

Opens Today!

Clinton County Fair



WEATHER



Weather drawing by Jacob Moore, Wilmington

Possible rain

Mostly cloudy. Showers and thunderstorms likely today, mainly in the afternoon. Highs in the mid 80s. Mostly cloudy tonight, with a chance of showers and thunderstorms. Lows in the mid 60s. Chance of rain 50 percent.

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INSIDE



Going places

Southern State physics students visit West Virginia research and development facility.

See **COMMUNITY**, Page 8A

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LOTTERY

WILMINGTON

News Journal

Saturday, July 11, 2009

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Blan library prepares for budget cuts

BLANCHESTER

News Journal staff report

A reduction in staff hours, a slight increase in cost of copies and fine increases for late returns are some of the cost-cutting measures planned at the Blanchester Public Library which is facing a 15 percent reduction in state funding.

The Blanchester Public Library Board of Trustees passed those and other cost-cutting measures at Wednesday's regular monthly meeting.

The measures taken include reducing all part-time staff hours approximately 20 percent, moving to a less costly health insurance plan for full-time and administrative staff, and closing the library one-half hour earlier, at

8 p.m., Monday through Friday. The board also has cut its material expenditures 15 percent.

The library's new hours take effect July 27.

These steps combine to help the library meet a shortfall of more than \$38,000 from the state over the course of this year, said Chris Owens, library director.

"We are doing everything we possibly can to maintain the high quality of service our patrons have gotten used to," Owens said. "But I'm afraid we are facing even worse cuts when the state budget is finalized."

The board also approved several other budget-related recommendations by Owens that will take effect Aug. 1.

See **LIBRARY**, Page 5A

EPA: Studies likely wouldn't get settlement

BEAVERCREEK

EDITOR'S NOTE — This is the conclusion of a two-part series of articles about an area of Greene County that is listed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a Superfund site.

By **BRANDON SMITH**
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Studies could be done, said Tim Fischer, site manager of Lammers Barrel Factory for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). But they aren't likely to link local illness to pollutants at the site — at least conclusively enough for a court, he said.

In fact, in his many years with EPA, Fischer said he hasn't heard of any cases where pollution has been linked to health problems in court — even regarding Superfund sites, the most toxic sites in the U.S.

Superfund sites are so named because of the "super"-sized trust fund Congress appropriated to clean them up in the early 1980's. Lammers is one of these sites.

"It's very difficult to tie it back to the site. Occasionally you can find a direct correlation but it's very rare," Fischer said, because people tend to move to and from different areas every few years. Also, causes of illness are simply hard to pin down, he said. Countless behavior patterns need to be analyzed to make a connection.

How could a study get done?



News Journal/Brandon Smith

The Woodhaven subdivision, just southeast of the polluted Lammers site, relies mainly on wells for drinking water.

Fischer said that "in most cases ... communities (themselves) go to the health agencies or to elected officials" to voice a concern about concentrated health issues. Apparently the Woodhaven community has not formally requested a study yet.

Woodhaven resident Don Kessler is on the brink of doing just that, but he may have to first explain the nearby pollution to his neighborhood.

An afternoon walk around the Woodhaven subdivision — and conversations with about 10 residents of streets nearest the pollution — revealed that many people nearby had not heard of the Lammers site. Most residents this reporter spoke with

were not familiar with the site or its pollution of nearby groundwater.

The EPA's so-called community involvement panel has not been contacted by EPA in at least three years, said Kessler. The EPA's "Information Repository," kept about a mile from the site at the Beaver Creek Community Library, has not been updated since mid-2006. And EPA's Web site on the Lammers pollution features a November 2006 update as its latest.

Fischer said that EPA plans to host public meetings about the site in Beaver Creek this fall.

See **STUDIES**, Page 5A

ASTAR, ABX lay off 175

WILMINGTON

By **GARY HUFFENBERGER**
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ASTAR Air Cargo laid off 121 employees this week, many of them based at the DHL Air Park in Wilmington.

"Because of the economic downturn, our primary customer, DHL, has considerably reduced its requirement for the airlift services provided by ASTAR. Regrettably, as a direct result of their decisions, we are grounding a significant portion of our fleet, and reducing our staff by 121 employees," ASTAR said in a statement released to the *Wilmington News Journal*.

The statement to the press added ASTAR will provide the impacted employees with a salary and benefits continuation program based upon their length of employment with the company.

ASTAR Air Cargo and ABX Air have been the principal air carriers for DHL Express' air freight in the United States. DHL announced last November it was stopping its domestic U.S. freight operations to focus on international shipping. In April, it said it would relocate its international shipping hub from Wilmington to the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport.

