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DOWNTOWN OWENSBORO:

BUILDING STANDARDS

Gateway submits its draft rules

Public comment period comes next

By James Mayse

Gateway Planning Group members presented the draft downtown building design standards to Owensboro residents Wednesday night and asked for public comments so the draft can be amended and finalized.

The hope, officials said, is to have any changes made by fall, so the standards can be presented to city officials for approval.

"We would like to see, by early to midfall, it having been considered and be implemented," Downtown Development Director Fred Reeves said.

The Gateway Planning Group is the Texas firm brought in by city and county government to craft the downtown master plan. Gateway President Scott Polikov and Jay Narayan, the agency's project manager, presented the design standards to about 50 residents Wednesday at Owensboro City Hall. The meeting was hosted by PRIDE of Owensboro-Daviess County.

Tonight, we want your input to make sure the philosophy of what we're doing, the technical details of what we're doing, will work," Polikov said.

The proposed standards create eight overlay "character" districts for the downtown area and establish standards for renovating existing buildings or building new structures in each.

The zoning regulations downtown won't change, so the standards won't affect building design. A downtown design committee — made up of planning commission officials and members from city departments, and headed by a city-appointed administrator — will determine whether applications for construction in the character zones conform to the standards.

The goal is to create "adjacency predictability," Polikov said.

See Gateway/Page A2

Cool pool



Lifeguard Kennah Galloway, 16, bundles up with close at noon today for maintenance, said J.P. a towel while wearing a jacket Wednesday after- Clark, the pool manager. "They're working on the noon at Combest Pool next to Chautauqua Park. pumps and pipes." The pool is scheduled to "I'm cold out here," Galloway said. The pool will reopen Friday.

OWENSBORO-DAVIESS COUNTY REGIONAL AIRPORT

Airline set to provide free flights

Pacific Wings begins service here on Sept. 1

By Keith Lawrence

Pacific Wings hopes to make a big splash when the airline begins commuter flights from the Owensboro-Daviess County Regional Airport to Nashville on Sept. 1.

'Every seat on every plane will be free for the first week," Greg Kahlstorf, chief executive officer of the Hawaii-based air-

line, said Wednesday.
"We usually do that on Christmas Eve and the day after Christmas," he said. "But it's been so long since Owensboro has had regularly scheduled air service that we thought we'd start that

The airline has discovered that "it's a good way to get people introduced to our service," Kahlstorf said. "People who fly for the novelty of it often come back as customers.'

Pacific Wings will open a Web site for its Owensboro service which will operate as Kentucky-Skies — and a telephone reservations line soon, he said.

Once the Web site and phone line are open, people can book the free flights on a first-come, first-served basis, Kahlstorf said.

Pacific Wings plans three

flights daily, one on Saturday and two on Sunday from Owensboro to Nashville. The flights to Nashville and back would normally cost \$39 each way. The airline had planned to operate in Kentucky as Kentucky

Blue. "I really liked that name," Kahlstorf said. "But Jet Blue owns the rights to every combination with the word 'Blue.' We have all the names with 'Skies,' so we'll go with KentuckySkies.' Pacific Wings officials will be

in Owensboro on Friday for a job fair from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the airport terminal.

"We need about a dozen peo-

ple to work the counter and the gates," Kahlstorf said. "And we'll be hiring people for our operations in the pitter of the said." tions in other cities as well — if they're willing to relocate."

Those applying should remember to bring their résumés, he said.

Kahlstorf said Pacific Wings will bring one of its nine-seat Cessna Caravans to Owensboro on Friday so people can take a look at what it has to offer.

The company operates in Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, New Mexico and Hawaii.

See Flights/Page A2

Residents take aim at city police's firing range

By Dariush Shafa

Residents who live near the Owensboro Police Department's firing range have a laundry list of concerns about noise, safety and the planned expansion that is set to begin in August.

The range, which is on Kentucky 298 just southeast of the city, is built on the city's old landfill property. OPD's plan is to upgrade and modernize the range, giving it computer automation and adding a "shoothouse" — a steel building where officers can do live-fire exercises the Fiscal Court room at the being so close to a landfill and to



"The city and the police department people's homes." do feel it's a beneficial reuse of a previously owned site and that it's a savings to the taxpayer. At this point. I feel another site location is not an option."

