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Liberal City Clerk Debbie Giskie, far left, swears in recently elected commissioners Dave Harrison, Dean Aragon, Ron Warren and Joe Denoyer at Tuesday's commission meeting. Harrison was later elected mayor, with Janet Willimon taking the position of vice mayor. L&T photo/Robert Pierce

Harrison chosen mayor on 3-2 vote, Denoyer declines vice-mayor nomination

By ROBERT PIERCE • Leader & Times Two new commissioners took their seats on the Liberal City Commission Tuesday, and two current commissioners took over leadership roles on the board.



Two board members, Dave Harrison and Joe Denoyer, were nominated for mayor. Harrison's nomination was seconded, but Denoyer's died from a lack of a second. The commission then took a vote on the Harrison nomination, and by a narrow 3-2 vote, Harrison was elected as the new mayor. Denoyer and new commissioner, and former mayor, Ron Warren voted against Harrison's nomination, while Harrison, along with current commissioner Janet Willimon and new commissioner Dean Aragon, voted in favor of the nomination. Though Denoyer received 200 more votes than Harrison and received the most votes out of eight candidates, the majority selected Harrison as mayor.

The board then looked to nominate a vice mayor. Willimon was the first nomination. Denoyer was also nominated for the position he had previously held, but he respectfully declined the nomination. The commission voted unanimously to make Willimon the new vice mayor.

The two new board leaders spoke about their new positions during the items from

commissioners portion of Tuesday's meeting. Willimon gave praise to outgoing commissioner Larry Koochel and outgoing mayor Tim Long, while welcoming Warren and Aragon to the new look board.

"It's a new chapter in this commission," Willimon said. "I will miss Larry and Tim. It's been an honor and a learning experience to serve with both of them. Welcome Ron. Welcome Dean. Welcome back Joe. We have served the last two years very unitized, and I feel confident that we will again. It is a new chapter, and we have a lot of work to do. There's a lot out there for us to be challenged in. Welcome men. Looking forward to two more years."

Harrison started by giving a nod to the election process that has taken place to get to this point in time.

"What you have seen over the last two-and-a-half months is one of the greatest things in America," he said. "You see 14 people file for positions. It comes down to eight. It comes down to four."

Likewise, Harrison commended the work of the past commission and looked to the future with the new board.

"This commission will work together just like the last ones have," he said. "This started in 2005. You saw the beginnings of the city starting to get back on its feet, a plan put in place. There is a plan in place. There is a strategic plan here. A lot of people think we have a sack full of money. We don't. We have a plan though, and we're proceeding along with executing this plan. There are some good things getting ready to happen. There'll be some more good things going on."

Harrison reminded Liberal residents that the community is a "wonderful place to live." "You need to take pride in your community," he said. "You need to believe in the place that you live and demonstrate that every day."

Harrison said it is easy to look to the progress of other area communities such as Dodge City and Garden City, but he assured people that those cities also have their share of problems.

"If you get to know those folks very well, they're envious of us in certain ways," he said. "The debt that we carry is almost insignificant compared to those guys. We're here. We're ready to do some things. I'm excited, and I'm excited to be a part of this commission. I look forward to the next four years."

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