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County commission rescinds previous vote to buy local, wants to support decisions of Community Corrections' board

By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

The Seward County Commission overturned a vote it had made at a previous meeting Monday with similar division amongst the board.

A vote of 3-2, this time with commissioner Randy Malin voting with the majority, gave Cimarron Basin Community Corrections director Mike Howell the OK to buy two new vehicles from an out-of-town vendor at a higher price.

On June 17, the board voted 3-2, with Malin on board, to purchase two used Dodge Avengers at a lower price from local dealer Chrysler Corner.

Monday's vote came following a long discussion, and the talking started with commission chair Ada Linenbroker explaining why the CBCC board, headed by county commissioner C.J. Wettstein, had voted unanimously and herself and Wettstein had voted at the June 17 meeting to purchase the Impalas from GSA.



“I talked to some other people on the board, and the reason that they had selected the Impala is last year, we bought an Impala,” Linenbroker said. “It was a used one that we bought from Stu Emmert’s that we paid \$17,100 for a 2011 model. The employees thought it was a good vehicle.”

Linenbroker said she had spoke with county counsel Dan Diepenbrock, who informed her that the board could legally change its decision about the vehicles.

Malin questioned Howell as to what could be done with the \$5,000 CBCC would have saved had commissioners stuck with the local bid.

“Could the \$5,000 be used for something else in Community Corrections?” Malin said.

Howell said the money used to buy the cars was from CBCC’s program fee budget.

“It wasn’t out of the main budget,” he said. “It would stay in that account. It could be used for something else in that budget.”

Commissioner Doug LaFreniere said he voted the way he did because of what he felt was most important – the integrity of the bidding process.

“I can’t imagine why local vendors would continue to place bids in, and we accept the higher bid for some fact,” he said. “The integrity of the bid is everything. It’s hard to justify accepting all your bids out of town and expect our local vendors to continue placing bids.”

Linenbroker said she supports local vendors, but she likewise wants to support the decision of the CBCC board, which represents 11 counties in Southwest Kansas.

“I don’t want to say I don’t support local bids because I do, and I also want to save as much money as I can, but I also don’t want to lose all those board people,” she said. “We have a really hard time finding people to be on our boards.”

LaFreniere said the bids placed on the cars was a rare occurrence of something from the CBCC board being questioned.

“I’ve got total faith in your board,” he said. “I just saw something that I disagree with. I have no desire to micro manage you at all.”

Wettstein said he felt the Impala, which was one model year newer than the Avenger, was the best buy, and he saw both sides of the argument.

“It’s just what different people think for the spending of money,” he said. “I thought it was worth the \$2,500 more to have a new vehicle.”

Malin made the motion to rescind the previous vote. The board voted 3-2, with Rice and LaFreniere voting against, to do so.

Rice and LaFreniere likewise voted against the next motion, also made by Malin, to buy the Impalas from GSA.

Malin puts prior vote on car purchases in reverse

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The two Impalas CBCC will purchase are 2014 models and will cost the agency about \$35,000, whereas the bid for the 2013 Avengers from Chrysler Corner would have only cost a total of a little less than \$31,000.

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