

News-Sun

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McCormick ends term on county commission

Friends praise commissioner's dedication to county

MICHELLE A. FOX
NEWS-SUN
Friends and coworkers of Lea County Commission Vice Chairman Randy McCormick gathered Tuesday in the basement of the Lea County Courthouse to celebrate the commissioner's first and only term on the board.

"I had never met Randy before this," said Commissioner Hector Ramirez. "He loves Lea County. We will continue to be great friends."

McCormick was elected to the commission in 2004 to replace the Chairman Ross Black who had reached his term limits. It was Black, according to McCormick, who gave him some good advice on being a commissioner.

"I really didn't know how to do the job when I took the seat," McCormick said. "Ross Black told me to jump in with both feet and be ready to work hard."

McCormick represented northern Lea County including Lovington and Tatum.

At the reception held for McCormick, his fellow commissioners lauded his dedication to his district and the county.

"I have enjoyed working with Randy. He puts more time, hard work and effort into being a commissioner. No one puts in more," said Commissioner Mike Whitehead.

Commissioner Gregg Fulfer, who came on the commission as a replacement for Jal Commissioner Darrold Stephenson who passed away in 2007, said McCormick served as an inspiration to him.

"Randy has been an inspiration to me coming on to the commission the way I did," Fulfer said. "I always appreciated taking (McCormick) to meetings in Santa Fe. When he comes into a room, people stop and listen."

McCormick's term officially ends Jan. 1. At that time, Dale Dunlap will take over as commissioner. Dunlap defeated McCormick in the primary election held June 3.

"Working with these four guys right here has been a God send to me," McCormick said. "They have the willingness to do the people's work. Thank y'all for everything."



McCormick



DARRELL PATTERSON/NEWS-SUN

Amanda Green, a member of Dogs Deserve Better, pets Petey, a one-year-old pitbull, through the fence. Green brought Petey a chew toy and treats for Christmas. Green also took presents to 37 other dogs in hopes of educating the owners about keeping dogs chained.

Organization helps educate owners about dog care Dogs Deserve Better

LEVI HILL
NEWS-SUN

Christmas has gone to the dogs.

Dogs across Hobbs got a helping hand and a holiday gift this week thanks to the help of Amanda Green and Justin Dreyer, local representatives of Dogs Deserve Better, an international non-profit dedicated to improving dogs' lives.

The pair walked the streets and alleys of Hobbs this week looking for dogs kept on chains and talking with dog owners, spreading awareness about the harms of chaining a dog and giving the owners a chew toy and treats for their pets.

"We try to educate people that chaining a dog is bad," said Dreyer. "As we socialize dogs we have to take responsibility for them. A big part of it is education."

"We thought it was a way we could approach people this time of year and try to educate them," Green said. "It is also a way to help the dogs."

Green said it is estimated that 6 million dogs in the United States live chained and she has seen first-hand the harm that chaining a dog can have. While working for a veterinarian in Arkansas, Green saw the effects on a dog that lived chained at a home near the clinic. How long the dog had been in that condition Green didn't know, but one day it disappeared. Green later learned it had killed a small child that had come into the yard.

"I never saw that dog off the chain, and I never saw the owner have any kind of interaction with it," she said. "The newspapers portrayed it as the dog just snapped. They never once blamed the owner. I always thought, what if that dog had been given a chance to be a pet and not just a possession?"

The pair's holiday gift-giving was made possible thanks to funds raised by PetSense and its Santa Paws photo fundraiser. The store raised \$250 for the non-profit, and Green used half the funding to buy chew toys and treats for the dogs.

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Amanda Green
Representative of Dogs Deserve Better

Green said the reaction from dog owners has been positive.

"Everybody seemed thankful," she said. "We have had comments that they didn't know there were people in Hobbs who cared about dogs. If seeing that someone else cares about their dog gets them to spend more time than they normally would with their pet, that is our goal. At some point they loved their dog, otherwise they wouldn't have gotten them. We try to find out why they locked the dog outside."