> — Glenn Skeens Owensboro police chief

ing trouble outside the building.

without fear of stray bullets caus- Daviess County Courthouse, some residents called the range At a meeting Wednesday in unsafe and said it has no place

'It was quite evident that those residents living near the firing range would prefer the range not to be in that location, said OPD Chief Glenn Skeens, who spoke at the meeting and took questions from the 30 or so residents who came.

But because of budget constraints and other limitations, the site is the best choice for the upgraded firing range, Skeens

department do feel it's a benefi-

site and that it's a savings to the taxpayer," Skeens said. "At this point, I feel another site location is not an option.

However, Skeens said the neighbors' input should not be ignored, because they have to live near the range. Though the location is not something that can be changed, he said, officials can still see if there's anything else they can do to make the range less of a nuisance.

"We do want to be good neigh-"The city and the police bors, and we do understand that

cial reuse of a previously owned See Range/Page A2

Obama attempts to win support for health reform

By Ben Feller

WASHINGTON - Six months in office, President Barack Obama sought Wednesday night to rally support for sweeping health care legislation he's struggling to push through Congress, expressing support for a surtax on families making more than \$1 million a year to help pay for it.

Under pressure from Democrats to weigh in personally on the details of legislation, Obama also vowed at a prime-time news conference to reject any measure "primarily funded through taxing middle-class families.'

While the session was dominated by health care, Obama said in response to one question that Cambridge, Mass., police "acted stupidly" last week in arresting Henry Louis Gates Jr., a black scholar at Harvard, in his house. Police were called to the house to investigate a possible breakin. Gates produced identification but was arrested



President Barack Obama speaks during a news conference Wednesday in the East Room of the White House in Washington.

Analysis: With credibility at stake, president's missteps are confusing

By Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar

WASHINGTON etermined to avoid the fatal missteps of the Clinton White House, President Barack Obama is wobbling along his own precarious path to try to overhaul the nation's health

Where Hillary Rodham Clinton micromanaged the 1990s effort, Obama has given lawmakers lots of room and held back from offering a detailed plan of his own — but with no indication his strategy is working any better.

The sense of bipartisanship the president infused into the effort in March has been dissipated; lawmakers may never have taken it seriously. And the clear, confident

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Honduras talks faltering; ousted leader vows return

By The Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica — Talks on resolving the Honduran political crisis headed toward failure Wednesday when the interim government indicated it would reject a Manuel Zelaya to power.

Zelaya, who is in neighboring Nicaragua, declared the mediation effort a failure and on Friday without an agreement. He said he would travel

and try to cross the border by land the next day accompanied by his wife and children.

The coup leaders are totally refusing my reinstatement," Zelaya, who wore a white cowboy hat and arrived escorted mediator's final proposal for by local police, told a news returning ousted President conference in the Nicaraguan capital. "By refusing to sign, (the talks) have failed."

Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, who mediated the vowed to return to Honduras talks with U.S. backing, presented an 11-point plan that called for Zelaya's return to to northern Nicaragua today the presidency in two days.

Range: Residents speak out

From the Front Page

locally, many people would not like to live near a firing range," Skeens said.

Safety and the noise from the range are the biggest concerns, residents said. To alleviate those concerns, additional 15 to 20 feet earthen walls will be built on three sides of the range. They will not only catch rounds but also help funnel sound up, Skeens said.

OPD's bomb squad, one of five in the state, uses the range as a safe zone to detonate any homemade explosives that can be safely moved there for disposal, as well as for training. Skeens said OPD will evaluate how they train in an effort to lower the noise from such training.

Engineers are also present throughout the year, Skeens said, as is proper procedure with the landfill, monitoring for environmental problems, methane leaks and other hazards.

'If at any time we felt the range was unsafe, we would call a cease-fire and shut the range down," Skeens said.

