

Council tries to shrink city budget

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
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Facing a possible 19 percent tax increase, the Oberlin City Council started to slim down the proposed 2011 budget left by the former city administrator during a special meeting Thursday.

Interim administrator Karen Larson said the biggest thing with this budget is that last year, the property tax levy was at 85.12 mills and it's proposed for next year at 101.622.

Mrs. Larson said each mill of property tax will bring in \$7,693. To cut the levy back to where it was this year, the city would need

to cut \$126,780.

So far, she said, in this budget year the city is moving right along. So far 49 percent of the 2010 budget has been spent.

Former Administrator Austin Gilley did this budget before he left, said Mrs. Larson. Some of the changes include bringing the library into the budget instead of giving the board money each year. It just cleans up the books a little, she said.

Councilman Bill Riedel said he would still like to look at The Gateway budget. He said he can't see increasing the property tax levy by 20 percent and still transferring

\$190,000 out of the electric fund for The Gateway.

Looking at the schedule of events for the center, he said, there is one thing going on this month at Morgan Theater and other than the weekly Rotary and council, that's it. Mr. Riedel said he can't see how paying two full-time people is good for the city.

Manager Kathy Brainard said another event was just scheduled, adding that that July and August are usually slow. Anyway, she said, The Gateway doesn't affect the property-tax levy.

Correct, said Mrs. Larson, but the money

going to The Gateway could go instead to the general fund, which does affect the taxes.

Mrs. Larson said the city is going to start paying rent to the civic center's account for the office space. That will clean up the books some, said Mr. Riedel, but the city is still transferring \$190,000 out of the electric department for The Gateway.

"I just can't in good conscience do a 20 percent tax increase," he said.

Mrs. Larson asked if the money from the Bremer bequest could be used instead of money from the electric fund to support

the operation. The council had decided to use the bequest for improvements rather than operations.

Mr. Riedel said he is fine with that, but there needs to be a plan for The Gateway. The Bremer money will dry up soon, too, if it takes \$200,000 each year. The city's reserves are dropping quickly, he said.

"I'm afraid we will tax a lot of folks right out of town," he said.

Councilwoman Rhonda May said she would second Mr. Riedel and say that the city can't increase the property tax levy that (See COUNCIL on Page 12)

Volunteers still needed for carnival

Volunteers are needed to get the fairgrounds and equipment ready for opening night of the Decatur County Home-Owned Carnival, which is just about three weeks away.

Judy Scott, authority president, said the board members plan a work night starting at 6 p.m. Thursday and will continue each Thursday until the carnival.

There is a lot of general upkeep that needs to be done before the week-long carnival, including moving picnic tables and benches out, cleaning and other items. Ms. Scott said it's possible that some of the seats of the Octopus need to be re-padded, so help from anyone who knows how to do that would be appreciated.

The plan is to start setting the rides up at 8 a.m. Saturday, July 24, she said, and they can use any and all people to help with that.

The following Sunday, Aug. 1, they will put the fairway together. Ms. Scott said they haven't set a time yet.

Anyone who wants to volunteer to run a ride or a game during the carnival can sign up at the Chamber of Commerce or call the Chamber 475-3441 or Ms. Scott at 470-7269.

The authority has been making improvements to the carnival, including rewiring the carousel and putting in a new breaker box for the Octopus, Ms. Scott said.

Besides needing volunteers for the work days and for the carnival nights, she added, they are still looking for board members. Robert Rouse came on the board last year and Brad Larson this year, but other than those two them, the members' terms will expire at the end of this year's carnival.

Anyone interested in serving should call Ms. Scott.

Spotty showers slow harvest for area farmers

With spotty rain showers at the end of last week and over the weekend, Decatur County's wheat harvest has been hit and miss.

At Hansen Mueller, Office Manager Janice O'Hare said they have had several busy days.

Many of those days have started late because the field or the grain was moist, she said.

While the area got spotty rains early Monday, she said, some farmers planned on cutting in the afternoon.

A severe thunderstorm moved through the west side of the county just before 6 p.m., but there were no reports of hail.

Hail east of Colby reportedly wiped out several fields of corn and unharvested wheat.

So far, said Mrs. O'Hare, the elevators have taken in 850,000 bushels of wheat. Most of that grain has been in Oberlin.

Harvest around Cedar Bluffs, she said, has barely gotten started because there's been more rain in that direction.

The test weights, she said, have remained good, even with the rain.

At Decatur Co-op, General Manager Kurt Anderson said they had some farmers bring in grain on Monday, mostly from the previous night.

