

## Council debates pool finance

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**  
sdecamp@nwkansas.com

After having to reschedule due to the weather, financial consultant John Haas made it to Thursday's City Council meeting to discuss where the City of Oberlin stands on financing the new pool project.

Council members Josh Williby and Rusty Addleman argued that the city has wasted time enough on the project, that the voters have spoken and the council has already studied the matter for six months.

The second view, held by Mayor Rob McFee and at least one audience member, was that in light of Mr. Haas' analysis, the

council should take one more week to think over the financing.

In the end, the council agreed to think it over before making any final decisions. Mr. Haas' report and resulting question-and-answer time took up the bulk of the meeting, with the audience, pool committee members and council members alike participating.

### A "debt picture"

Mr. Haas, an advisor with Ranson Financial Consultants out of Wichita, was asked to the meeting by the mayor "to paint a debt picture to the City of Oberlin," he said.

"How you finance the project will have

an effect on how you finance things in the future," Mr. Haas said. "I'm going to go through your options and the impact they will have on the city ..."

Mr. Haas said that when people look at the city's bonds, they look at the ratio of the city's debt to its total assessed value to get an idea of the risk involved. For 2013, he said, this "percentage outstanding" is 32, with that number declining to 29 in 10 years. This is a conservative calculation that doesn't include any growth for the city, he said.

"Next we look at what the city has on the horizon, and not including the airport, with

just the pool and the water projects, you'll see that combined current and future debt jumps to over \$4 million in 2013, and the remaining water project jumps that number up to \$12 million in 2014.

"This means that with the pool, the ratio of debt to assessed valuation jumps to 60 percent, then after the water project, it jumps to 140 percent.

### Borrowing options

"Next, we really get into the meat of the issue. If you issue general obligation bonds for the pool project, your remaining debt capacity is less than a half million. My preference is, I like to never see that number as

less than a million dollars, unless it's for an essential city service. If you decide to fund the project with general obligation bonds, then I would say don't borrow anything else for another six years, so you can work back up to a million.

"There is an alternative, and that is setting up a public building commission for revenue bonds. Is it off-balance sheet financing? Yes, but it's a method to pay for these things. The city will hold the \$2.5 million debt (for the pool) within the public building commission, but it's still debt to the city, and you'll still have 160 percent (See POOL on Page 12)



2  
0  
1  
3



## Dancing the night away...

ON NEW YEAR'S EVE, it was snowing just enough that about the only place to be was the American Legion. The music was provided by Mobile Music Express (above left) as Aaron Ploussard and deejay Stan McEvoy spun everything from line dancing to R&B hits. If dancing wasn't your priority, then bartender Brenda Coryell (above right) was plenty happy to pour you one of the many drink specials. And as the clock ticked down, everyone found their midnight kiss, as Curtis and Jessica Richards (right) did to ring in 2013.

- Herald staff photos by Stephanie DeCAMP



## No-till session here Tuesday

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**  
sdecamp@nwkansas.com

The 10th annual Cover Your Acres winter conference will fill The Gateway with farmers, crop experts, advisors and sales representatives Tuesday and next Wednesday.

"It's very exciting," said Jeanne Falk, a regional agronomist for Kansas State University Research and Extension who organizes the event. "It actually started as an afternoontype meeting, and has morphed into being a two-day conference where we pack The Gateway."

The conference, in its tenth year, focuses on "new ideas and updates in crop production for northwest Kansas," according to its website. It is held in partnership with K-State and the Northwest Kansas Crop Residue Alliance.

"Basically," Mrs. Falk said, "the Residue Alliance wanted meetings on no-till farming, and then after we organize those, we get all other sorts of topics. So we get a group of (farmers) together and pick out the topics to figure out what we want there. They're then prototyped and we visit with university speakers. This year we have speakers from K-State as well as the University of Nebraska."

Mrs. Falk said that the conference usually draws more than 500 farmers, crop advisors, sales representatives and other industry people over the two days. This year, she said, the conference will feature 10 university and seven industry speakers, taking over the civic center from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days.

Early-bird registration, she said, which includes a nice discount, is due today, but people can still register after that and walk-ins are allowed the day of the conference.

Mrs. Falk said, to her, the most

exciting part about the conference is its "unfiltered, meeting-of-the-minds" kind of atmosphere.

"In my mind," she said, "one of the really good things is that it's the hot topics producers are asking questions about that we discuss. Coming from university speakers, you get very not-tainted, strictly unbiased information, and answers to their questions. That's the really exciting part about it. We span from crop rotation clear up to grain market outlooks for 2013; it's a wide variety of topics."