Skeens and Daviess County Sheriff Keith Cain said they will examine ways to use the county's reverse 911 system to contact residents in the area of any training or unscheduled bomb detonation. Though law enforcement also trains at night, Skeens promised a stop-time of 10 p.m. for the range.

A marking system to let residents know when the range is in use is also being investigated, and Cain said making that hap-

what's going to hap-

From the Front Page

pen next to you," Polikov said.

Existing downtown business-

es will have to conform to the

design standards if improve-

ments to their buildings are

above a certain percentage of

the building's assessed value.

That threshold has not been set.

high as 30 percent to 50 percent

over a fixed period of time,

Polikov said. Setting a threshold

will prevent routine repairs from

making an existing business

out of business," Polikov said.

We don't want to put anyone

Sean Dysinger, a member of

"If I'm getting close to the

Polikov said some business

the board of zoning adjustment,

asked if the thresholds could

dissuade people from investing

threshold, isn't that going to dis-

owners might choose to delay

making renovations because of

the standards. But Polikov said

business owners might choose

to invest in their buildings as

other parts of their character

going to encourage them to

cross over, jump on board" and

make improvements, Polikov

reported recently that Pacific

Wings has selected that city's

airport for its southern regional

headquarters and maintenance

maintain planes for its Tennes-

see, Kentucky and Georgia

routes in Jackson, the newspa-

The company will repair and

The U.S. Department of

Transportation has approved an

annual subsidy of \$1.07 million

for Pacific Wings' flights from

Owensboro to Nashville for each

'At some point, the market is

district increase in value.

From the Front Page

courage me?" Dysinger asked.

in their downtown properties.

subject to the standards.

The threshold could be as

pen should not be difficult. Improvements to the road and relocation of the gate are also easy changes that were brought up and met with approval from

Despite the meeting and all its promises, residents still have doubts about having a firing range so close to their homes and families.

We just want some peace," said Nancy McCormick, who owns and operates Blueberries of Daviess County, a you-pick fruit operation nearby. "I think they could find a more appropriate place and even a place to grow."

The meeting was positive,

"It gives us an opportunity to let them know how we feel," McCormick said. "I think he (Skeens) listened. Whether or not they respond, I don't know."

Daviess County Commissioner Bruce Kunze said he was pleased with the meeting but more needs to be done before the planned ground-breaking.

The more information you have and the more you understand about what they're doing makes it easier to accept it,' Kunze said. "But there's going to be some people who, no matter what you do, will not accept it.

"I thought it was a good meeting overall but I think we need a follow-up," Kunze said. "Before that happens (construction begins) there needs to be some discussion.

Dariush Shafa, 691-7302, dshafa@messenger-inquirer.com

Having a threshold will help

In cases where the design

committee rejects a building

plan, a developer can appeal to

the historic preservation board

approval if the proposal fits the

overall downtown master plan.

stifle creativity," Polikov said.

which can recommend

The key is we don't want to

After the meeting, Virginia

Marx, president of PRIDE of

Owensboro-Daviess County, said

the design standards will help

attract investment in downtown

I can only see the advantage,

Marx said. "Whatever goes up

next to me is going to be con-

trolled. I think that will be a signifi-

eration of the entire street,'

The standards create "consid-

Public comments will be

reviewed by Gateway officials,

and the final version of the stan-

dards will then be sent to the

Planning Commission. The com-

mission will recommend the

standards be approved or reject-

ed and the document will be for-

warded to the Owensboro City

Commission for consideration

and a vote, Reeves said.

James Mayse, 691-7303,

imavse@messenger-inquirer.com

cant advantage to downtown.

"If I owned property downtown,

buildings.

Marx said.

existing downtown business

to a new location. Polikov said.

Gateway: Rules unveiled

If a developer invests in a owners decide if they want to

building downtown, "you need upgrade their buildings or move

Analysis: Confidence in president's approach is slipping

From the Front Page

message of last year's presidential campaign has turned into confusing policy options and messy politics, a standoff on Capitol Hill over how to expand and improve health coverage — and somehow pay for it.

It's all recasting Obama's image. The cool, crisp candidate who captivated voters last fall has been replaced by a president who is constantly calling for action, with little to show for it and his credibility at stake.

