

Goodland vendor questions hospital's purchasing policy

PURCHASES, from Page 1

Leiker has done the maintenance at the hospital, Jolly said, and has done a good job. The hospital has been satisfied with the Sharp copiers and with Leiker's work.

Jolly said the hospital wanted to buy Sharp copiers and thought that the national contract would be the best way to go.

"As far as we knew," Jolly said, "the national contract was the best price. We went with that and let them decide who distributes."

Since the hospital is a government entity, he said, it qualified for the national contract, and officials left it up to the company to decide which dealer to send them through.

"As I understand it," Jolly said, "Topside is the designated Sharp dealer for Goodland."

Topside is a Kansas dealership, said Leiker, adding that as far as Sharp is concerned, his business is a branch of his partner's dealership in Sterling, Colo.

Hospital officials talked to a Kansas representative when ordering from Sharp, Leiker said, and he wouldn't give up his commission to order from a Colorado-based business. Leiker said that High Plains is considered a branch of the Sterling dealership that is authorized to cover counties in northwest Kansas, including Sherman and Wallace.

Leiker said he's not upset that Topside got the deal but about the

way he was treated when he questioned the hospital's purchasing policy. He said he was cursed at and has not received an apology, and he maintains that the purchase should have been put out for bid. It would have been fair, he said, and the hospital would have gotten the best deal.

The hospital did not know there were two different government programs with Sharp, Leiker said; as far as they knew they were getting the best price when they ordered. But, he said, the other program would have been cheaper, and they would have gotten that price if they put it out for bid.

Topside would have known about the program and offered that price too, Leiker said, if the hospi-

tal had asked for bids.

Precht said, before seeing a copy of the letter, that Leiker "has a personal ax to grind, and if he wants to run it up the public flag pole, that is his prerogative."

After reading the letter, Precht said he was planning to meet with Leiker and try to resolve the conflict and did not want to comment before that.

Leiker said he has been told Precht apologized to everyone else for his behavior, "everyone but me."

"All I want is an apology from Jim," Leiker said.

Leiker said he wants the hospital to change its purchasing policy and give more consideration to local businesses. They need to put money back into Goodland, he said.

He said the hospital should also be concerned about its image and about attracting patients from outside the county.

"I care about our hospital and our community," Leiker said. "I want them to fix this negativity. If people come here to see the doctor, they will spend money here. Everyone benefits."

He said he is hoping things will be straightened out and he hasn't given up, adding that he thinks he has still gotten the runaround. Leiker said a meeting had been scheduled for 7 a.m. Thursday for him to talk with hospital officials about the problem but that it was canceled. He said he understood from what a board member told him that it would be re-

scheduled after the board's regular monthly meeting Monday night.

Jolly said he had heard some discussion of a meeting and that an invitation had been made to Leiker, but said as far as he knew, there had been no further contact. Jolly said hospital officials are willing to discuss business relationships with any vendor.

Leiker said he understands the importance of the hospital and praised the institution and its employees for saving his brother Rustin's life after he was stabbed Nov. 8. Now, Leiker said, it is hard for him to praise the hospital since the doctors, nurses and emergency medical technicians are not to blame for his problems.

Vendor's letter explains complaints about treatment from hospital staff

In a letter addressed to the Sherman County commissioners and hospital board, the owner of High Plains Office Supply detailed his rocky relationship with the Goodland Regional Medical Center's purchasing department.

Darrick Leiker claims the problems culminated in a "cussing out" by the hospital's chief financial officer.

Leiker said he assumed the maintenance agreements on the hospital's Sharp copiers in March of 2003 after he was contacted by Andy Laue, then the chief financial officer. Leiker said he had previously serviced them while working for Topside Office Products. He said he lost his job at Topside in December 2002 and formed his own business in January 2003.

Leiker said when he went from machine to machine at the hospital to inspect the copiers and write down their serial numbers, the purchasing staff told him this was not their idea, and they seemed openly

hostile to him.

