

By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

Monday, Seward County commissioners voted to table an item which would help keep the temperature in the server room of the county's information technology department at a proper level.

IT director Mark Rohlf said the room is located in the basement of the Seward County Administration Building, but this is not the location originally intended for the room.

Administrator April Warden said when the administration building was initially designed, the IT department was supposed to be on the second floor with Warden's department.



"Everything got changed around, and the reason I've been told is that the server room is not properly ventilated with the proper air control is because it wasn't originally designed for the IT department to be down there," she said.

Warden said she was not sure where the IT was supposed to be in the upstairs level, and she

did not know if the server room was designed properly when it was moved downstairs.

“They left a large part of the area up here unfinished for future growth, but not knowing what that future growth was going to be, they left the bare floors and walls,” she said. “We found out as we got into looking to moving the 4-H room up here, the electrical wiring wasn’t run, and there’d have to be duct work done and a lot of extra expense.”

Warden added she also did not know what the price would be to move the IT department to its intended location, nor did she know how cost effective it would be. Rohlf said it would be a huge project.

A bid of more than \$14,000 was received from a Wichita-based company, Knipp Equipment Inc., and commissioner Doug LaFreniere said with a price tag that high, the county should be taking further bids on the project.

“I think the proper thing to do is to bid it out,” he said.

Rohlf said the installation of a heating, venting and air conditioning unit in the server room would require some features not normally found in such a project.

“They have to exhaust that hot air,” he said. “That’s the hard part.”

Warden said Knipp sent an engineer to look at the ongoing project, and county officials have also talk to other companies such as Lynn’s Total Comfort, C & C Group and Glassmen’s. She said one of the companies said a separate unit would be needed for the project.

“The C & C Group and Glassmen’s stated they weren’t really interested in coming in to put in an individual unit, and it was going to be a very detailed project in trying to ventilate the hot air out of the basement,” she said.

Warden said Christian Knipp of Knipp Equipment was supposed to be on site this morning to discuss the project.

“The frustration for them is a lot of times when we have projects like this, we call out an expert to look at the things, but we need their help to draw up the bid,” Warden said. “They feel they travel out here from wherever. They draw it and give us the bid specs that we need to properly bid out the project. We don’t know what all that entails, and they’re not given a bid.”

LaFreniere said the Knipp bid itself was very vague.

“Nothing’s broken down,” he said. “Total price \$14,644.”

Warden agreed, saying the company should have been more specific on what it could provide.

“They arrived at that figure somewhere, so they need to break it down for us as far as the electrical cost,” she said.

Both LaFreniere and commissioner C.J. Wettstein looked into the cost of the Mitsubishi units that Knipp called for in the bid, and both saw a lower cost than what was on the bid.

“About \$3,400, \$4,000 is what they cost on these units,” Wettstein said.

Rohlf said, however, the hardware is not where the biggest portion of the cost is.

“I would be willing to bet there’s going to be some pretty significant labor involved in this installation because of the way they have to exhaust the hot air,” he said.

Warden said with a price tag of more than \$10,000 on the project, it is the county's policy to bid out the work.

"That is something based off the cost estimate that they've given us that it will need to be bid out," she said. "I think the most important thing is having the assistance to properly draw up the bid specifications so that it is done properly so that we're not paying what they're saying it's going to cost to have somebody else come in and say they can do it for \$1,000 and it not resolve the problem that we have."

Rohlf said letting local vendors bid on the project would be the best move.

"I'm always wanting to give local businesses the opportunity to do that," he said. "I'm more comfortable being able to call somebody down the street than across the country."

Warden suggested the commission table the item until its next meeting on Dec. 16 to do more research.

"If you could table the item until we've had an opportunity to meet with Christian tomorrow and talk to him about what it would take for him to put the bid specs together and if he could give us a little information on the unit itself, we'll do more research and bring it back on the 16th," she said.

The commission voted unanimously to table the item.