

City Primary

Mother wants mayor's job

Wanting to make a difference, Bobbi Jo Johnson said, she decided to run for mayor of Oberlin.

Mrs. Johnson said she, her husband and their three children moved here from Minnesota 2 1/2 years ago.

She said she doesn't want to just sit around and not help the town; she wants to make a difference. She wants people to be able to come to the city with an idea or a program and she will listen to them.

This is a dying town, she said, losing population, but she wants Oberlin to be a thriving town.

She hasn't been involved in government before or had an interest in it, but it feels like a good idea to get involved.

Of the four candidates, she carried the petition to get 25 names needed so she could file for office. Carrying the petition gave her a chance to talk with some people.

"I can do a really good job," she said.

She would like to see more activi-

ties for the youths and elders and would like to see surveys sent out to see what kind of activities people want. It's important for people not to sit at home, she said.

The kids need things to do, adding that it's time to find out what they want. So many of them go off to college and never come back, she said, and that is why this is a dying town.

Oberlin needs more jobs, she said. There aren't a lot of job opportunities for teenagers. Those first jobs help them grow up and mature.

The people are really an asset to the town, Mrs. Johnson said. They are friendly, and there are a lot of people who really want to do something, but they aren't sure what they should do. People need to pull together.

There are ways to expand the town. Homes are available, she said; there just needs to be programs to help people.

The city needs the planned water plant, said Mrs. Johnson. There are



B. Johnson

people who don't have the money to get a system in their homes to have better water.

She said she's used to working on a tight budget and can work on the city budget to tighten its belt, without hurting the people.

Mrs. Johnson said she's a stay-at-home mom with three kids. She also has a 19-year-old. Her husband Nolan has filed for a seat on the City Council.

Voters should cast their ballots for her if they want a difference, new, fresh ideas and someone who can come up with solutions. It's time for a difference, she said, and she hopes to make that difference.

She is running in the primary against council members Bill Riedel and Rhonda May and Judy Scott, a former council member.

Native looking for a challenge

Looking for a challenge and the opportunity for further public service, Councilwoman Rhonda May is seeking the post of mayor in the Oberlin city primary election Tuesday.

Ms. May was appointed to the council by former Mayor Ken Shobe in 2006 to replace Patrick Pomeroy, and then ran for election. She's served as a councilwoman for the last five years; her term ends this year.

She said she doesn't think the city needs any huge changes, although there are some things needed to shore up the infrastructure, which includes the streets, water, electricity and sewer.

She views most of life, especially small-town government, as "an optimization experience." There are some things that have to be done and others where there's a choice.

Ms. May said she doesn't have a huge agenda or plans to do things differently, but wants the opportunity to spend money smartly and wisely. For example, last week the

council looked at how much the city has in outstanding bonds and asked whether that debt could be refinanced with a lower interest rate to save money.

She doesn't have new projects in mind. The city has enough on its plate with the water treatment project and airport, she said.

What's neat about the water project, she said, is it's not only addressing some of the federal Environmental Protection Agency's concerns, but also would improve the quality of people's water. It will actually make the water better, she said.

The city's best asset is the people, she said. People here who will really step up to get things done. People refuse to let the town die; they make Oberlin a nice place to live. And not all towns are like that.

Ms. May said her biggest concern isn't something the city government can do anything about, which is health care.

She said she has a unique perspective in that she was raised here,

moved away for 30 years and then returned to raise her kids. Ms. May said she has an outsider's perspective, yet a hometown perspective, too. She said she's also learned a lot in the last five years she's been on the council.

"Experience develops capability," she said.

She buys into the theory of the town refusing to die. She thinks of Oberlin as the "little town that could."

New people moving to town are a real asset, she said, and it's nice to see that so many want to be involved in city government.

Ms. May said she serves on the Upper Republican River Advisory Committee and has served on the Oberlin Arts and Humanities Commission.

Ms. May has a Bachelor of Science from the University of Kansas in petroleum engineering. She and her husband Dan Nedland have three children.

Ms. May is running in the primary against Councilman Bill Riedel, former Councilwoman Judy Scott and Bobbi Jo Johnson.



Rhonda May

Man has budget knowledge

Councilman Bill Riedel says his knowledge of the budget should help the City of Oberlin face some big financial challenges ahead, so he's running for mayor.

Mr. Riedel has served two years on the City Council and has two years left.

While on the council he's served on the airport advisory committee and as a member delegate to the Kansas Municipal Energy Association and Kansas League of Municipalities.

The city has some big challenges coming up, said Mr. Riedel. The city is borrowing \$4 to \$6 million for a water treatment plant and will have to raise water rates.

The city property tax levy is one of the top 10 highest in the state, he said, though the city's assessed values are in line with everyone else's. He doesn't see that raising the taxes is an alternative.

The power plant needs to be updated, he said, not to mention the utility poles, which don't have room for NexTech to add fiber optic lines for a new cable and phone system.

The city's contract with Sunflower Electric is up this year, so there's a good chance it could cost more to purchase power. The city already has some of the highest utility rates in the state, he said, partly because the electric department is also supporting the city budget.

The city's infrastructure which

includes streets, water, sewer and electricity has been neglected, said Mr. Riedel, and it needs to be updated.

Mr. Riedel said he would like to see all of Oberlin's civic groups work together. It's important to have a chain of communication and eliminate redundancy. At the same time, it's time to build civic pride and recognize people's interest.

Another huge concern is the declining population, he said. There needs to be a way to sell Oberlin to other people.

He would like to see a focus group meet quarterly for the community. There are some great ideas out there, but the groups need to get together and sell Oberlin. It's time to get rid of personal agendas.

