

County road will remain open due to local input

By Cynthia Haynes

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A Norton County Road, which was slated to be closed after a hearing on Monday, will remain open, the commissioners decided after landowners said they didn't want it shut.

Landowner and former Norton County commissioner Leroy Lang told the commissioners that the road in question has had little or no work in years.

"There ain't nothing ever been done here," he said and his wife showed the commissioners photos of the road on a laptop computer.

"It's been this way for 60 years," he added. "My Dad bought this place in 1950."

Mr. Lang has closed the road with barb wire at each end and had borrowed road closed signs from the county. Because of this and because the road has had little maintenance, the county had thought to close it.

The road is not built on the section line but wanders around, Mr. Lang said. That doesn't bother the people using now but if it reverted to the landowners it would need to be fenced. Before fencing, the road would need to have some deep ditches filled in, by surveyed and staked

so that the landowners would know where to put the fences.

"You don't build a fence on another person's land," he said.

Mr. Lang said that he has pastures on each side of the road. The south one has a spring, he said, so there is always water there. Since he uses rotational grazing, he needs to be able to move his cattle from one pasture to the other, he said, and he needs the road to get to his cattle.

He said during the grazing season he goes down that road every day and makes about 100 trips a year on it. He said he thought that there were probably 100 other vehicles that used the road each year also before he fenced it off.

The road was fenced, he said, because one of the culverts is so bad, cattle cannot go under it and have to go over the road.

He presented the commissioners with letters of opposition to the road closing from his sister, Jeanette E. Sterritt and Barbara Schmitz, who own the land with him. They both live in North Carolina, he said.

Mr. Lang also handed out copies of a letter from Warren (Roy) Richards, who is in Texas but owns the land at the east end of the road. Mr. Richards is also

against having the road closed.

Mr. Lang said that if the road is closed, the nearest road is about four miles away and that would make it impossible to haul grain.

"This is the only one (road) we have," he said.

"I need to get in there and I mean bad. You can't land lock a guy, Can you?"

Other nearby landowners Gary Lacy and David Donovan attended the meeting in support of keeping the road open.

"It's nice to move cattle down that road," Mr. Lacy said. "It keeps them off the busy highway."

Cory Urban also attended the hearing to support Mr. Lang's request to keep the road open.

County Road and Bridge foreman Floyd Richard said that he didn't care if the road stayed open or was closed. His only concern was the county's liability in the issue.

Road and Bridge Administrator Sandy Smith gave the commissioners an estimate of what it would cost to bring the road up to county specs.

It would take an excavator and dozer working for 16 hours plus three graders working for 10 days to get the road into shape. Add to that the materials, fuel

costs, wages and a six-foot culvert for the bad bridge and the cost would be about \$16,000, she estimated.

The work would take about two weeks to compete depending on staff available.

Mr. Richard said that it would cost about that amount to do the work Mr. Lang said needed to be done in order to close the road.

Mr. Lang also noted that it would be a problem if the road was closed and someone was injured.

"What if one of us gets hurt down there," he said. "How would you get the ambulance down there?"

Mr. Lang also said that the six-foot culvert Ms. Smith had proposed won't be enough to handle the flow of water in the area.

Two draws drain into the area, he said, and it gets a lot of water. It is even wet now although the county has been in the midst of a drought.

He said that the landowners don't care that the road isn't on the section line. He said that if the county would pull the trees growing on the right-of-way and fix the box bridge with something bigger than a six-foot culvert, they would be happy.

It doesn't have to be a super highway, he said. A minimum maintenance road will do nicely. "We need the road," he told the commissioners. "Everybody's against closing it. People use it."

With no strong support for closing the road, the commissioners voted against the petition to do so thus keeping the

road open. However, after the hearing they wondered amongst themselves how the work needed would be paid for.

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City Council

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will be made through Engel's Sales & Service.

The Council also authorized \$356 for security cameras for outside the Norton Public Library and the City will provide any labor needed to install the

cameras.

Ted Sanko received Council approval for the Norton Rotary to use Elmwood Park on April 18, 2013 for two shows by the Carson Barnes Circus, and Mike Campbell received approval to have Mud Drags in Elmwood

Park on Sept. 14, 2013.

Economic Development Director Scott Sproul gave his semi-annual report to the Council.

The following building permit was presented:

Ed Berlier - \$15,000 - remod-

el and re-roof at 611 W. Wilton

The Council approved Mick Miller's request to replace the sidewalk and curb at 113 W. Washington. The City will provide the labor and Miller will pay the cost of the materials.

County

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ounces of metsulfuron-methyl (Escort) at \$3.90.

Commissioner R.A. Peterson asked about using generic chemicals instead of brand names. He said that he had been told that the golf course had gone to generics and saved a lot of money.

Mr. Beckman said that he's willing to save money any way he can but because of government discounts he can frequently get the brand name for the same price as the generics. He also said that he always puts each chemical out for bids separately to get the best prices and will buy from several suppliers depending on the cost.

"We try to save every dime we can," he told the commissioners.

Commissioner Charles Posson noted that if some farmers took better care of their ground, it would save the county money.

Mr. Beckman said that what farmers put on their crops to control the weeds depends on their rotations. He noted that bindweed roots can go down 30 to 40 feet.

He said that the county sprays about 120 miles of roadside each year but does not spray around the Norton Dam or inside Prairie Dog State Park.

All the spraying equipment

seems to be in good shape right now, he said.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Talked to John Webster of Murphy Tractor, which is bidding on three motor graders for the county. Mr. Webster thought that story in the newspaper gave an inaccurate report of the difference in price between John Deere products and others but was told that that is the information the county had at the time although there will probably be changes with various discounts.

The three machines will probably cost the county close to \$500,000 no matter who they buy it from depending on gov-

ernment discounts, trade-ins and warranties.

Mr. Webster also stressed the company's reputation for service and reliability and that his prices include full five-year warranties.

"I want your business," he told the commissioners. "We'll be competitive."

- Agreed to attend the annual county Health Department Advisory Board meeting at noon on Monday, March 4, at the hospital conference room. The meeting should last until about 1 p.m.

- Talked about applying a calcium chloride compound to one-fourth mile of Road L starting at

the cemetery and going east to help with dust control.

The road would need to be graded first, Commissioner R.A. Peterson said, to remove any wash board problems.

The commissioners decided to ask the county Road and Bridge Department to check on the cost of the project and report back to them.

Sudoku Puzzle #2818-M

		1			2			3
		4				1		5
		3		6		7		
3		2		1		8	4	
1			7		3			6
	6	7		9		5		1
		9		5		6		
7		8				3		
5			1			2		

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Medium



Legislative Town Hall Meetings with Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, Rep. Ward Cassidy, and Rep. Couture-Lovelady

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2013

- 8:00-9:00 a.m. CT St. Francis, Cuppa Joe Espresso
- 10:00-11:00 a.m. CT Atwood, Williams Bros. Grocery
- 12:00-1:00 p.m. CT Oberlin, Decatur County Courthouse
- 2:00-3:00 p.m. CT Norton, Town and Country Kitchen
- 4:00-5:00 p.m. CT Logan, Hampton Memorial Plaza

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