

Trying to make workplace safer

Written by Deb Egenberger
Thursday, 04 February 2010 16:38 -

County to add safety committee.

LEXINGTON—Dawson County commissioners don't think the county's employees work in unsafe conditions.

Neither does the county's comprehensive liability insurance carrier.

But quarterly meetings of county employees who form a safety committee can bring to light minor concerns and prevent what could potentially become major hazards.

During their regular bimonthly meeting Monday, county board members agreed to form a safety committee with representatives from all departments.

County clerk Karla Zlatkovsky said most entities with a large number of employees are required by their liability insurance carrier to have at least quarterly meetings of a safety committee.

She said the county has gone without such safety meetings for awhile but she is uncertain exactly how long.

At Zlatkovsky's request, Dan Schomer of EMC Insurance visited with commissioners and offered to help get the safety committee going.

Schomer will do an initial inspection of all county property and help direct the safety committee's agenda.

In other business, commissioners heard a request from Nancy Westphal of Farnam for the

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Dawson County sheriff's department to enforce the village's junk car ordinance.

Westphal told commissioners her family has been forced to move from their home which was damaged by a fire into their business building in downtown Farnam.

She said junk cars around the business are a hazard to her children playing outside.

Zlatkovsky said Westphal has made similar requests in the past, asking that commissioners direct the sheriff's department to do something about the cars.

Zlatkovsky said Westphal was told the same thing this time—despite Dawson County's contract with the sheriff's department for patrol in the village, the issue is not the county's responsibility.

In other action, commissioners:

- heard an agency update from Jennifer Soncksen of the Parent-Child Center. The shelter served 353 clients in 2009.
- accepted the 2009 audit from Linda Erickson of Countryman Associates with corrections.
- authorized surveyor Jake Ripp to sell a 1994 Suburban that is not being used by his office.
- approved annual contracts for Jeff Wightman and Kenneth Harbison as conflict attorneys with the public defender's office. Wightman will be paid \$51,250 annually and Harbison will make \$42,400.
- set the public hearing for the county's one- and six-year road plan for 9:30 a.m. on Feb. 16.
- learned the employee handbook has been transmitted to Lisa Jorgenson, an attorney in the Bacon-Vinton Law Office in Gothenburg who specializes in workplace issues. Jorgenson will assist the county with policy updates.