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Community Page

Lottery Numbers

Newspaper in
Education

Search

Subscribe

FRONT PAGE

LOCAL

Local Briefs

Transcript

REGIONAL

OPINION

OBITUARIES

SPORTS

CLASSIFIED

PAST ISSUES

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Commissioners discuss road improvements near development

By Sarah Hill

Reno County Commissioners had a busy Monday as they listened to discussions about two of the county's biggest issues.

Surveyor Dan Garber presented updated plans outlining road improvements on Buhler Road and on 4th Avenue.

Garber and Cottonwood Hills developer Lane Neville have asked the commission for support on those road improvements since proposing the project at that intersection in 2003.

The improvements would add turning lanes long enough for 10 cars to "stack up" while waiting to turn into the main entrances to the development. Acceleration and deceleration lanes near the development could also be added.

"We expect the numbers of people traveling on the road to go up pretty fast once people start moving in," Garber said. "We want to improve the safety on those roads for the traveling public, but also to show the residents moving in that we designed the community with safety in mind."

Garber also showed commissioners plans to add raised medians on the roads. Those medians would be raised from the roadway and possibly landscaped with grass or low shrubs.

Alternatives to the medians could include a painted median, with the option of installing a raised one later, Commissioner Larry Sharp said.

The commissioners also talked about the possibility of tying together two road improvement projects near the development. When completed, a three-mile stretch of 4th Avenue between Kent and Victory Roads would be upgraded and improved.

The issue will likely be discussed again at a later meeting, when the commission approves the contract.

In other business:

* The Public Building Committee met during the commission's session to discuss renovations to the new Public Works building in South Hutchinson.

With a budget of about \$400,000 left over after a bond sale to finance the purchase of the building, members of the board questioned the additions made by county staff to the office and shop modifications needed at the former Master Machine building.

Debate ensued over the addition of an elevator and Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant restrooms.

Architect Dan Link with Landmark Architects said he had determined that the planned use of the second floor - record storage and a conference room - along with any staff member or citizen who would need to access that part of the building warranted the inclusion.

But that addition raises the total cost of the project by almost \$200,000.

"You're going to run out of money," said PBC member Bill Morand.

"We'll get with (County Administrator) Ed Williams and the county commissioners and see what we can do next," responded Public Works Director Dean Chesnut. "We'll figure something out."

Commissioners will vote on the improvements after a tour of the building next Tuesday.