel cats? asked Mayor Stanley.

Then the city will have People for Ethical Treatment for Animals out here, said Mr. McFee.

The last time the city talked about the cat issue, said Mayor Stanley, Mr. Shike e-mailed other towns. One city catches the cats and fixes them and then releases them, he said. That way, they aren't breeding.

There is an argument, said Dr. Anderson, that the rest of the colony will breed more to fill in that space.

The first step will probably be licensing cats, said Mayor Stanley.

The city needs to do something, said Dr. Anderson, even if it is putting a challenge out to cat owners for some kind of work-

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# \*Couple asks for beer in Sappa Park

(Continued from Page 1A)  
Isn't it typical to ban alcohol at city parks? asked Councilwoman Rhonda May.

If the park is exempt from the law, she said, teenagers would know that, and there are places to drink and not

be seen. The Lincolns said they have 80 people interested in the cook-off, Mr. Shike said, but they thought it might not happen if there was no beer. Just because the council says people can't drink at the park, said

Mayor Joe Stanley, doesn't mean people won't. Plenty of drinking goes on along Main Street during the car show, he said, even though it isn't allowed.

"My concern is for the kids," said Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener.

The city could maybe set specified days in the ordinance when alcohol consumption would be allowed at Sappa Park in a certain

area, said Mr. Hirsch. The city attorney, Mr. Shike noted, hasn't had a whole lot of time to research the issue. The group is looking at possibly doing this the same weekend as the Mini Sapa Day event this fall, he said.

Mayor Joe Stanley suggested putting off a decision. That would allow the council to get more information from the Lincolns and some public comment, he said.

## Recycling program growing

Sarah Fredrickson told Decatur County commissioners Tuesday she had gone to Oberlin Elementary School to talk with the students, who are now collecting plastic milk jugs, about recycling.

Mrs. Fredrickson told commissioners the weed control department had bought a pallet jack, which saves her about an hour a week because she doesn't have to go borrow one from Ultimate Fertilizer to move materials.

She said they have 13 bales of cardboard in the storage building and one in the baler. That's 14,000 pounds. Mrs. Fredrickson said they also have a gaylord, a big box, full of office paper.

The truck from Northwest Kansas Recycling will probably come in May, she said, and they will have to borrow a fork lifter to load it.

Would a skid loader be better? asked Commissioner Stan McEvoy. A skid loader would be nice to move snow, too, said Mrs. Fredrickson.

Mrs. Fredrickson said she is looking for someone to donate an old stock trailer for people to put cardboard in until it goes in the baler. More and more businesses are calling for her to pick up cardboard, she said.

During the last storm, said Mrs. Fredrickson, there was water running into the old county shop, and it was over her boots on the floor. It seems like more drains into the

building than outside, she said.

What about electronic waste? asked Mr. McEvoy. County Clerk Marilyn Horn said Jack Benton is in charge of that.

Mrs. Fredrickson said some people don't want to climb up on the recycling trailer and are putting their items in the gaylords in the metal building.

She said the weed department had started spraying roadsides and musk thistle.

How is the cleaning at the health department going? asked Mr. McEvoy. Mrs. Fredrickson said she does it on Fridays over the lunch hour, but when she's out in the country spraying, she isn't going to be able to come back in to clean the office then.

In other business, the commissioners,

- Heard that a technician from ES&S out of Omaha had come out and calibrated the AutoMark voting machines to prepare them for the next election.

- Approved the fire department ordering parts for one of the trucks, which will cost just over \$800 without shipping and handling. Chief Bill Catheart and crew will do the work. Mrs. Horn said the request came in by e-mail.

- Approved repairs to the front-wheel drive spindle to the 1988 Dresser 850 grader, which will cost over \$500.

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