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(Neb.)-Dawes County Begins Search For Public Defender, Weed Superintendent  [Listen](#)



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 03/20/2013 04:57 PM

(CHADRON)-As the 12th judicial district prepares to receive new judge Paul Wess from Chadron, the Dawes County commissioners received his written resignation at their meeting Wednesday morning from his position as county public defender. At the meeting, the commissioners spoke with Box Butte assistant public defender Jon Worthman, who has been given the majority of Wess' cases. Worthman expressed interest in serving as Dawes County's interim public defender while the county advertises the position. Worthman agreed to the same salary terms as Wess was receiving, but said he did not need insurance coverage and instead would need mileage reimbursement. It is estimated that Worthman will be in the Chadron area two days a week, but the court calendar has a possibility of changing in April. The commissioners agreed that having an interim public defender would prove more financially viable than contracting hourly with an attorney to provide legal services.

Commissioner Jake Stewart says that the need for a new public defender is just one of the transitions the county is having to make.

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The commissioners are seeking a new weed superintendent after voting to terminate interim weed superintendent Pat Deaver. Deaver had served in the interim since former superintendent Becky Paulsen had resigned and relocated last year. Commissioner Stacy Swinney said Deaver violated terms in the employee personnel manual on a work trip to Kearney recently, hence his termination. The commissioners voted to advertise for a new weed superintendent, with applications ending at close of business on April 10th, and also for a part-time employee for the weed department.

Commissioner Stewart explained how the Dawes County commissioners aim to help their associates to the south after receiving a letter from the Box Butte County commissioners.

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Dawes County Veteran's Service Officer Alan Connell will most likely help in Box Butte on Fridays. His hope is that his secretary Martha Quay will be able to keep the office open for Dawes County vets while he is gone, with Box Butte County being financially responsible for her additional hours. Connell mentioned that he too is still learning his position, but that he is willing to help out as needed. He has not yet received accreditation, but is hoping to attend accreditation classes in Denver at the end of May. Connell told the board he did not have enough funds left in this fiscal year for the accreditation, which will cost between \$800-\$900, but since Box Butte County will most likely be paying a day's salary now for the next 90 days or so, the commissioners agreed that those funds could potentially be appropriated to cover the costs of the accreditation.

The commissioners also approved highway department bids to be advertised for a new extended cab pickup with trade-ins of 1997 and 2000 GMC pickups; two new gravel trailers with trade-ins of two trailers from 1983 and 1993; and two new packer attachments, one with an accumulator and one without. They also asked highway superintendent Larry Hankin to bring information to their next meeting on the possibility of upgrading the county's 10-6 dozer to one with a cab, A/C, and a six-way angle blade to be used during fire season. Commissioner Swinney said last year an employee received minor burns while helping fight fire with it because it offers no protection to the driver. Swinney says the money is already there for an upgrade as the highway budget has \$100,000 in a line item that is to be specifically used on fire-related expenses.

Hankin also shared with the commissioners that his entire road crew will be attending a Red Card Fire Operator certified training class April 8th-11th at the Crawford Fire Hall to help better prepare the crew for assisting in fire fighting operations this upcoming fire season. Hankin said "it will alleviate a lot of worries" to have his crew better trained in that area.

Sheriff Karl Dailey said the new plumbing has been installed in the county jail and is operating efficiently. He also shared that he is working hard to not be over budget this fiscal year in areas that he says were impacted by the fire season last year. He assured the commissioners he is working to curtail other areas in hopes of minimizing the overage, including forgoing some employee training and not buying a new cruiser the department was planning to purchase.

Scott Cotton with the UNL Extension shared a variety of current and upcoming meetings and programming that the extension provides and will be providing to residents regarding fencing recovery, pesticide application, health and wellness, and more. We will have more on that at a later date. Commissioner Swinney shared that a fire planning recovery seminar is in the works for sometime at the end of April, similar to the one that was held at Chadron State College last fall. He said approximately eight entities will be on hand to share information with residents. Stay tuned for more information as it is formulated and made available to the public.

The commissioners also voted to nominate Justin Haag with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to serve on the Tourism Board.

(Questions? Comments? E-mail roxie@chadrad.com.)

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