

February 14, 2017  
Reno County Courthouse  
Hutchinson, Kansas

The Board of Reno County Commissioners met in agenda session with, Chairman Dan Deming, Commissioners Ron Hirst and Bob Bush, County Administrator Gary Meagher, County Counselor Joe O'Sullivan, and Minutes Clerk Cindy Martin, present.

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance and a short sectarian prayer led by Pastor Jeff Slater, First United Methodist Church.

There was one addition to the agenda; discussion on Mr. Deming's newspaper column on January 31, 2017 regarding RCAT.

**Mr. Hirst moved, seconded by Mr. Bush,** to approve the Consent Agenda consisting of the Accounts Payable Ledger for claims payable on February 17, 2017 of \$300,491.67 and also consisting of pending Added, Abated and Escaped Taxation Change Orders numbered 2017-318 through 321, 326 through 332, and 337 through 341 as submitted. Commissioner Deming noted the passing of Kenneth Burgess from Fire District #3 Nickerson/Highlands area. He served 45 years as a fire fighter and 30 years of those as the Fire Chief. Mr. Deming stated, "We appreciate his service to Reno County and give our condolences to family and friends". Mr. Deming also wanted to keep in our thoughts and prayers the family of a Sheriff officer Matt Tatro who lost his wife this last week. The motion was approved by roll call with a 3-0 vote.

Emergency Management Director Adam Weishaar met with the Board to recommend approval for Fire District #3 Chief Bobby White's letter of recommendation to appoint Gerry Wiens as Assistant Chief. **Mr. Bush moved, seconded by Mr. Hirst,** to approve the recommendation from Chief Bobby White through Mr. Weishaar. The motion was approved by roll call with a 3-0 vote.

Mr. Weishaar discussed fire units dispatched yesterday for a chemical released into the air affecting twenty employees making them throw up at SYT Incorporated (HABIT area). Mr. Weishaar further stated that 45 minutes after arrival on the scene, the Fire Departments, Hutchinson hazmat, Sheriff

officer's and Haven EMS noted the CO2 levels were taken and recorded at over 120 per million. He stated the standard for a fire fighter fully equipped to enter a building was 35 per million. Since there were so many affected, an RCAT bus was used to transport 18 people and three drove their own vehicles to the hospital for several tests. He thanked RCAT for responding to the emergency with transportation and staying the duration while the employees were checked out at the hospital. Mr. Weishaar stated that all agencies involved worked very well together.

Public Works Director David McComb met with the Board to recommend approval for an Agreement between BG Consultants, Incorporated and Reno County to engineer the Wastewater Treatment Facility Improvements for Sewer District No. 8 (Highlands). He stated this was an ongoing process with BG Consultants for the last three years, since requesting the survey to determine the extent of the improvements and just recently purchased of property. The next phase is the design at a cost of \$79,185. **Mr. Bush moved, seconded by Mr. Hirst,** to approve the Agreement as recommended and outlined by Mr. McComb. The motion was approved by roll call with a 3-0 vote.

Extension Office Director Jan Steen gave the quarterly report and Ag Agent Darren Busick discussed the Annual Cattle Drive in Buhler on February 18, 2017.

Commissioner Hirst commented on the City Exchange Program that Mr. Steen discussed then stated how it could be beneficial for rural or any community. He also made a comment on how well the Aging Department and the Extension Office worked together on the Medicare Program.

South Central Kansas Economic Development District (SCKEDD) report was given by the City of Hutchinson's Downtown Director Jim Seitnater, who is one of the two members on the SCKEDD Board that represent Reno County. The other was President elect Mr. Hirst. He gave a brief explanation of SCKEDD, their building, funding, programs, and technical support they are involved with. Mr. Seitnater stated the dues of \$10,966.37 were based on a per capita formula by county population and split between the County's share (\$5,433.18) and the balance by the City of Hutchinson. Commissioner Bush was concerned about the tangible value of being involved with SCKEDD and the amount of dues. Mr. Seitnater stated the dues had been the same amount for a long time. The Board briefly discussed the relationship between SCKEDD and the county, Grant Fund writing, small business loans,

TECH assistance, and Quest Center E-Community loans combined with other organizations.

Commissioner Bush questioned why Commissioner Deming wrote an article that criticized RCAT in his column. He stated using the media to call out staff was unprofessional and was not the place to deal with county issues.