Green said the non-profit can offer resources on crate training, obedience training and spay and neutering for pet owners to help them bring the dog back into the family.

"Also if someone has a dog on a chain and they don't want to take care of it, we offer to rescue the dog," Green said.

The rest of the money is being used to cover vet bills for the dogs the group rescues. Green said rescue dogs are often kept by foster families until permanent homes are found. Green is currently trying to find a home for Petey, a year-old pitbull whose owner is dying of cancer.

Rodeo VIP seating tabled by high cost

MICHELLE A. FOX
NEWS-SUN

The Lea County Commission popped the ever-ballooning cost of VIP seating in Jake McClure Rodeo Arena.

At Tuesday's commission meeting, commissioners were asked to accept a bid from Lasco Construction to install VIP seating in the rodeo arena and other necessary utility work at the facility at a cost of \$2.809 million. The project was originally estimated to cost \$1.2 million to complete.

"We had one bidder," said Brad Nesser of NPSR Architects Inc., the architects on the project, in presenting the bid. "The budget was \$1.2 million. I had reported in November that we felt like it would be \$1.3 million."

While the commission accepted in the November the possible increase in cost from \$1.2 to \$1.3 million, a jump to \$2.809 million was an increase the commission could not stomach.

In the end, the commission opted Tuesday to table the issue and meet with the Lea County Fair Board to map out a list of priorities and look at renegotiating or rebidding the project.

"I would be in favor of throwing this out and going out for rebid," Commissioner Gregg Fulfer said initially on Tuesday.

Fulfer said he did not believe the five contractors who originally took plans for the project fully understood the project.

One of the largest costs within the project is bringing electrical and plumbing utilities up to code. According to Ralph Nall, facilities director for Lea County, existing utilities for the entire Lea County Fairgrounds will have to be brought up to code.

"Anything electrical at the fairgrounds has to be brought up to code," Nall said. "The big deal was going to be electric and plumbing all along."

The arena is currently serviced by two electrical poles erected in 1978. The lines connecting those poles hang right over the top of the rodeo arena grandstand.

And while the commission was asking Nall to talk about which parts of the entire projects are priorities, Commission Vice Chairman Randy McCormick pointed out that it would be cheaper to the county to bring all the electrical utilities at the fairgrounds up to code than to pay out a lawsuit.

"With those poles and overhead wires, if there was to be an accident during a performance, the price of redoing those would be a drop in the bucket compared to the liability," McCormick said.

Commissioner Mike Whitehead asked Nall to get clarification on the building code to see if the county really had to bring all the utilities at the fairgrounds up to code at once or if it could be done in segments.

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Meth raid nets 4 arrests

LEVI HILL
NEWS-SUN

Four Lea County residents were arrested Monday in a joint law enforcement bust of a methamphetamine lab in Lovington.

Agents from the Lea County Drug Task Force assisted by the New Mexico State Police Criminal Investigations Bureau and the Lovington Police Department executed a narcotics search warrant at 110 North East St., in Lovington, around 10 a.m. Monday.

Commander Allyn Pennington of the task force said law enforcement were made aware of the laboratory during the course of a narcotics investigation into individuals purchasing large quantities of pseudoephedrine.

A small amount of methampheta-

mine along with pseudoephedrine, gas generators, filters, scales, drain cleaner, acetone, needles and assorted drug paraphernalia was seized in the bust.

Four people were arrested at the scene and charged with felony trafficking a controlled substance. They were, Robbie Gay, 37, 110 N. East St., Lovington; Francis White, 29, 110 N. East St., Lovington; Robert Dickinson, 47, of Monument; and Darla Cochran, 35, of Hobbs.

"We believe they were producing and selling," Pennington said. "We have seen an increase in the number of meth labs in the past year."

Pennington said the task force has raided five labs this year, up from one or two last year. He said the



Agents of the New Mexico State Police's clandestine lab team examine evidence of a methamphetamine lab taken from a Lovington home Monday night.

COURTESY PHOTO

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