A few months later, he said, the purchasing department contacted him for a bid on a replacement copier. He said he gave them a bid, but the purchasing agent refused to take it, insisting the hospital wanted a Sharp National Accounts price.

Leiker said he tried to explain that the price he gave was less than the national accounts price and that he was extending generous payment terms, but the bid was still refused. He said he spoke to Dale Schields, hospital human resources director, about the situation.

Leiker said he later heard he had upset the purchasing department by "going over their heads."

"I never had that intention," Leiker said. "Dale just happened to be there, and I have always had a good relationship with him and found him easy to deal with."

Leiker said he went to the purchasing department to apologize and was met with silence. He said he was trying to get the hospital the

best possible deal on the copier and that when Schields told him what the problem was with the purchasing department's copier, he told him he could fix it for \$40-\$50.

Leiker said that in his last months of repairing and servicing the copiers, he was told by several hospital employees not to put any money into them because the hospital was ordering new ones.

He said he expected to be asked to submit a bid, but the request never came. Leiker said he asked several of the hospital staff about the matter and was several times referred to Chief Financial Officer Jim Precht.

Leiker said when he told Precht he could save the hospital money, Precht seemed interested. However, Leiker said, when he asked why the hospital didn't get bids on the machines, Precht said he didn't want to get into a contest between him and his competitor and that he was angry Sharp had allowed two dealerships in the same area.

"For two years, I have been bidding office machines against my local competitors and non-local competitors," Leiker said. "Sometimes you win; sometimes you lose them. That's just business.... To my knowledge, the bidding process has never involved urination, at least not on our part."

Leiker said he got conflicting reports from Precht, from the purchasing department and from hospital board members about why he wasn't asked to bid on the copiers. Still, Leiker said, he met with hospital officials and tried to explain what prices and service his business could provide.

Leiker said he showed them his price sheet and said that he could have saved the hospital \$300 per machine. He said he told them he wanted to work out their differences.

Leiker said Velasquez accused him of threatening to get her fired and "write her up." After more apologizing, Leiker said, they began talking about copiers again.

Leiker said he spoke to his partner in Sterling, Colo., and explained the situation. He said the hospital was concerned about getting in the middle between him and his competitor and wanted to order the copiers direct from Sharp to avoid the conflict. Leiker said he was told he could give them a price sheet and blank order form, and the hospital could leave the dealer information blank to eliminate the "contest" and get the best price.

Leiker said he left the papers in Precht's office Monday, Dec. 6, while Precht was out. On the way out of the hospital, Leiker said, he saw Precht in the hallway and told him he had left the papers.

The next day, Leiker said, he found out the copiers had already been ordered and were being shipped. He said he went to the hospital to ask Precht why he had been told the copiers weren't ordered yet if they were. Leiker said he told Precht he spent hours in meetings and could have been told if the copiers

were already ordered and then asked why he had wasted his time with the meetings.

Leiker said Precht became very upset and said, "I don't like your attitude."

Leiker said he tried to explain about talking to others besides the purchasing agents, and Precht said, "We pay you to service our machines, but now I don't want you up here anymore. You are too disruptive."

Leiker said he told Precht, "I'm sorry you feel that way; you've got me all wrong. If you don't want me here anymore then I won't be here anymore."

He said he then left Precht's office. Leiker said he wondered whether that meant he wasn't to service the copiers anymore and wondered if he wasn't allowed to come to the hospital if he was sick or hurt.

He said he told the women at the hospital they would have to call someone else to fix the machines because he didn't want to be arrested for doing a service call.

Purchasing locally hospital's priority

POLICY, from Page 1

would. First, the hospital looks at what it needs, he said, and where it can be bought.

He said the hospital was interested in keeping the copier business in town, especially the maintenance, so there would be someone available on short notice. Also, he said, a local business could stock some of the supplies for the machines so the hospital doesn't have to.

