

# Commissioners review dog pound contract

By Tom Betz  
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Sherman County commissioners reviewed the revised dog pound contract Tuesday morning, and agreed in principle to the changes and raise in cost.

Commissioner Chuck Thomas said the committee had met and heard the city did not want to include the clause about paying the utilities.

He said Janet Rumpel, county clerk, had said the county could not abate the property taxes without going to the state, and that the property taxes included money for the school district.

He said under the revised contract the Paw Wash owned by Kathy Schermerhorn would pay the utilities and the property taxes, and to allow that the annual contract amount had been increased to \$27,000.

Rumpel said the commissioners should check with Terry Ballard, county assessor, to see if he had arrived at an assessed valuation.

Thomas asked if Schermerhorn had applied for the neighborhood revitalization program that would have given her a property tax break.

Commissioner Cynthia Strnad said she did not know it was possible because this was commercial.

Rumpel said it does not matter that program covers all projects.

Thomas said the total amount is what Schermerhorn is going to be offered, and that it was not yet a done deal.

Strnad said Schermerhorn is planning to have a spay and neuter clinic available, and with the photos taken by Ballard said the future plans are for trees and windbreaks as well as concrete pens.

Thomas suggested checking with Ballard to see how close the figure is for the property taxes.

Strnad said to help out Kanorado Co-op is donating a pallet of food to be split between the pound and the animal shelter. She said she is going to ask Brad Cowan if Frontier Ag would make a similar donation.

Ballard came to the meeting and said he had been out to look at the facility. He said it is a nice facility for the animals and has a good system to clean it up.

He said he has a question on the dog pound and is sort of on limbo. He said part of the question is that it is being utilized for a city and county dog pound. He said his thought was to lean toward the residential class.

He said as residential, the property tax would be about \$300 a year, but if it was commercial it would be about \$650 a year. He said it is being used as a public service, but it is sort of a business.

Strnad said a businessman went to look at the pound and thought it was a disaster.

Ballard said it was much better than what is being used now.

Strnad said the hail storm in July put some holes in it, but the insurance paid to have it repaired.

The commissioners agreed that the increase in the annual cost was within their ability as it would be about the same as it would have been with the property taxes abated.

The county commissioners may have a chance to approve the dog pound contract at their meeting at 7:30 a.m. on Friday.

# City struggles with approving dog pound contract

POUND, from Page 1

cerned about the cost of the dog pound operation going up.

Fairbanks said she was on the original committee and was assured Dr. Smith had been talked to about the plan. She said she had not visited with Dr. Smith face to face.

“I had not heard Dr. Smith had called anybody,” she said, “nor has he been to any meeting.”

Daniels asked if Prairieland Animal Clinic would be where dogs or cats are treated in the first five days.

Gerber said it was the intent to have the vet work done in Goodland. He said the contract says that Schermerhorn is to contact him or Sheriff Kevin Butts before doing anything with a dog.

Billinger suggested putting in the contract that if any vet care is needed that the animal would be taken to Prairieland.

Gerber said he felt a line could be

put in to cover that.

Daniels said he thinks there are a lot of things probably missing in the contract.

“The committee has done a good job,” he said. “You came up with the contract Paw Wash did not come up with it.

“We did not have any bid specifications and no one was asked about what the charges would be. I am not sure we know where we are as it has not been done in the open through a bid situation.”

“True we did not put an ad in the newspaper saying give us a proposal,” Gerber said. “This has been hanging out there for eight months.”

“If this goes through we probably cannot go back to Dr. Smith,” Daniels said. “Once we make this step we will be fixed into the cost.”

“We will probably be building our own pound if we have to go that way,” Billinger said.

“That is part of what I am concerned about,” Daniels said.

“I agree with you about how this was handled with Gary,” Billinger said. “I have talked to him several times about this.”

The first time Fairbanks made a motion to approve the contract none of the other three commissioners said anything as there was dead silence for several minutes.

“I find this very frustrating,” Fairbanks said. “I know this did not happen the way it was supposed to happen. We have tried to do anything that was needed to get this going. I understand the concerns. We have to get past how it got started. We have to make a decision. We need to do something.

