

Commissioners bark at animal control facility

Written by By Betsy Blevins, Managing Editor
Thursday, 02 June 2011 10:13 -

May 26, 2011 - After months of sometimes heated and emotional discussion over the topic of having an animal control facility in the county, the situation came to a head at Monday morning's commissioner's court meeting where the issue was called to a vote, and subsequently voted down. In a meeting that lasted just over three hours and covered 23 line items on the agenda, at least one hour of that time was spent just on the one final line item pertaining to the facility. The final vote was met with several who expressed disgust and anger over the decision, and led to many remarks against the two commissioners - Stan Barker and Joe Strong - and County Judge Spanky Carter, who cast the dissenting votes.

Judge Carter opened the discussion by reading a set of letters that he had received in his office from people in the county who wanted to weigh in on the topic. Many urged the commissioners to make a decision and vote yes. Those in attendance were also given an opportunity to speak, and several took the chance, including Criminal District Attorney Richard Glaser.

"When was the last time you had a brand new road grader placed in front of you, and all you had to provide was an operator?" asked Glaser.

Glaser was referring to the \$230,000 that had already been received to build the facility from donors and other avenues. The biggest hiccup with the commissioners, however, was being able to fund the maintenance and operation costs.

"With the state budget in question, and us not knowing how much of a cut we're going to have from the legislature, I am hesitant to engage Fannin County in any other items that would affect our budget," stated Commissioner Barker. Judge Carter also expressed concern on being able to fund the facility once it came to fruition.

Commissioners Dewayne Strickland and Gary Whitlock supported the facility, and offered a motion and second to move forward with it, but were opposed by the other three voters.

Also coming under debate among the commissioners was a redistricting map for the county roads and bridges. Barker proposed a map showing what he proposed for redistricting, which would increase the Precinct 4 boundaries by 18 miles. Precinct 4 Commissioner Joe Strong

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opposed the proposition because it would require more travel time, to which Barker remarked, "Your precinct has a \$659,000 budget per year, and every other precinct gets considerably less monies per year."

Barker also showed a second plan that was discussed, but could not be agreed upon either. After two votes that didn't approve a plan either way, Judge Carter requested they table the topic until next meeting, and for Barker and Strong to attempt to work on a solution.

In other business at the meeting, the commissioners took the following action:

- approved the minutes from the previous meeting, with a clarification on number 14.
- approved a bid from Herrington Plumbing to replace the commercial hot water heater at the jail, for a cost of \$3,000
- approved Ince Engineering to handle the engineering services for breach analysis on 17 existing flood control reservoirs in the county, and further approved Judge Carter to sign the contract
- approved the purchase of 4 gigabytes of RAM to update each computer in the sheriff's office at a cost of \$336.
- approved the relocation of a camera at the South Annex at a cost of \$635.
- approved the purchase of a scanner for the county clerk's office to input criminal documentation, at a cost not to exceed \$897.09.
- tabled a decision to hire a program assistant in the AgriLife Extension Office for one month.
- approved a letter from TxDOT to concur with their bridge replacement plan on county roads 3434, 3433, 3935, 3550 and 1015.
- accepted an anonymous gift of an HP Officejet 4500 All-In-One machine.
- approved to file an application with the Texoma Council of Governments for grants to purchase a chipper that would be shared among all four precincts.
- approved the April 2011 Treasurer's Report.
- approved to renew retirement benefit plans for 2012.
- reviewed and discussed a budget workshop schedule and departmental hearings schedule.
- approved payment of the bills.