Democrats are putting on a brave face, noting that in Congress a standstill can quickly shift into high-gear action.

"I have no question we have the votes on the floor of the House to pass this legislation," Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said Wednesday. But she hasn't scheduled a vote.

Around the country, doubts are creeping in. A majority of Americans — 56 percent — still think Obama can pull off an overhaul. But a new Associated Press-Gfk poll found that disapproval of how he's handling health care spiked in the past three months. Disapproval stands at 43 percent, up from 28 percent in April. Overall, just half approve of the way Obama is dealing with the issue.

Obama says it's not about him. But confidence in his approach is slipping.

Independents, middle-of-theroaders who were vital for Obama's election, are increasingly skeptical. Forty-seven percent disapprove of how he is handling health care, up from 30 percent in April, the AP poll shows. What went wrong?

The quest to guarantee health insurance for all Americans has never been easy, because it means raising taxes and expanding the role of the federal government. Add to that Obama's goal of taming medical costs, and the degree of difficulty gets much higher.

The last Democrats to attempt it — President Bill Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton — were accused of micromanagement after they handed Congress a 1,300-page bill that had taken months to draft in the isolation of the White House office



Associated Press

President Barack Obama reacts during questioning Wednesday at the White House in Washington.

complex. Bill Clinton went on to wave his veto pen at a Democratic Congress, saving he'd settle for nothing short of coverage for all.

He settled for nothing. Obama was going to take a humbler path but one that he hoped ultimately would reach the goal. His strategy was to set the tone, paint the big picture and let seasoned leaders in Congress work out the details. Everybody would have an ownership stake in the legislation.

The problem: He may have cut his Democratic allies in Congress too much slack, both on policy decisions and political strategy. He underestimated the depth of ideological divisions on

In the House, liberal committee chairmen drafted a bill that doesn't even represent a consensus of their own members, moderates and conservatives whose votes they need to pass it on the floor. In the Senate, Democrats headed off in different directions. One group produced a partisan bill; another keeps searching for a

compromise with Republicans. Obama — like a modern-day father with a somewhat dysfunctional family — has tried to encourage, not criticize. With Congress, that doesn't seem to be working.

Battles have broken out over major issues: How to raise \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion over 10 years to cover the uninsured; whether the government should offer a plan that competes with private insurance; how to make sure employers and individuals contribute their fair share.

Not wanting to alienate lawmakers who have taken sides on an issue - but could be allies later on — Obama for the most part has avoided coming down hard. And because he lacks his own public plan, it's often unclear where the administration stands.

"He doesn't have a plan," said Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, one of the bipartisan negotiators. "He's given some broad guidelines of what ought to be done, but you find (the congressional bills) now being completely contrary to the letter that the president sent up here on June 2 when he said that he wanted to bend the inflation curve of medical care downward."

It's created the impression that the administration is trying to have it all ways.

For example, Obama insisted from the beginning the overhaul won't add to the deficit. But this week his budget director said that pledge doesn't include an estimated \$245 billion in the House bill to restore programmed cuts in Medicare payments to doctors.

It's unclear how Obama will move forward. Bipartisan talks continue in the Senate, but there seems to be little chance of resuming the civil dialogue Obama sought to launch at the beginning by inviting all sides to a White House summit on health

"We need to put the brakes on this president," Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., told NBC on Wednesday. "His goal seems to be a government takeover, not making insurance more available. So I do think we need to stop the president on this.

Obama: He defends decision on midsummer deadline

From the Front Page

on a charge of disorderly con-

in that," the president said. But he more than a year ago. added that blacks and Latinos often are stopped by authorities in disproportionate numbers. Police have dropped charges initially lodged against Gates.

Obama stepped to the microphone looking grayer than the man who ran for president and took office in January and immediately began confronting the worst economic recession in

He defended his decision to set a midsummer deadline for the House and Senate to act on health care, even if it isn't met. "I'm rushed because I get letters every day from families that are being clobbered by health care costs, and they ask me, 'Can you help?" he said.

