

County to hire road superintendent

Written by Deb Egenberger
Friday, 05 August 2011 20:40 -

LEXINGTON—For nearly a decade, Dawson County has contracted with a private business to cover the duties of a road superintendent and engineer.

The agreement has worked for the county but commissioners now believe stiffer competition for state and federal aid dollars requires an individual on staff who can better focus on Dawson County's needs.

County board members decided during Monday's regular bimonthly meeting to advertise to hire a road superintendent/engineer with a target hiring date by Jan. 1.

"The competition is so much tougher now to get state and federal aid money," said Lexington commissioner Bill Stewart, who has served on the board's road committee for many years. "We need to have someone communicating with the state all the time and pushing to get that money."

Dawson County's last highway superintendent was Richard Speck, who was last appointed in 2002.

He was replaced in 2003 by a contract with Tagge Engineering of Holdrege which named company president Darold Tagge as highway superintendent.

Tagge Engineering has handled the county roads department's annual one- and six-year road plans, financial aid applications and legal requirements, among other duties, with Pat Nichols as highway administrator working in Lexington.

"We went to this situation to see how it would work with a roads committee and department foremen working together," said board chairman Dean Kugler of Gothenburg. "Now we feel like, rather than hire a company, we should look at one person."

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Then, not only would a Dawson County resident benefit from county employment, but the county would likely gain in government funding for roads projects, he said.

“It doesn’t take many state aid grants before you’ve paid for that employee,” Kugler said.

The county will advertise for three weeks. At this point, the salary is negotiable and commissioners will plan accordingly in the 2011-12 budget.

In other business, county board members:

tabled bids for annual audit services. Two bids were submitted with the total for Countryman Associates, the county’s current auditor, at \$31,000 and the state auditor’s office offering \$16,000. Action was postponed until clerk Karla Zlatkovsky could confirm included services were identical.

approved a special designated liquor license for Schnapps Haus of Eustis for a Sept. 17 wedding reception at Mark Oberg’s property south of Gothenburg.

adopted a resolution which reduces the speed limit from 55 mph to 45 mph from the Gosper County line to Road 751 near Johnson Lake.

accepted responsibility for a culvert on road 765 between Roads 408 and 409 southwest of Gothenburg. Six-Mile Canal Inc. was previously responsible for the culvert, which drains water toward the Platte River. All of the Six-Mile Canal has been abandoned and filled but officials believe removing the culvert would cause negative drainage issues.

set a public hearing for Sept. 1 on a special use permit requested by Geronimo Wind Energy to build a 197-foot meteorological tower 5 miles east and 2 miles north of Farnam. The temporary tower would be used to measure sustainable winds for a period of one to two years, testing for the feasibility of a future wind energy site.

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