He would also like to see the council's meetings televised again.

The city airport is a great asset, he said, but he is concerned with the cost of improvements and whether the city can afford the way it's going, with plans to build a 5,500-foot runway. He's just not sure the city can afford to have an airport on such a grand scale.

The people voted to go forward with the plans, he said, and it's his duty to listen to the people and go ahead with what they want.

In the last six months, he added, the city has made huge strides on the airport. He noted that the airport committee meets every other

week.

It's not a bad thing to spend money, he said, if it's for the benefit of the majority of the people.

Water rates are a huge concern, he added, but they don't scare him. The proposed water treatment plant is required by the federal government, he said, and the water will benefit everyone.

Something that does scare him is taxes. People could get taxed out of town.

"We have control over the taxes," he said.

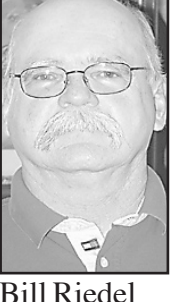
If elected, he said he will give up his vote on the council, although the mayor can break ties. As the mayor, he would be the foremost representative of the city.

He thinks they can get a handle on the finances and get community members involved in the process. He said he looks forward to working with the town's civic organizations.

If elected mayor, he would like to be in the office at The Gateway for 10 to 15 hours a week. The city needs continued communication, said Mr. Riedel.

Mr. Riedel and his wife Connie bought their home in Oberlin 16 years ago and moved here five years ago. They two children, both of whom live in Colorado.

Mr. Riedel is running in the primary against Councilwoman Rhonda May, former council member Judy Scott and Bobbi Jo Johnson.



Bill Riedel

Woman wants to help city

Judy Scott says a desire to be part of city government again and to be a positive influence on what happens in Oberlin prompted her to run for mayor.

Ms. Scott said she grew up in Oberlin, left in 1971 and returned in 1979. She is the purchasing director at the Decatur County Hospital.

Ms. Scott isn't new to city government, as she served as a member of the City Council from 1991 to 1995.

In the past, she has been a member of the Decatur Professional Women, the Oberlin Business Alliance, the Decatur County Amusement Authority board, the Oberlin Pride committee and Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. board. She was president of the Amusement Authority, which runs the carnival at the county fair, until this year.

Ms. Scott said she wants to find out exactly what shape the city's infrastructure, which includes water, sewer, streets and electricity, is in. She wants to see what priorities the council has and help to achieve them.

It's great, she said, that people who are moving here are running for office, but Oberlin still needs some hometown people to participate in the process, too.

It's important, said Ms. Scott, to see the town continue to progress.

The infrastructure needs work.

It's important to continue to get businesses here and to help those that are here to stay and expand, she said. We need to keep what's here and also increase the business base. That means more population, too.

Ms. Scott said there were street issues when she was on the council in the '90s, and there still are problems. As far as water goes, she said, the city is moving forward.

Apparently, she said, the city's utility poles are too short for progress. There's no room for NexTech to put a fiber optic cable on them, and that could prevent the city from getting a new cable and phone system.

"That's really disappointing for the town," said Ms. Scott.

She said she would like to see The Gateway keep a strong list of activities there.

Even before she decided to seek the mayor's seat, she said, she's been attending council meetings. Ms. Scott said she's disappointed

that others who have filed to run for office haven't been coming to the meetings.

The people who live here are the town's biggest asset, she said. Without people, there's nothing. It's important that the people support projects and events and choose to serve.

Ever since moving back to Oberlin and raising her daughter, she's been involved in community projects.

She knows that it's hard for some to pay higher utility bills and taxes, but Oberlin still is the best place to live. She added that she can't imagine living anywhere else.

"Every vote I have ever made has been with the best interest of the community as a whole," she said, adding that she bases her decisions on helping the majority of the people in town.

She said she plans on being a hands-on mayor, study the issues and do the research and be well informed.

Ms. Scott will face Bobbi Jo Johnson and current council members Bill Riedel and Rhonda May in the primary election on Tuesday.



Judy Scott

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Notice of Personal Property Assessment

Personal property renditions must be filed between January 1 and March 15. Renditions filed after March 15 will have a penalty for late filing. Taxable personal property includes: Business and shop equipment, computers and printer, boats, motor and trailers, aircraft, mobile homes, camping and travel trailers, flatbed and car trailers, mopeds, ATV's, golf cars, trucks, non-tagged and non-highway vehicles and improvements on leased land.

The Decatur County Appraiser's Office need to be notified of the sale of any personal property during 2009. All taxpayers must file before the March 15 deadline.

All new businesses in Decatur County are required to contact the Decatur County Appraiser's Office to report business equipment for tax purposes.

If you have no personal property to report please call us to verify that you are in the county for census purposes.

Personal Property Penalties:	
March 15 through April 15	5%
April 16 through May 15	10%
May 16 through June 15	15%
June 16 through July 15	20%
On or after July 16 through May 14	
of the following year	25%
Failure to File	50%

Decatur County Appraiser's office
785-475-8109

Partnering To Bring Medical Specialists To Oberlin

Oberlin Outreach Clinic Schedule

Decatur County Hospital
810 W. Columbia - Oberlin

Cardiology - Dr. Jeffery Curtis
Third Wednesday - (785) 625-4699

Orthopedic - Dr. Robert Bassett
Second Thursday
(785) 261-7599 or (866) 428-8221

Urology - Dr. Darrell Werth
Third Wednesday
(877) 312-1619 or (785) 628-6014

Mobile Cardiac Nuclear Medicine
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Mobile Ultrasound, Echo & Vascular
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