

Sheriff's department working to expand county's K-9 program

Written by Deb Egenberger
Wednesday, 17 March 2010 21:49 -

Funds raised from donations, not taxes.

LEXINGTON—The youngest member of the Dawson County sheriff's department is about to retire and she hasn't even reached double digits yet.

K-9 officer Noeska is only 8 years old. That's eight dog years and somewhere around 50 when compared to human age.

Deputy Rick Crown, who serves as Noeska's law enforcement partner and handler, told Dawson County commissioners on Monday that Noeska has already been retired from several K-9 duties because of her age.

The Belgian Malinois is no longer allowed to perform criminal apprehension or building searches but continues to work service calls involving a variety of drug infractions.

"We're looking at retiring her and possibly adding another K-9 to the force," Crown said.

The replacement for Noeska and the additional dog would be used for drug detection, handler protection, tracking, criminal detention and apprehension, building and area searches evidence recovery, tactical operations, public safety and drug education.

Crown said K-9s are a deterrent for criminal activity and suspects are less likely to run or fight officers knowing there is a K-9 on the scene.

But the cost of replacing Noeska and adding another dog to the force is expensive.

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One dog could cost between \$7,500 and \$10,000, Crown said, depending on the quality of the dog.

Sheriff Gary Reiber told commissioners that given the current economic situation, his department has chosen to seek private funding rather than ask for tax dollars.

"We're getting more requests for K-9 service all the time," Reiber said. "It's been a very successful program."

Reiber said the sheriff's department is still soliciting funding. He is confident one dog will be purchased and is hopeful enough money can be raised to cover the cost of a second K-9, including training.

Crown said Douglas County has three dogs available between 13 and 19 months old.

"We bought an older dog the last time because of the cost," Reiber said.

Dawson County has had Noeska for six years.

If the campaign to add an additional K-9 is successful, Reiber said an existing sheriff's department vehicle will be converted for the dog rather than purchasing a new one.

In other county business, commissioners:

- heard the monthly crime report from Reiber. There were 1,066 calls to dispatch with 950 calls for service, 170 new inmate bookings and an average daily jail population of 110.
- approved advertising for bids for a 10-mile overlay project from Lexington's 13th Street east. The project is in the county's one-year road plan.
- authorized a resolution to pay 20% of the cost to have seven bridges inspected as per

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state-mandate. The work has already been done. Total cost and inspection results are not yet available.

- voted to sign a one-year lease with Maloley Real Estate for the 4M building in Lexington which houses the Health and Human Services office. The county is required by the state to provide building space for the program. Commissioners also approved a sub-lease with the state.

- discussed a right-of-way issue with county surveyor Jake Ripp and resident Dave Stenberg concerning a 6-acre corner of property east of Lexington on the Overton/Sumner road. Ripp said the road has moved and changed but the boundaries of the property have not been updated. Stenberg wants the property lines verified along with the county's right-of-way so he could possibly sell the land and finalize an estate. Commissioners gave Ripp permission to survey the land.

- agreed to form a committee to design an interlocal agreement with the City of Lexington to include survey information on the county's geographical information system Web site. Ripp told commissioners the county's portion of the site is complete but waiting on additional phone service to the office.

- discussed approximately \$2,800 in overdue bills posted by the surveyor's office, some of which date back to 2003. Ripp asked if the county could hire a collection agency or pursue small claims court since turning the bills over to the county attorney's office has not proven successful. Commissioners said they would investigate options.

- approved a contract with Cozad Carpet Cleaning & Restoration for service at the Extension building. Cleaning there will be split between Cozad Carpet and Servicemaster.

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