“We can look at it after the 18 months, but we have to move forward. We have to stand behind the decisions we make and feel this is one we can stand behind.”

Gerber said after the previous

meeting when the contract was not adopted the changes were made to make it adoptable. He said if that is not the direction the commissioners feel the city needs to take, he wanted to know what to do. He asked if the commissioners want to put it out for bids or stay with the status quo.

Daniels and Garcia talked about their objections to the contract which mostly were centered around the increase in cost and they were disappointed what started out as a joint project with the county was whittled down to a 70-30 split.

“We seem to be at a stalemate,” Billinger said.

Fairbanks rephrased her motion to approve the contract, and Garcia seconded.

When the vote was called Daniels said he would like to have seen this bid out, but felt the cost was close and finally said “yes.”

The others voted yes to approve the contract 4-0

# Sheriff wants commissioners to make a decision

SHERIFF, from Page 1

“I hope you do something,” Butts said, “because it is not working the way it is now. I am tired of it and we need to move forward.”

Butts said he was not saying Pianalto was the problem, but that “there was not enough of Burton to go around.”

Thomas asked Butts if he would like to hire another person.

“I would like to know what you are going to do,” Butts said. “I need to know so I can get things moving.”

Strnad said she did not see what the commissioners could do, and suggested it would be better for the discussion to be held at budget time.

Butts said he felt Selby could make some cuts in her office if she really wanted the investigator in her office this year.

Thomas said the commissioners had thrashed the subject about, but have not looked at the details.

“If she wants that position there are a lot of things that can be cut to get that done,” Butts said.

“What is your position about what Burton needs to do,” Thomas asked.

“I think he ought to go to Bonnie’s office,” Butts said. “There is not enough of Burton to go around.

“The position was originally set up to have him look over the cases to see if they are ready to be filed. What is happening now is Burton is taking over the case. That is not what I have planned and I did not want to give up my deputy.”

Strnad said it sounds like Pianalto needs to be in the attorney’s office and the sheriff needs to hire an investigator. She said talking about budgets and money, “I know you are not obligated, but are there any extra funds in your budget we could transfer to the county attorney for this year.”

“I would say I am not willing to transfer anything now,” Butts said. “I have not looked at it in that way. I cut my budget down and do not know if I could cut it further. My budget has gone down the last three years at least.”

“What happens if we are not able to make the move,” Strnad said.

“He will have to go back to doing more work in my office,” Butts said, “and go back to reviewing the cases. If the guy I brought back from Houston is to be prosecuted I can see Burton spending a lot of time on him, and that is probably a good thing.”

Commissioner Max Linin said he felt better about the discussion.

“I think we do need two positions,” he said, “but not sure it will happen this year.”

Butts thanked the commissioners for looking at the budget, and said if there were any future meetings with one of his employees he would like to be notified.

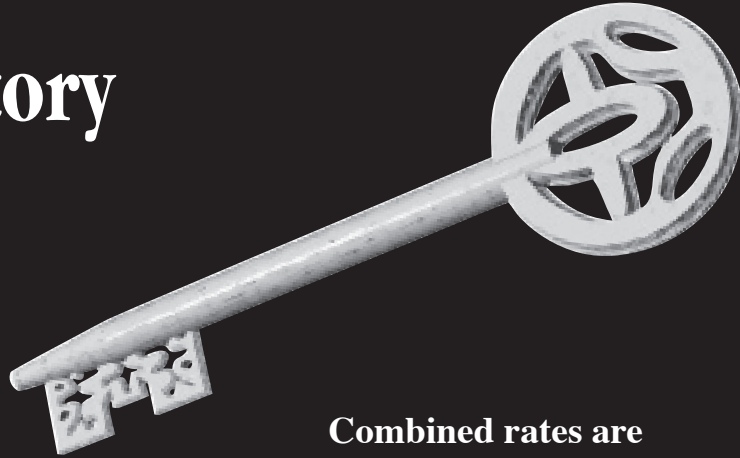
The commissioners spent time looking at the county budget, but did not make any motions about moving money to create an investigator position in the attorney’s office. The indication was the commissioners wanted to wait until July to see where the budgets and income are.

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