



*City Council shows support for a biologist

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tat and hunting, Mr. Pauls replied.
There are programs that aren't being used here, said Mr. Pauls. The biologist will be able to read through the information on various programs and be able to tell the landowners which ones will work for them.

"This is a unique opportunity to bring some young people to Oberlin," he said.

Councilman Bill Riedel asked if the biologist would be committed to living in Oberlin. Mr. Pauls said yes.

It would be a three-year contract, said Mr. Pauls. The job opening will be advertised at the beginning of February.

Mr. Riedel asked who would underwrite the rest of the salary. Mr. Pauls said most of the money would come from the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the person will be a federal or state employee.

This isn't a huge expenditure considering the possible benefits to the community, said Mr. Pauls.

While there was some discussion on using the house as an in-kind donation instead of the money from the city, Mr. Pauls said he hadn't heard if that would work.

Mayor Joe Stanley said he was somewhat reserved about paying someone to move to Oberlin. The

city doesn't do that for a new doctor or teacher, he said. The city wouldn't be paying someone to move here, said Ms. May. The money is going to pay a person's salary.

This would be a marvelous thing for a new hotel, too, said Mr. Riedel.

The idea is to look at hunting as an economic base, said Ms. May.

The Pheasants Forever chapter could pay for the whole thing, said Mr. Pauls. The community has really supported its annual banquets.

Last year, he said, the group set aside \$10,000 for Walk-in Hunting to kind of sweeten the pot and only \$3,400 was used. The group budgeted \$4,000 for Sappa Park and spent \$1,000 on a youth shoot.

Councilwoman Marcia Lohofener said she knows what hunting used to mean to the town's businesses. It needs to get back to that point, she said.

It's a great idea, said Mr. Riedel. If Oberlin can partner with other cities and all have already OK'd this, and the city can benefit from the person living here without putting up a lot of money, that's great.

Mr. Pauls said other cities that have already committed money to the project include \$2,000 from Goodland, \$5,000 from Colby, \$7,000 from Norton and \$10,000 from Hoxie.

*County gives OK for salary money

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Sheridan and Sherman counties.
Commissioner Gene Gallentine, who farms near Jennings, said he understands the economic impact of hunting, but asked how the money hunters spend would help landowners who provide the place for hunting.

The biologist would work with landowners showing them which state and federal programs would work for them and help them get the money. There are several programs that aren't being used in Decatur County, he said.

The land is always going to be here, Mr. Pauls added, but will the grocery store be here? People are moving away because they want to make more money, but also for recreation. This part of the state doesn't have mountains for skiing or a lake, but there is hunting.
"Hunting is a big business," said Mr. Pauls: "Let's keep that money here."

He added that he wants hunting to still be affordable for teenagers to get out in the field, which is one reason why the state's Walk-In Hunting program is good. Many out-of-state

hunters come here because they have developed a relationship over the years with landowners, but teenagers haven't been able to establish that and maybe can't afford to pay for hunting.

Commissioner Ralph Unger, who farms west of Oberlin, said he doesn't appreciate people hunting on his land without permission. He said he had 17 people last year on his land and none of them had asked to be there. Those experiences last quite a while, he said, adding that he doesn't want hunting to just be a rich man's sport either.

There's a serious movement going that way, said Mr. Pauls.

One of the major assets in this county, said Mr. Gallentine, is the land. Maybe it's time to promote economic development using that asset.

This year, said Gary Anderson, owner of the LandMark Inn, hunting demand has been bigger than in the past 10. He said he had some hunters just last weekend.

While the county couldn't commit to three years, which is what Mr. Pauls was asking for, they did agree to \$2,500 for the first year.

Impromptu reunion planned

An impromptu Red Devils reunion will take place in Overland Park in the middle of February.

Jill (Mermis) Minton, who graduated from Decatur Community High School in 1996, said any alums in the area are invited. They plan to get together at Tanner's Bar and Grill in Overland Park from 7 to 10 p.m. on

Friday, Feb. 19.

Mrs. Minton said if someone wants to let her know they're coming, they should e-mail her at jill@minton.com. She said she's trying to get as many e-mail addresses as possible to let people know about the evening.