A lot of the hospital's major purchases can't be made in Goodland, he said, because the items are medical equipment and supplies that are not available from anyone here. Also, he said, the hospital buys drugs and supplies in large volume

on a national contract.

The hospital is part of the Voluntary Hospitals of America, Jolly said, a national purchasing group that bids on behalf of all members. The medical center's biggest items, medical equipment, are often bought through that group, he said.

For routine business items, he said, the hospital tries to have all the equipment of a one brand to save on inventory. One thing that applies to, he said, is photocopy machines.

The hospital had machines from two different manufacturers, he said, but one brand may have been donated.

"I'm not sure until the most recent purchase when the last copier purchase was made," Jolly said, "but it happened before I got here."

Good weather lets kids enjoy outdoors



The Linnell family (above) enjoyed the sunny day Friday, playing football in Gulick Park near their house, 215 E. Fourth. Eric (middle) the oldest, threw the ball to his brothers, Sebastian (right) and Gavin. The high Friday got up to 64, but the chilly winds forced the kids to keep their coats on. Phillip Carver (right) enjoyed the sunny day. He and his sister Sabra played on the slide at the Topside Territory Park.

Photos by Kathryn Burke/The Goodland Star-News



Possibility of locating convention bureau office with chamber in works

OFFICE, from Page 1

ment to move in next to the Chamber.

Bureau board members thought the historic telephone building would make a nice site, some adding that it is too nice to be used for storage. One concern was that the building has asbestos, but board members thought it wouldn't be a

problem as long as it is not disturbed.

During a discussion of the bureau's proposed \$99,000 budget for this year, Lincoln Wilson, owner of Howard Johnson's Hotel, told board members they should set aside money to buy a new van for Director Donna Price to drive for business, including trade shows.

The bureau needs to decide

within the next two years, he said, whether to buy a van or pay the director mileage. But, he said, the bureau probably can't get away from owning or leasing a van.

The bulk of the budget, over \$40,000, is for marketing. The bureau plans an increase of \$10 a month for rent and had to add workman's comp insurance to the budget.

Price told the board about the Kansas Archeology Training Program field school June 4-19 near Kanorado. The school board has agreed to let the Kansas State Historical Society and other groups used school buildings for headquarters, labs and classroom instruction.

Last year, Price said, 130 people attended the school; the year before that, 300. The school expects more

this year, she said. Besides the month of activity, the dig could bring a major discovery to the area.

"If they find what they are looking for," Price said, "it will be huge for us."

The giant Van Gogh painting is gaining attention. Price said Feist Telephone Book contacted her for photos of the painting to use on the cover of the new book. She said they

will use a photo taken by *The Goodland Star-News*, if it turns out clear.

Price said she had been contacted by Smoky Hills Public Television. They are planning on doing a segment about the Van Gogh painting, Price said, and will be interviewing Marcia Golden, artist Cameron Cross and possibly others. She said she doesn't know when they plan to do the interviews or run the segment.

Shop Burlington for all your needs

Health Essentials

Natural Foods, Vitamins,
Massage Therapy,
Acupuncture & More

Natural Living Cottage & Wellness Center

314 14th Street, Burlington, Co.
719-346-4681

In Stitches

Your Total Scrapbooking Store

Come join us to learn how to
scrapbook. Call for information

1371 Rose Ave.,
Burlington, Co.

719-346-5538 1-800-247-9081
Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Saturday 8 a.m. - noon

The Feed Bunk



- Controlled consumption guaranteed
- Protein and mineral tabs
- Increase Profits and Herd Health

1847 Rose Ave.,
Burlington, Co.
719-346-5220

Let Advertising work for you!

Call
785-899-2338



- Flooring • Gift Items
- Gourmet Chocolate
- Window Covering

• Wall paper Superior Flooring & Rugs

360 14th Street, Burlington, Co.
719-346-7579
Dan & Myrna Troyer