

Optimists hear about the Reuse Authority

Clinton Breakfast Optimist members were scheduled to hear ISU President Daniel Bradley Thursday, but bad road conditions postponed that program until January. Optimist member Jack Fenoglio, president of the Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority, updated members who attended the meeting on progress at Newport.

Recent statements from others are the same comments that were heard last year after the public comment meetings. The Reuse Authority continues to work steadily toward completing the Economic Development Conveyance transfer of the property from the Army. Working with the last two Department of Defense employees there, Mack Adams and Cathy Collins, the Reuse Authority has been named the caretaker of the depot when the Army left. This is an unusual display of confidence in the Reuse Authority by the Army. Usually government contractors are named to be caretakers. This is also a savings to the Army and taxpayers.

The Reuse Authority is currently operating with only 11 people instead of the hundreds employed by Mason and Hanger. Quality reports on the recent operations have been outstanding.

The concerns voiced by some over the prairie grass have been heard before and the Department of Defense advised concerned groups last July that "the Department has recognized the Newport Chemical Depot Reuse Authority as the Local Redevelopment Authority for Newport Chemical Depot, and will rely on it to resolve any conflicts over local redevelopment." Those comments last year did not fall on deaf ears, but immediate reaction to comply with them will not happen soon.

The primary goal of the Reuse Authority is economic development and the creation of long term jobs for the area. Fenoglio likened the situation to a man moving into town and buying a vacant lot on which to build his house. The first thing he must do is determine the size and location of his new house so he will have a place to live. Later he can determine where to plant flowers and trees and which existing trees should be kept or cut down. The preservation of natural areas at Newport is included in the reuse plan, but not defined down to the

nearest inch. Several conservation groups have been working with the Department of Natural Resources and the Reuse Authority to cooperatively come up with a more specific plan for these natural areas. After the more important tasks of completing the transfer and developing opportunities for new jobs, the Authority will concentrate upon other tasks. The Reuse Authority is always listening to comments but will act on them when they become the current priority.

The last Board meeting reports will be heard at the regular meeting, Thursday. The Dec. 30 meeting will feature member Jon Beardsley, of Spyglass Investments, talking about 529 education savings plans.