



THE PONCA CITY NEWS

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Minor Fire, Malfunctioning Doors Get County Attention

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NEWKIRK — A minor fire and malfunctioning doors at the Kay County Jail were among jail topics discussed at the county commission meeting Monday in Newkirk.

Undersheriff Buddy Thomas told commissioners that the electronic panel that controls cell doors malfunctioned over the weekend causing what he described as a minor electrical fire.

"We have several doors causing shortages and so they have been unplugged," said Thomas.

"Last week we had several instances where the doors just started opening and closing. Slowly we are running out of options," said Thomas.

"We had to have the deputies come to the jail armed to keep the inmates in the cells."

Kay County Sheriff Everette Van Hoesen added that the inmate count is holding at 135, 27 over the legal limit, and that he has not made contact with Sweeper, the contractor that recently installed 16 new jail cell doors.

Commissioner Wayne Leven commented that the county may have to order motors for the doors.

"We don't know if we are going to rebuild the jail and if we do, it would still be far away," said Leven.

Officials said they would try to contact the contractor this week about the door problems.

Phelps Dodge Agreement

Commissioners entered into an agreement with Phelps Dodge Monday, the company that is conducting voluntary soil sampling in the Blackwell area.

In January Phelps Dodge announced plans to voluntarily conduct a community outreach program to sample and if necessary clean up impacted soil.

In March a group of Texas attorneys told citizens that tests conducted by environmentalist showed lead and arsenic contamination in the city.

The agreement between the county and Phelps Dodge on behalf of the Blackwell Zinc Company Smelter, lists several properties that will be tested including 521 West Kansas; the property surrounding the county shed in Blackwell; 801 West Frisco; 804 West Dewey; 1704 South Main, which is the Kay County Health Department.

Other properties on the list includes county roads and an area where Hubbard Road and U.S. 177 meets.

Commissioner Laile Wilson said he does not see a reason for the county roads to be tested.

He commented that when the property is tested and cleaned up if necessary, a letter stating the property is clean and green will be issued.

"I visited with a real estate agent that said in time this will have to be done before property can be sold in Blackwell," said Wilson. "I plan to have my personal property tested as well."

Three of the properties listed have become county property because of delinquent taxes.

Leven was surprised that there were only three.

County treasurer, Christy Kennedy, commented that people from all over the country have been buying delinquent properties.

County Roads

Commissioners are still attempting to repair the road damage from recent rains. Leven said all of the roads in his district are open, while Wilson said he had two roads that remain closed.

Commissioner Dee Schieber said that the process to receive Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds is under way and that he is signing paper work today on \$163,000 for damages caused by

May rains.

He added that it may be four months before the county receives the funds.

FEMA officials are still evaluating damages around the county.

Other items on the agenda approved included the transfer of \$1,000 from the Kay County Justice Facilities Authority Cash fund from travel to contract services in an effort to pay jail consultant Don Jones.

The transaction wipes out the money the authority was allotted for travel.

The authority will hold a special meeting Wednesday at 2:30 p.m. in the courthouse basement and listen to presentations from Larry Edmondson and Associates, Tulsa, and AIP, Architects in Partnership, Norman.

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