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District Three resident upset over manner in which Parks Board appointments made

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — A resident of District Three told the Choctaw Co. Commission on Monday that he is upset because he had expected to be appointed to the re-vamped Parks and Recreation Board.

Eddie Lewis said that Commissioner Clyde Dixon said that he would be appointed and that the appointment was changed by Probate Judge D'Wayne May.

May, however, said that he did not change anything.

"Once a recommendation is made, the Commission as a whole makes the appointments," May said. "One commissioner cannot appoint a member to any board, he can only make a recommendation."

Dixon said he did, in fact, submit Lewis' name for consideration.

"I did what I told you what I was going to do," he said.

"But you said you could appoint me," Lewis continued.

Commissioner Henry Lovette said that he doesn't recall seeing Lewis' name listed anywhere.

"I did talk to five people from District Four that had indicated to me they were interested in being on the board," he said. Lovette added that none of the former board members contacted him to say that they

wanted to remain on the board.

May said that Lewis' name was indeed among those considered.

"The Commission had the authority to appoint board members and that's what happened," May said.

"I'm just saying that my commissioner wouldn't stand up for what he thought was right," Lewis said.

May said the Commission tried to appoint people to the new board whom they thought would actually show up for meetings.

"Frankly, I didn't see that happening," he said. Several times, he said, there were not enough board members present for a quorum, so no business could be transacted.

"We also wanted to make sure that all citizens of the county were fairly represented, and when I looked at how the money has been expended, I find that there are parts of the county that have not received any funds," May said.

Lewis, who heads up the Southern Choctaw Independent Football League, said he told Dixon last fall that he was interested in serving on the board.

"So, this is a done deal?" Lewis asked.

"It was a done deal when the Commission approved it," May said.

Lewis accused May of telling him that he could take care of it if

Lewis gave him a little more time.

"I told you that if anyone resigned you would be considered," May countered.

"That's not what you told me, you didn't put that last part on it," Lewis said. "That's not what you said."

May said he was trying to be as open and honest as possible.

"I am not trying to hide anything," May said to Lewis. "It appears to me that you have a problem with Mr. Dixon."

Dixon made no additional comments except to say that he wanted to thank the five people from District 3 who did express an interest in serving on the board.

"Please note that the whole board decides what is done and leave it at that," he said.

Commissioner Dandy Brown said that he did not see the final list of nominees for the board until he arrived at the special meeting on April 24th.

"I am well pleased with my nominees, but I did not see the list until I got here that morning, so I don't know who all applied," Brown said. "Nobody discussed the list of names with me beforehand."

May said that the Commission has not yet received a set of new bylaws for the board. The matter will be an agenda item for the May 14th meeting.

Delinquent solid waste cases on the way to District Court

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — Environmentalist Bart Robinson told the County Commission Monday that he mailed about 600 letters in 2006 to people whose bills for the county's mandatory solid waste pickup service are delinquent.

As a result, he said, about 82 responded and were put on payment plans, but the vast majority of those who received the letters simply ignored them.

"If they don't show up, or fail to follow the payment plan, I fill out a deposition and send it to the Circuit Clerk's office," he said.

Last year, he sent 265 depositions to the Clerk's office, of which 138 were set for hearings in District Court.

More than 100, however, were never placed on the court docket.

"I have talked to (Circuit Clerk) Donna (Murphy) about that situation, and she made copies of those depositions and is trying to figure out what happened and get those cases set for court," Robinson said.

Robinson said some of those cases should have been added to the court docket as far back as January, 2006. But, he added, some of those persons may have died, moved from the county, or simply never received the letter or the summons to court. Some of the problems could have occurred during the transition of the office when former Clerk Don Gibson resigned and new Clerk Murphy took over, he said.

From Jan. 1 through April

19th, the county has collected approximately \$44,428 on the delinquent accounts.

"We're still cleaning up illegal dumps," Robinson said. "We took care of one at Shady Grove two weeks ago, and we're still finding new dumps every week."

In another matter relating to the county's household garbage program, attorney Lee McPhearson was instructed to get a definite answer as to whether or not Waste Management of Mississippi is interested in extending its current contract with the county for the pickup and disposal of residential solid waste.

According to the contract, the county and WM can agree to extend the contract for a certain period of time without having to go through a new round of bids.

Under state law, such agreements are allowed only if there is no increase in price or changes to the terms of the initial agreement.

McPhearson said he had had an earlier conversation with WM's Buford Clark, who indicated he did not think the company would be interested in such an agreement.

"He said he would check with his people but he seriously doubted it," McPhearson said. "That's been several weeks ago and I haven't heard anything more from him."

"We need to know that," May said. "Bids will have to go out by the middle of June and there has been some other interest shown."

The contract with WM expires on Sept. 30th.

In other matters at the May 7th meeting:

■ Treasurer Alice Carol Smith again warned commissioners that they need to keep a close eye on their own budgets as well as the overall budget of the county.

■ Judge D'Wayne May read a letter from Voncille Jackson, Director of the Dept. of Human Resources, advising the county of the resignation from the DHR's Board of Directors of long-time member Mary Evelyn Bird.

Mrs. Bird has served since July, 1993 and will be greatly missed, Jackson said.

On a motion by Ruffin and Brown, commissioners voted unanimously to appoint Orelle Ford Glover to the board to take Mrs. Bird's place on the seven-member board.

■ The former Country Convenience Store on Ala. 17 across from Mid-Star Timber's Satellite Fueling Station near Needham, is reopening under a new name and new ownership.

The board voted 3-0 — with one abstention — to approve the transfer of an existing retail, off-premises beer license from the former owners to Randall Mason and Melvin Chaffin, of Uncle Buddy's Country Convenience, LLC.

Commissioners Ruffin, Brown and Dixon voted for the motion. Commissioner Lovette abstained for ethical reasons because he said he works on a part time job in another, unrelated business with one of the owners.

"I just feel like that would be a conflict of interest," he said.

Hearing planned on whether to approve county's participation in Sales Tax Holiday

By Tommy Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — At the suggestion of Commissioner Henry Lovette, a public hearing will be held during the Choctaw Co. Commission's meeting on Monday, June 4th to gather input as to whether the non-incorporated areas of the county should participate in the state's Back to School Sales Tax Holiday in August.

Lovette said he would like to hear from parents and businesses alike as to what they want.

The county voted too late to take part in the state's first such event in 2006, and if the board decided to allow retail businesses to exempt certain "back to school" items from state sales tax for the weekend of Aug. 3-5, such a vote must be taken no later than July 3.

Under the state law, certain school supplies, computers, and clothes are exempted from sales tax to give cash-strapped parents a break on their children's school needs. Each incorporated town in the state must also decide whether or not to participate.

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