According to agriculturelaw.com, a company that provides farmers and ranchers with information on agricultural policy, no-till farming is "a method of planting crops that involves no seed bed preparation other than opening the soil to place individual seeds in holes or small slits." Mrs. Falk said that the actual process is a lot more complicated than that, however, and that's why the challenges particular to no-till farming are the central focus of the conference.

"There's a session for irrigation, too," Mrs. Falk said. "We address both production systems (at the conference). One very unique part is that we have a producer panel. The topic this year is 'striving for successful no-till.' The cool thing about it is that attendees can bring their questions in and ask about what has and hasn't worked for them. It's very interactive."

"It talks a lot about the value of residue. If you have cover over the soil, there's less evaporation, and you have the chance to have more cover and retain more water in your production system. There's a whole host of challenges that come with it, and that's mostly what the conference is addressing."

## Blood drive today at The Gateway

January is "Blood Donor Month" for the American Red Cross, and the organization is setting up a blood drive from noon to 6 p.m. today at The Gateway to get donations and spread awareness of the need.

To donate, either call 1-800-RED-CROSS in the morning for an appointment or just show up. While the Red Cross takes appointments, walk-in donors are always welcome.

"Since 1970," said Donor Recruitment Representative Catherine Younger of Hays, "National Blood Donor Month has been celebrated in an effort to educate Americans about the importance of regular blood donation and the impact it can have."

"Every day, around 44,000 pints of blood are needed in hospitals to help treat trauma victims, surgery patients, organ transplant recipients, premature babies, cancer patients and more."

"Without our donors, hospital patients wouldn't have the lifesaving blood they so desperately need."

Ms. Younger said that someone in America needs blood every two seconds, but only about 8 percent of the eligible population makes donations.

"January can be an especially challenging month to collect blood

### Donating by the numbers

The American Red Cross is in constant need of blood and platelets to help the sick and injured. Here's the situation by the numbers:

- Every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood.
- More than 44,000 blood donations are needed each day.
- One out of 10 people admitted to the hospital needs blood.
- One donation can help save the lives of several people.
- The Red Cross supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood.
- Only 38 percent of the U.S. population is eligible to donate.
- Just 8 percent of those eligible actually donate blood.

donations," she added, "because of inclement weather and seasonal illnesses. So it's important that those who can donate do."

Ms. Younger said that all blood types are needed, and that donors should bring two forms of identification with them to check in.



**AYDEN MARIE LONG** was born at 5:15 a.m. on the morning of Jan. 2, making her the first baby of the year for Decatur County. Her mother, Danielle Richard, and father, Ethan Long, said she was 7 pounds and 19 1/2 inches long.

- Herald staff photo by Carolyn Plotts

## New Year's baby is a girl

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**  
sdecamp@nwkansas.com

Decatur County's first baby of the new year was born at 5:15 a.m. last Wednesday to parents Danielle Richard and Ethan Long of Oberlin.

Ayden Marie Long was born weighing 7 pounds and measuring 19 1/2 inches. She is the first baby for 19-year-old Danielle and 22-year-old Ethan, who went to Norton County Hospital to have her.

"I feel like it's the best thing that's happened in my life for a while," Danielle said over the phone Monday. "I think I'm going to stay at home until she's old enough to start school, or maybe until I can get a job or something. Right now, Ethan is working, and I haven't since about the middle or the end of the pregnancy."

Danielle said that the name Ayden Marie was one that just came to mind, and since they both liked it, they decided to name her that. It wasn't until later that they found out that Marie, as a middle name, runs in the family.

"She was born with a full head of dark brown hair," her mother said. "Right now her eyes are

blue; they haven't transitioned yet. Her daddy has brown eyes, and I have blue-green hazel eyes. We've been talking about her a lot with other people, and (her looks are) really mixed between the two of us. There are certain features she gets from her dad, and some others are from me, so it's hard to say who she looks more like."

The new grandparents are Kimberley and Robert Richard and Greg and Mary Long. Danielle said that she has two sisters, Stacey and Amanda Richard, who are excited to be aunts. Ethan also has a sister, Jenna Long, and a foster sister, TyLynn Peterson. Danielle said she also has a foster sister, Chelsea St. Clair.

"The labor started in the evening of New Year's Day," Danielle said, adding that it was a lot easier than she thought it would be. "I got to the hospital about 10:30 p.m., got admitted and then the contractions really started happening not long after midnight. Everything went really smooth, though. The nurses even asked, 'Is this your first kid? Because you look like you're doing awesome.'"