Some in southern and western Decatur County probably were able to cut on Monday, he said, because they didn't get the rain.

Mr. Anderson said he heard that the area just north of Herndon got big winds and hail in spots in a storm on Saturday night, but the weather has been spotty.

So far, he added, the co-op has taken in 3.2 million bushels at the nine locations.

The Danbury elevator, he said, still really hasn't gotten started.

Businesses sponsor big shopping spree

Any interest in winning \$1,000 in scrip money to pay for a shopping spree at the end of August?

Now is your chance, by signing up at sponsoring businesses for the Oberlin Merchants' Annual \$1,000 Shopping Spree.

Anyone 18 or older can enter the spree without making a purchase. Just fill out the small entry form at participating businesses and drop it in the box.

People can sign up as many times as they want at any or all the sponsors. The deadline to enter is 4 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 10.

The drawing will be at the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce Back to School Picnic in City Park at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday,

Aug. 11.

The lucky shopper must be present to win. Names will be drawn until a winner is found.

One person will win \$1,000 in scrip money and have until Tuesday, Aug. 31, to spend it at participating stores only.

No change will be given. The shopper has to notify The Herald so a photographer can go with them.

Sponsors for this year's Shopping Spree include Dale's Fish 'N' Fun, Culligan Water, Ward Drug Store, Stanley Hardware, R&M Service Center and The Oberlin Herald.

The scrip is good for merchandise only, and only at sponsoring businesses.



DEPUTY JAY TATE (above) directed traffic on U.S. 83 south of town Saturday while rescue crews worked to get Elaine Marcuson out of her smashed 1989 Ford pickup. Her husband Brad got into the bed to lean in and try to comfort

her, while daughter Sarah stood by. Emergency medical volunteers and firemen (below) carried her to the highway and the cart of a waiting ambulance.

— Herald staff photos by Steve and Cynthia Haynes

Wreck injures woman

By **STEVE HAYNES**

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Wheat harvest took a wrong turn for the Marcuson family south of Oberlin on Saturday, but as it turned out, a lot of friends were there to help them when they needed it.

The family was ready to start harvest that morning. Brad Marcuson drove the combine to the field, about five miles south of the family's home place on U.S. 83 and about 1 1/2 miles south of Oberlin.

Because Brad's father, Gail, had heart surgery in Denver a couple of weeks ago, they were shorthanded. Daughter Sarah was drafted to drive a tractor pulling a grain cart, used to unload wheat from the combine and haul it to a truck at the edge of the field, and Elaine Marcuson followed in the family's beat-up 1989 Ford pickup.

Brad said he looked back up the open highway and told Sarah on the radio there was a pickup coming, but it was OK to turn. She wasn't sure how to downshift, however, and the tractor stalled on a slight rise. That left her mom no place to go with the pickup.

Sarah, who said she was not familiar with the tractor, said she saw the pickup coming fast, and tried to warn her mom, but it was too late. The 1994 Ford driven by Ronald Steelsmith, 29, Phillipsburg, plowed into the back of Mrs. Marcuson's truck where it was



stopped in the southbound lane. At that point, you can see up the road more than three miles, to the top of the hill on the north side of the Prairie Dog Creek valley.

Decatur County dispatch logged the first call on the wreck just after noon. The dispatcher called sheriff's Deputy Jay Tate, who was on duty, plus two Oberlin ambulances and fire rescue crews from Oberlin and Jennings. People passing by, several of them friends of the Marcusons, stopped to help.

Firemen had to use hydraulic tools to pry apart the old Ford pickup so they could safely extricate Mrs. Marcuson. Brad got in the bed of the truck and leaned in the broken rear window to talk to his wife, while Sarah stood at the

passenger-side door.

County Ambulance Director Linda Manning and others helped Mr. Steelsmith, who remained in his vehicle until the ambulance crew could move him.

Deputy Tate said he thought the driver had not seen Mrs. Marcuson's pickup stopped to make a left turn. His pickup left no skid marks before the impact, which drove the old Ford nearly 300 feet up the side of the west bank of the road. The force left the frame bent and the bed crumpled; the Phillipsburg man's truck was crushed from the cab forward.

"He never saw the pickup before he hit it," the deputy said.

Both victims were taken to the Decatur County Hospital. Mr.

Steelsmith was treated for minor injuries, but Mrs. Marcuson was flown by air ambulance to Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney, Neb. Relatives said she suffered broken ribs, a punctured lung, two broken vertebrae each in her neck and lower back, and other injuries.

Monday, her husband said she expected to be in intensive care for three to four days, but her condition was rated as stable and none of the injuries, though painful, appeared to be life-threatening.