A round of applause



DURING AN ASSEMBLY last Tuesday, Adrienne Pauls (left) and Mary Olson clapped in appreciation for the hard work their teachers put in. The students and staff had just learned they would get a day off Monday as a reward for the test scores on last year's state assessments.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Davis

*Electric fund to pay for civic center

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That will pretty much be spent on bills for electricity and payroll for the department, said Mr. Gilley. Budget figures show \$737,446 in the electric reserve fund.

The Bremer will said the money should be used "For the benefit of The Gateway," said Councilwoman Rhonda May, but spending it on operations isn't "for the benefit." Without the donation, the money would have come from the electric fund, she said, so if the money is used out of the Bremer account for operations, it actually benefits the electric fund, she said.

When The Gateway was first built, said Mr. Riedel, no one intended hat the electric fund would

pay for it. Every year, he said, it gets a little more costly to run the building.

The building is operated at the expense of everyone who pays a utility bill, the councilman said.

The city should take the money out of the electric fund, said Ms. May, and use the Bremer money according to the will.

What happens when the electric fund runs out of money? Mr. Riedel asked. Use at The Gateway could be restricted, she replied, or there could be less staff.

If the electric fund can't pay for the building, said Mr. Riedel, the Bremer money will have to.

If the city didn't have the Bremer money, said Mrs. Lohofener, the

electric fund would still have to be paying to make up the difference and it wouldn't be upgraded.

If the city doesn't use the money appropriately, she said, others who might be thinking of leaving money might change their minds.

Can the city continue to ask the people for an increase in their electric bills? asked Mr. Riedel. Can it continue paying for an increase for The Gateway until it starts making a profit?

The history of the electric fund, said Ms. May, is that it's paid a lot of that that people didn't want to pay for from their property taxes.

The electric lines and equipment are in dire straits, said Mr. Riedel, so that money should go to rebuilding

the system. If the surplus is gone, he asked, where will the money for repairs come from?

Mayor Joe Stanley asked for a council recommendation, which was met with silence.

Mr. Gilley said he highly recommended, with the cash balance what it is, that the council approve the transfer. Otherwise, he said, The Gateway will be out of money by the end of March.

The council approved taking \$140,000 from the electric fund with Councilman Ray Ward, Ms. May and Mrs. Lohofener voting for it. Mr. Riedel cast a no vote and Councilman Rob McFee was absent.

Gateway office space project moves forward

The Oberlin City Council decided Thursday to move ahead with bids to remodel new office space for the city staff at The Gateway, as well as other expenses to be paid out of the Bremer gift.

The city staff now works in the front office, said City Administrator Austin Gilley, while Kathy Brainard, Gateway director, operates out of a makeshift office in an unfinished storage room.

The plan is to switch the offices and have Ms. Brainard in the front and the staff in the back after it's finished.

Miller and Associates, a McCook engineering firm used by the city, did a drawing of the new space, which the council looked at during the meeting. Mr. Gilley said the estimated cost of the work is \$50,000, but the city won't really know until the bids are back.

It's not very professional, said Councilman Bill Riedel, the way Ms. Brainard's office looks, to have someone come in and book an event.

The council approved proceeding with asking for bids on the work.

The council discussed several other items for The Gateway, including landscaping outside, which they put on hold, waiting for more information on a proposed new motel on the southeast corner of the site. The landscaping estimate from Common Scents in McCook was \$10,660.

Other bids approved included:

- Four awnings at \$950 from Gorman Tarps, with three at the front door and one at the back.
- Finishing the painting, including the arena floor, walking track, the north stairs, north room downstairs, storage room off the kitchen, in the theater, west stairway, office, room one and two closet and the ceiling of the downstairs lobby. There was no amount set.

- Changing the filters on the rooftop heating units at \$1,662 from CB Heating and Air Conditioning of Colby.
- Putting in a light at the bottom of the west staircase for \$375.
- Exhaust fans in the upstairs

men's and women's restrooms at \$250 each.

The council discussed other lights in the building, but Councilman Ray Ward suggested getting information on different kinds of lights before making any decisions.

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