

County considers bonds to pay for road projects

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Resurfacing lags behind.

LEXINGTON—Dawson County may have found a way to get caught up on long overdue road resurfacing projects.

There are approximately 150 miles of paved roads in the county, most of which are well beyond their life expectancy.

County commissioner Butch Hagan, a former highway superintendent for the county, said ideally paved roads should be resurfaced every 10 years, 15 years at the most.

During the past decade, commissioners tried to pinch pennies for taxpayers and didn't levy to cover road resurfacing projects.

At the same time, government funds to help pay for such projects have lagged far behind the need.

The answer may be found in bonds.

During their regular bimonthly meeting on Friday, county commissioners heard a presentation by Andy Snyder of Smith Hays Co. of Lincoln.

Hayes said issuing bonds for roads projects could not only provide money necessary to get projects done sooner but it could also save the county some money over a traditional loan.

“Interest rates are historically low right now,” Snyder said, “and contractors seem to be hungry

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for work.”

That combination means timing is right for road bonds, he said.

Commissioner Dean Kugler of Gothenburg said the courthouse remodeling bond is to be paid off this summer and the jail bonds will end in 2011.

“That puts us in good shape financially to take on more bonds,” Kugler said.

The board agreed now is the time to get some resurfacing projects ready for bid and pursue bonds for payment.

Chairman Bill Stewart said the board should know by May 31 if a project can be done yet this year.

In other business, commissioners:

- received an agency update from Region II Services director Sally Vauhn. She said there are 56 clients in Dawson County receiving services from Region II with supported residential services up by 15 clients.

- approved signs that will mark the Oregon Trail, California Trail and Pony Express route through Dawson County. Bill Peterson of Minden told the board that signs previously approved had to be redesigned and required new approval. Peterson said he hopes they can be installed before the 150th anniversary celebration for the Pony Express in June.

- opened a public hearing to receive evidence in the appeal by Paula Brittain of Cozad, who was denied county medical and general assistance by Nebraska Health and Human Services in January. Brittain told the board she has a degenerative back condition that prevents her from working as well as a recent wrist injury and uncontrolled diabetes. She is waiting for a determination on her appeal for Supplemental Security Income from Social Security as well as widow benefits and has no way to pay her rent or utilities, she said. Brittain offered to repay the county whatever she receives in general assistance once her SSI is approved. Stewart said he would like to hear from Brittain's HHS case worker but because the meeting was on Arbor Day, that office was closed. Stewart suspended the hearing until 10 a.m. May 14, at which time

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Brittain and HHS can present their evidence.