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STUDIES

Continued from Page 1A

Whether the pollution has had any effect on public health may never be known, because of the lack of illness studies. But the pollution itself remains, and likely will for some time to come.

Fischer says that the average Superfund site takes about 10 years to clean up, from the initial addition to the Superfund list to the end of cleanup work. Lammers was suggested as a possible list addition in 2001, and was added in 2003. EPA has known about Lammers since around 1985.

"It's fair to say this (site) has taken longer than usual" to get its cleanup process going, said Fischer. "In this case, there was a lot of front-end work" involved to determine the responsible parties, said another EPA spokesman.

EPA offers incentives for cleanup to occur in a timely

fashion, said Fischer, but Lammers is considered a "longer-term project." With those, he said, "speed is relative."

Luckily the community won't get stuck with the bill. In cases of pollution involving Superfund sites, any person or company that generated, transported, stored or disposed of toxic waste at the site can be held legally (and monetarily) responsible. That includes paying for research on the pollution, the cleanup itself, and often times reimbursement of EPA for its oversight of the whole operation, as is the case at Lammers Barrel.

According to EPA documents, responsible parties include the following companies and people: Alcoa Inc., Borden Inc., BP Products North America Inc., Chemcentral Corp., Copeland Corp., DaimlerChrysler Corp., Ford Motor Co., General Electric Co., General Motors Corp., Goodyear Tire & Rubber, International Truck and Engine Corp., Lamson &

Sessions, United Technologies Corp., Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Co., PPG Industries, ArvinMeritor Inc., Sherwin Williams Co., Sunoco Inc. and Anthony Kohnen.

In a later report, several more entities were listed: Monsanto, Specialty Papers Company, Aluminum Company of America, and Virginia Lammers.

Anthony Kohnen was co-owner of Kohnen and Lammers Chemical Company. An Ohio EPA official and the site's current owner say Kohnen resides in a nursing home. Paul Lammers was the other co-owner, and likely had died before 2001 because his next-of-kin, Virginia Lammers, was named in a legal settlement in that year. Virginia Lammers died in 2006 according to obituary records.

The current owner of the property, Helen Gorby, claims to be a mere victim of circumstance in the story of Lammers Barrel. She says she and her husband bought the property in

1974 or 1975, and was not told anything about the possible pollution on the site. She said she merely knew that there had been a fire there.

"We had a(n automotive) transmission business and we were going to expand and we never got to it. And then about the time we were thinking strongly about expanding, the EPA came in," she said.

Gorby says that the EPA forbade her to erect her business on the site.

"We wouldn't have bought it, I'm sure," had we known about the pollution, she said. "I just got stuck with it."

Beavercreek city officials already have ideas about how to use the site once it is cleaned up — possibly as a park, said Gorby, who is more than willing to part with the property.

Yet the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has said that with current levels of carcinogenic chemicals, cancer risk rises (ever so infinitesimally) just by walking across certain parts of the site. Those parts

were fenced off in the early 2000's because of concern for children and adolescents who had been known to trespass on the site, ODH said in a report.

EPA's job is to assure adequate cleanup, said Fischer.

What does cleanup entail? No specifics are known yet, except that both the soil and the groundwater will have to be removed of their toxins. One option could be excavating all the soil on the site, cleaning it and replacing it. And groundwater could be pumped out, cleaned and replaced. Another option is to inject compounds into the soil and water that are known to react with and neutralize the toxins.

Scott Glum, site manager of Lammers for Ohio EPA, did not offer an estimate of how much cleanup might cost, but he did not deny the possibility that it could cost as much as \$10 million.

The responsible parties have banded together, as Fischer said they often do, to hire a contractor to research and clean up the site.

In the meantime, people who live in the Woodhaven subdivision are left to wonder what impact the pollution has had — if they know about it at all.

Fischer said that EPA's monitoring wells have been sufficient to gauge subterranean pollution in the Woodhaven neighborhood, and that testing Woodhaven home wells directly is not necessary. Kessler pays to have his own well tested once a year, which costs about \$200 each time. But Kessler has expressed the desire that EPA test Woodhaven home wells — even before learning of the recent ODH report.

In an October 2008 report, ODH stated the homes with wells above the official threshold of pollution have been connected to the county water system. However, in the same report, they said that more testing should be done on a previously unexplored portion of the subdivision. ODH tests returned positive results for pollution there.

EPA officials explained that groundwater patterns do not change very rapidly, so ODH's evidence of pollution could not simply be a large underground shift in the previously-discovered Lammers site pollution. This leaves open the possibilities that the Lammers site had polluted groundwater in a location several hundred meters away, or that another source of pollution exists.

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