The Marcusons knew the wheat would wait, but worried about their dog Kip, a German shepherd-labrador mix that looks more like a shepherd. Brad said Kip was with (See WRECK on Page 12)

Fun day planned for Saturday at Sappa Park

Adults and kids are invited to Sappa Park on Saturday for a "fun day" sponsored by the Decatur County Helping Hands.

Disk golf will kick off the day, with registration starting at 9:30 a.m. Beginners will start playing at 10:30 a.m., intermediate at noon and advanced players at 2 p.m. The

entry fee is \$10.

A washer-toss tournament will start at 2 p.m., with registration at 1. The entry fee for that also is \$10.

At 4 p.m., kids games will start with a \$5 wristband on sale, good for all the games.

The group will hold a hog roast at 7 p.m., followed by a dance at 8 p.m.

with Mobile Music Express.

Helping Hands raises money to help Decatur County people with medical expenses. All the money goes back to county residents, said Chris Dempewolf, president of the group.

Applications for help are available at the Decatur County Hospital,

the Oberlin Clinic and the Norcat City Office. People can also contact Ms. Dempewolf, Hospital Administrator Lynn Doeden or Regina Stanley, all members of the group.



*Council starts working on 2011 budget

(Continued from Page 1) much and expect anyone to like it. "It can't go up 15 mills," she said, "and the city say, 'That's just life.'" "I agree," said Mayor Joe Stanley. The council needs to look for places to get some spending out of the budget, said Ms. May. The council started to look at areas that could possibly be reduced or eliminated. While no decisions were made, a majority of the meeting was

spent looking at pages that show how the money is spent. The council will discuss the budget again in a special work session at 7 p.m. next Thursday, July 22. It also may come up at the regular meeting at 7 p.m. this Thursday. Both sessions will be at The Gateway. At the end of the meeting last Thursday, the council held a 10-minute closed session for non-elected personnel. There was no action taken.

Manager asks about food prep

The "meal site" manager and a volunteer from the Golden Age Center talked with the Decatur County commissioners about the possibility of preparing meals using the kitchen at the new center. Manager Helen Gee said at the meeting Tuesday, June 29, that she drives to Atwood to pick up the food for the state-supported senior lunch Monday through Friday. After the end of the year, she said, she plans to stop doing that. Mrs. Gee said since the county hasn't set its budget yet for next year, she would like the commissioners to consider using the kitchen at the Golden Age Center.

County Clerk Colleen Geihlsler said someone with the agency said in the past that the meal site doesn't have enough people eating there for the food to be prepared here. The site serves 38 to 46 meals a day, said Mrs. Gee, not the 31 the Area Agency on Aging has listed. The program is subsidized through the Kansas Agency on Aging under a federal program. The county budgets \$4,300 for the meal site each year. Every cent that is brought in with the meal site now, said Mrs. Gee, goes to the area agency in Hays. Why not keep that money here? Commissioner Gene Gallentine questioned whether the county could do the meal site without involving the state because of the federal money. He said he didn't think the county could pay for it. Mrs. Gee said she's not saying she wants to the county to pay the cost. She said she wants to keep Hays involved. Before the commissioners hash this around, said County Attorney Steve Hirsch, they need to talk with someone from the area agency and see if using the kitchen here would be possible. The kitchen in Atwood now provides meals for Oberlin and Atwood. Commissioner Stan McEvoy said they need to keep in mind that Golden Age is almost out of county tax dollars and it's only half way through the year. The year is half done, said Ms. Geihlsler, and the meal site and transportation bus fund only have \$800 for the rest of the year. More people would eat at the center, said Dewaine Stapp, if the food was cooked here. Sometimes, said Mrs. Gee, she has to go to the grocery and get something to make the food more palatable. She said they have complained about the food before. Is there anyone who could cook if the food was done here? asked Mr. Gallentine. Yes, said Mrs. Gee, she could cook it and there is someone to help. Mrs. Gee asked what the utilities on the new building run. Those are at right around \$100 a month, said Ms. Geihlsler. That will probably go up when the air conditioners start running hard, said Commissioner Unger. Mrs. Gee said she does get paid from the area agency and gets mileage to go to Atwood. Mr. Stapp said he ate at the meal site in McCook recently. The meal was meat loaf cooked there. It was good, he said, adding that you can't beat it being cooked on site. The earliest a switch could be made, said Mr. McEvoy, for the meal preparation is January. Mr. Stapp said they know it isn't going to happen right away; it's just something to look at and work on. Mrs. Gee said people under 60 pay \$5 for lunch and those 60 and older are asked to pay \$2.75.

