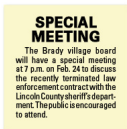


Trustees to reconsider law enforcement contract

Written by Deb Egenberger
Thursday, 18 February 2010 23:05 -



Brady residents tell board they want to keep guaranteed sheriff's patrol in town.

A month after Brady village trustees decided to cancel a contract for guaranteed patrol hours by the Lincoln County sheriff's department, residents have convinced board members to reconsider.

Several people spoke during the public comment section of the village board meeting on Feb. 10, essentially telling trustees that their decision last month to terminate the contract for law enforcement in town was a mistake.

The village board signed a four-year contract with Lincoln County in September 2008 guaranteeing at least 50 hours of patrol in the village per month.

Citing unknown costs that loom for a state-mandated upgrade to the sewer system, trustees voted on Jan. 13 to terminate that law enforcement contract and save approximately \$14,000 per year.

No one spoke against the idea during that public meeting.

The Lincoln County commissioners were hesitant but agreed during their meeting on Feb. 1 to end the service as of April 1.

Again, no one from Brady spoke against terminating the contract.

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But at last week's regular village board meeting, the room was full of residents hoping to change the trustees' minds.

"People in this town want law enforcement," said former trustee Dennis Christophersen, referring to a village survey conducted last year. "The \$14,000 you're going to save isn't going to amount to a hill of beans when it comes to the lagoon."

Trustees have expressed concern that fixing the seeping sewage lagoon could cost as much as \$500,000 and cutting back on expenses will be necessary to cover the price tag.

Resident Keith Wagnitz, who also serves as the village utilities superintendent, said no one knows what the cost of fixing the lagoon will be and trustees are using that issue as a scapegoat for a poor decision about the law enforcement contract.

"I believe this was done in haste," said another former board member Nancy Sitorius, who resigned as trustee last September. "There are many other areas to look at making cuts besides the protection of our community."

When asked by vice chairman Troy Viter why no one had spoken up about the issue before, Sitorius said the agenda item was so vague that residents didn't realize what was going on.

"Is it too late to change your mind?" Christophersen asked. "If you could add a dollar or something to the sewer and water bill to help cover the cost of the lagoon, I think most sane people who want law enforcement would not complain."

Resident Tom Ward made the final plea to trustees.

"I have a 17-year-old son," he said. "I know him and I know his friends. They're already talking about this. Knowing a deputy is here now and then is a real deterrent. I'm begging you to reconsider this issue."

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Trustees agreed the issue is worth another look.

“With the out-pouring here tonight, I think this needs to be reconsidered,” Viter said.

Sheriff Jerome Kramer said he sees no reason why county commissioners would deny a request to reinstate the contract.

Kramer said the hourly rate for patrol service is \$23. Reducing the number of requested hours would be a way to lower the village’s cost but Kramer said that would mean negotiating a whole new contract with the county.

“I can’t speak to that,” he said.