

County hires counselor

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

Doug Sebelius gave up the job of Norton County attorney to run for state representative earlier this year and his law partner Karen Griffiths won the county post.

However, Mr. Sebelius will still be sitting in his chair at commission meetings after Mrs. Griffiths takes over in January because the county passed a resolution on Monday setting up the office of county counselor and hiring Mr. Sebelius to fill the position.

However, the county isn't planning on paying any more for legal services.

According to the resolution, which was prepared by Mr. Sebelius with the commissioners and Mrs. Griffiths permission, his pay comes out of the county attorney budget, which is not being increased.

Mr. Sebelius said that more than 20 counties in Kansas have a post of county counselor.

In addition to being the county counselor, he said, he will also be the assistant county attorney, the post Ms. Griffiths holds now.

"She'll be in control of all the duties," he told the commissioners. "I'll do whatever duties I'm assigned."

However, he noted the commissioners won't notice much change in how things are done.

"I think this arrangement makes sense," Commissioner John Miller said.

Ms. Griffiths, who attended the meeting to discuss the counselor position and her job as city attorney said she was comfortable with the resolution.

"I feel good about him continuing to counsel you and I hope you do too," Ms. Griffiths said. "It would work out well for our office and will allow continuity. Unless you have an undying desire that I be your counselor."

She said that she would work with Mr. Sebelius to figure out how he would be paid but that it would come out of the county attorney budget so it won't cost the taxpayers any extra.

Both lawyers said that conflicts between the county and city can be worked out when such arise.

"Conflicts in small areas are common," Mr. Sebelius said. "I won't say their frequent, but it happens. If something is uncomfortable, it is uncomfortable and we work with it."

Almena lights up for holiday

The town of Almena is shining brightly with Christmas lights as many homes are decorated. Take a drive around and enjoy several large displays in and around town.

— Photos by Susie Marble



Hospital gets good grade for emergency care

By VERONICA MONIER

The Norton County Hospital got a good rating on its quality improvement and risk management, the board was told at its meeting on Tuesday.

Risk Management Quality Assurance Coordinator Lynn Thiele said the hospital is in compliance with EMTALA, the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, which says the facility must provide a medical screening for anyone who comes in for emergency treatment, whether they can pay or not.

She said it was started because some hospitals would refuse to treat those who couldn't pay.

Mrs. Thiele said the hospital also has to provide stabilizing treatment, making sure that everyone with the same condition gets the same treatment, and that the hospital has to transfer or accept transfers when needed, regardless of whether a patient can pay or not.

She said the experienced nurses help the newer nurses to follow the rules and the doctors do well.

She said some hospitals get hung up on the paperwork for transfers, but so far, Norton hasn't had that problem.

"Everyone here is pretty good at filling out the forms like they need to be," she said.

Mrs. Thiele said the hospital is

also working on a quality assurance improvement program. She said all of the hospital's departments are involved and are expected to work on it year-round. She said they have a quality assurance committee meeting every month so see what projects departments are working on.

"Sometimes it's a struggle for the departments because they get really busy, but everybody works on it," she said. "The departments get better every year. They realize that the quality improvement is the best thing for our patients."

"Every department is important. Each one makes a difference."

Mrs. Thiele said risk manage-

ment is focused on improving patient care. She said the departments record and investigate anything that could be a risk for a patient.

When something happens, the employees bring a written or oral report to her or Hospital Administrator Rich Miller, then the department supervisor investigates and reports to a committee member. Then everybody tries to figure out the best way to improve the problem.

She said the risk management committee meets quarterly, or four times a year.

In other business, the board:

- Approved a risk management

plan with no changes from last year.

- Went into a five-minute closed session to review a confidential risk management report. After coming out of closed session, the board approved the report.

- Appointed Board Member Von Fahrenbruch to be a member of the risk management committee.

- Heard from Mr. Miller that the workmen's compensation premiums are going up 45 percent next year. He said he was going to see what else was available. He said the hospital may not change providers, but felt that 45 percent was high and other options needed to be considered.



Everything was almost ready. Cynthia Collins, (right) director at Whispering Pines, put the finishing touches on the hors d'oeuvres buffet before the second annual Christmas coffee Tuesday evening for residents and guests at

the retirement and assisted living center. Valerie Lee (above), vocal instructor at Norton Community High School, introduced the Jay Singers to those attending the coffee.

— Telegram photos by Carolyn Plotts



City, county, post office and schools look at days off for next year

As the year comes to a close, the City of Norton, Norton County, the post office and Norton schools have made plans for holidays next year.

The city, county and school will all have Friday, Dec. 31, off as well as New Year's Day.

The post office will be open on Dec. 31, but will be closed for New Years.

For Martin Luther King Day, both the post office and Norton

students will have Monday, Jan. 17, off. The students are off for a scheduled in-service day, but the district's office will be open.

President's Day falls on Monday, Feb. 21. Both the post office and county offices will be closed to celebrate.

Norton students will have March 14-18 off for spring break. Then, they will have March 25-28 for Good Friday/Easter. The school's district office will also

have March 25-28 off, while the county employees will only have to work half a day on Friday, March 25.

Memorial Day, which falls on Monday, May 30, will see the city and county offices, the post office, and the school's district office closed. The students will also have the day off.

Norton students last day of school is Tuesday, May 30. No vacation days are, as of yet, sched-

uled for the following school year, but the students will definitely get the same days off as the district office.

Independence Day will bring a holiday to the city and county offices, post office and school office on Monday, July 4. All four offices will also be closed on Monday, Sept. 5, for Labor Day.

On Monday, Oct. 10, the county offices and post office will be closed for Columbus Day.

Both the city and county offices will be closed on Friday, Nov. 11, for Veteran's Day, while the post office will be closed on Thursday, Nov. 10.

The city, county and school offices will be closed Thursday and Friday, Nov. 24-25 for Thanksgiving, while postal employees will have Thursday, Nov. 24 off.

Since Christmas falls on Sunday next year, the city, county and school offices will take the holiday

on Monday, Dec. 26.

The post office will be open Dec. 26, but will be closed Saturday, Dec. 24.

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