Another was Barry Richards, a farmer and used-car dealer in town, who said he and Brad had known each other since childhood, attending the same church for more than 40 years. Their wives are close friends, he said. Others were members of the close-knit Lund Covenant Church, where many are descendants of Swedish homesteaders who populated the area south of town more than a century ago. The church is just a few miles west and north of the accident site; members call each other with news of births and deaths, fires and other emergencies and needs. Pastor Doug Mason said Tammy Fredrickson met Gail Marcuson and his wife Kay in Colby, where they'd gotten a ride with a friend from the hospital in Denver, took Kay to Kearney, and brought Sarah home. He said he and his wife had checked the house and he and others picked up combine parts knocked out of the pickup. Mr. Ayers, who farms a quarter-

section of his own ground, said he and Mr. Richards offered to go out the family's wheat. He drove the combine and Mr. Richards drove the truck. It took until Sunday afternoon to finish that field. "His folks have been friends of my family since before I was born," Mr. Ayers said, "so I kind of owed it to them." He said he'd missed the first call on the wreck, but went on out in his own pickup. He started directing traffic at the north end of the scene, he said, and had no idea who had been hurt until later. "Barry came to the hospital," he said. "He told Brad he could help him. There were some others who offered to help, but it was basically a two-man job." Sunday, he said, his wife Becky came out with sandwiches and then helped the men move equipment to a second field. Monday, Armand and Yancy Sowers brought a combine and Rick Shaw from Selden came to help. Rain stopped the harvest about 6 p.m. with a couple of small fields left to cut. Monday, Brad said he probably was lucky it was a low year for wheat for him, with the bulk of his land in corn. Still, he was struck by the response of friends and even strangers who helped the family in so many ways. "I'll bet there were eight or 10 people there before the sheriff got there," he said. "The staff at our hospital was just super. People in Oberlin are great." Normally, he said, son Jared would have been running the grain cart. But Jared, a student at Barton County Community College in Great Bend, works for a program for underprivileged kids called



RESCUE WORKERS rolled Ronald Steelsmith, 29, Phillipsburg, (above) into an ambulance Saturday. His pickup had smashed into a truck stopped to make a left turn on U.S. 83 about 15 1/2 miles south of Oberlin. He was

taken to the Decatur County Hospital, then released after treatment. The Marcuson family's dog Kip (below) ran off after the wreck and hadn't come home as of Monday. — Herald staff photo (above) by Cynthia Haynes

*Wreck sends two to hospital

(Continued from Page 1) Elaine in the cab of the truck, and ran off after the accident. Kip's not allowed to roam, he said, and may not know the way home. A neighbor thought he saw the dog about a mile east of the crash site, Brad said, and the family made up a flier with the pooch's picture on it, but as of Monday night, he was still missing. Even before the family left for Nebraska, friends began showing up at the hospital, offering to help. One of them was Larry Ayers, Oberlin assistant fire chief, who said he'd known the Marcuson family "since before Brad was born."

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Upward Bound. He was helping escort the group back from a trip to Washington, his dad said, and caught a ride to Kearney Sunday. One thing the wreck has taught him, he said, is to wear his seatbelt all the time. No one in the family used the seat belts in the old Ford, he said, but the doctors said that could have saved his wife some pain. The truck was like part of the family, he said. "We bought it when Jared was a baby so we'd have room for all the car seats," he said, adding that they'd just used it to haul furniture to Colby, where Sarah is in summer school. Becky Ayers echoed many when she said the town's response was no big deal. "It's just what you do for a friend," she said. And the Marcusons found, they have a lot of friends.

Trivia night planned for Saturday at Legion

An Oberlin couple has organized a trivia night Saturday at the American Legion to raise money for a statewide cat club. Patrick and Jonna Inman will hold the event from 6:30 to 10 p.m. Saturday, with registration starting at 6 p.m. Advanced registration is encouraged, said Mrs. Inman, as teams are limited. Each team can have six to 12 people, with the entry fee \$5 a person. There will be snacks and raffles. Cash prizes will be given to the top three teams. The event will raise money for the KansasKatz Cat Club, a non-profit member of the International Cat Fancy Association, which supports feline activities in Kansas. For questions or to register, call the Inmans at (785) 475-2839 or 202-2031. The couple said some pedigreed cats will be on display, including a Bengal, a Persian, a Himalayan,

a Burmese and a Havana, possibly more. Everyone is welcome to come see the cats in the late afternoon and during registration.

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