Mr. Deming replied that he wanted to let the public know the improved change in policy for the RCAT drop off/pickup location at Prairie Star which would help the sick and elderly get on and off buses. He stated most of the column complimented RCAT for coming around, and was his opinion that it should have been done earlier than the ten months it took to make the change.

Mr. Bush also stated if that was the case why call RCAT bureaucrats and throwing a shade on past county commissioners who did not agree with your decision last year when they asked you not to write about county business in your column while on the commission. He acknowledged the public information about the change was good and still wanted to know why Mr. Deming called staff bureaucrats. In Mr. Bush's opinion bureaucrat was a derogatory term used numerous times in Mr. Deming's article.

Mr. Deming replied RCAT tends to be bureaucratic and this was one of many examples. He said he had discussed the issue with Mrs. Lilyhorn on previous occasions with no action taken. Mr. Deming felt publicizing the problem and highlighting the issue was what it took to get the change made.

Mr. Bush replied that when Barbara Lilyhorn was available giving her monthly update, no issue was raised then and should have been addressed at the commission meeting not in a newspaper column.

Mr. Deming stated, "That is my right, freedom of speech, if that is how I feel, just as it is your right to criticize if you don't like it."

Mr. Bush then stated as the Chairman for the Reno County Commission when you attack employees and when you use your power in the media by calling them out and not giving them an opportunity to defend themselves, how does that reflect on the Chair of Commission? He continued with being a community columnist you can say what you want but there is no need to wrap this in a First Amendment cloak. I get it, and believe in the

First Amendment however; when you are a commissioner and you are writing these kinds of things about employees we are responsible for, it doesn't help the system and it doesn't make us more efficient or get the word out about the change at Prairie Star. What it does say is that you think our employees are bureaucrats. This is the time and place or even in executive session for the chair to address issues you call bureaucratic.

Mr. Deming disagreed with Mr. Bush that the article was improper stating the jest of the article was for the improved service and thanked RCAT for doing it and was also about time. He stated there was nothing wrong with that. Mr. Deming was frustrated by the bureaucratic actions of some government agencies. He stated, "He was not elected to be a cheerleader for government but to be a watchdog for the taxpayer and didn't mind saying so."

Mr. Bush again said, if you, Mr. Deming, have something to say do it here. They elected you to be effective as a commissioner. Reno County's biggest assets are the employees and we have a responsibility to our staff so they want to come to work. He then asked Mr. Deming, "Do you understand." Give the Board an opportunity to address the issues here with all three commissioners and have some impact don't take up the issues in your column.

Commissioner Hirst commented that the stop at Prairie Star was delayed for a period of time due to a change in their administration which may have caused some frustration for all people involved. He stated that it was good to be done with the change and maybe should not bring up others, and we should move on from here. We need to stay positive not negative.

Mr. Deming summarized his stance stating, "He tried to get the issue resolved and after shedding light on it by letting the public know, it finally got done. A service had been performed for the elderly, disabled and sick and felt he did not need to apologize for that. If calling someone a bureaucrat because of their bureaucratic decision making was not something Mr. Bush agreed with, then he had the option of speaking out. Finally there was a response that I did not believe it would be done even now if I hadn't spoken out in the article. His thoughts were to let people know of the change. When government offices make mistakes they are subject to being called on and that is where I am at."

Mr. Bush ended the conversation stating, "Where I am at is that it is never appropriate for a government official to use the media to call out staff, call them names, and point out what is wrong. If you have a problem with staff call them in here and make them accountable. In my opinion, that is the proper way to handle the situation, with professionalism. You, Mr. Deming, do not have the same opinion. Anytime you use the media to attack county staff you are hurting the system and people involved. I know you're not going to change, speaking to Mr. Deming, but at the end of the day it's important that I tell you how I feel. Putting the issue in the newspaper column was unprofessional as chairman of the commission. If you have a problem with staff you need to bring it to the agenda session to handle it in a professional manner." Mr. Bush read an email in response to the column from employees.

Human Resources Director Renee Harris, Youth Services Director Bill Hermes, District Attorney Keith Schroeder, and Sgt. Selby speaking on behalf of Sheriff Randy Henderson, each met with the Board for their regularly scheduled meeting and discussed various current issues not requiring action by the Board.

At 10:35 the meeting adjourned until 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, February 21, 2017.

Approved:

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Chair, Board of Reno County Commissioners

(ATTEST)

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Reno County Clerk  
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Date