If the consequences are high for nearly 50 million Americans who lack insurance, the political impact is huge for Obama, who is putting much of his credibility on the line to gain congressional passage. His stepped-up public role comes as he faces rising criticism from Republicans, sliding public approval ratings and divisions within his party. Obama acknowledged that many people are uneasy about growing federal budget deficits and the fast-rising government debt.

He said that without a deadline for action, a recent proposal to curtail the growth in Medicare costs would not have materialized "until who knows when." He said in the past few days, leaders in both houses had agreed to incorporate it into legislation taking shape.

Asked if it was his job to produce a deal on legislation, the president said: "Absolutely it's my job. I'm the president. And I think this has to get done."

He said that since he moved into the White House, "we have been able to pull our economy back from the brink.

Yet, he said, "of course we still have a long way to go.' Obama didn't say so, but unemployment, currently 9.5 percent, is expected to remain stubbornly high for many months to come.

He was eager to talk about health care — an issue that now towers above all others. "This isn't about me. I have great health insurance, and so does every member of Congress," he said.

The president said that in \$350,000 income or more, but from that pledge an estimated addition to helping millions who lack coverage, the health care duct after protesting the police legislation is central to the goal of eventually rebuilding the

> He said Medicare and Medicaid, government health care programs for the elderly and the poor, are the "biggest driving force behind our federal deficit."

Unless they are tamed, he said to a national TV audience. "we will not be able to control our deficit. If we do not reform health care, your premiums and out-of-pocket costs will continue to skyrocket.'

The president said he believed it was possible to fund more than two-thirds of the cost of health care legislation by eliminating waste and redirecting federal funds already being spent. The rest must come from higher taxes, he said.

The administration proposed last winter a plan to raise taxes on upper-income wage earners by limiting their ability to claim deductions.

Congress looked unfavorably on the proposal, and Obama said he was open to alternatives with one notable exception.

'If I see a proposal primarily funded through taxing middleclass families, I'm going to be opposed to it," he said.

It was not immediately clear whether the president was signaling he would accept at least some higher taxes on middleclass families as the price for winning passage.

As a candidate he vowed repeatedly that no one earning under \$250,000 would face higher taxes if he won the White

Obama's remarks about a proposed tax on million-dollar families aligned him with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Draft legislation in the House calls for the surtax on individuals making \$280,000 and families with

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she suggested earlier in the week those levels should be increased.

who lack it, as well as control the costs of medical care generally.

In his opening statement, he stressed the second of those two

"In the past eight years, we saw the enactment of two tax cuts, primarily for the wealthiest Americans, and a Medicare prescription program, none of which were paid for.'

He vowed anew that he wouldn't sign health care legislation that wasn't paid for, although his administration has exempted sive risk taking.

\$245 billion to raise Medicare fees for doctors.

"This debate is not a game for The president stepped to the these Americans, and they can-"Now I don't know, not having economy stronger than it was microphone as Congress labored not afford to wait for reform any been there, what role race played before the recession that began over his call for legislation to longer," Obama said. "They are expand health care to millions looking to us for leadership. And we must not let them down.

The president said he was pleased banks are returning to profitability. But he added. What we haven't seen I think is the kind of change in behavior and practices on Wall Street that would ensure that we don't find ourselves in the fix where we've got to bail out these folks again. He said legislation he has proposed to Congress includes new regulations to control executive compensation and limit exces-

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2008 but never started service, had been guaranteed \$1.45 mil-

of the next two years. Great Lakes Airlines, which won the Owensboro contract in

lion a year.

Flights: They'll be free

Owensboro has only had reg-The Jackson (Tenn.) Sun ularly scheduled commuter service for about six weeks in the 28 months since the Federal Aviation Administration shut down RegionsAir in March 2007. RegionsAir had served Owens-

boro since 2001. Big Sky Airlines served the community from Thanksgiving week 2007 to Jan. 7, 2008. Great Lakes Airlines won the contract to serve the community in Febru-

ary 2008 but never began service. Allegiant Air has been flying nonstop between Owensboro and Orlando, Fla., since February. But it doesn't offer connecting flights to other cities.

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