

Commissioners choose local bid over low bid for liability coverage

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Coverage to continue through Barney Insurance.

LEXINGTON—A liability and comprehensive insurance package offered through a state association could have saved Dawson County a chunk of change.

A proposal from the Nebraska Intergovernmental Risk Management Association (NIRMA) offered not only insurance to cover county property but also added benefits including legal counsel for \$272,212 annually.

In an unconventional move, though, commissioners chose to stay with a liability and comprehensive plan provided by EMC Insurance with Barney Insurance of Lexington as the third-party administrator.

Cost of the plan for the next year will be \$287,464, more than \$15,000 higher.

Commissioners traditionally accept the lowest bid but during a special meeting on Nov. 23, a motion to switch to NIRMA failed.

Commissioners Roger Bauer and Bill Stewart wanted to keep the insurance locally. Dean Kugler and Butch Hagan voted for the lower cost. Commissioner P.J. Jacobson was absent.

“Legally, they do not have to bid this,” said county clerk Karla Zlatkovsky.

But when the new one-year contract is up with EMC Insurance, Zlatkovsky said it’s likely the county board will accept new proposals.

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“Only a handful of counties are not involved with NIRMA,” Zlatkovsky said.

The association includes 83 entities, of which 79 are Nebraska counties.

In other business, commissioners learned during their regular bimonthly meeting on Dec. 1 that the county will receive \$200,000 in governmental stimulus funds to cover the cost of purchasing and remodeling a building to be used as the Dawson County Public Transit headquarters and bus barn.

County grant writer Janna Pierce and handibus director Barb Hollenbeck told the board that in coming years, general operating budget funds from the government will not be given to transit programs without buildings to house buses.

The next step will be negotiating a purchase price for the building at the intersection of Van Buren and Plum Creek Parkway in Lexington which will house the three public transit buses as well as the handibus office.

The handibus office is now in the Lexington Grand Generation Center and buses are parked outside.

Commissioners also:

- renewed a contract with Tagge Engineering of Holdrege to provide highway superintendent services.
- approved a conservation easement agreement for 54 acres of land owned by Spencer and Donna Knauss.