

According to 1994 deed, county owns gun range

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• Leader & Times

City and county commissioners worked together at a hastily-called Thursday evening special meeting for the shooting range. The media was not notified until Thursday afternoon.

According to city commissioner Joe Denoyer, who phoned in for the meeting, the reason for the two parties being together was to explore the options for the shooting range.

“One of the reasons we are here is to talk about options for the shooting range. I know the current shooting range is owned by the county with the easement to the city, and the county had talked, expressed interest in talking with the city about options for the future. Since I’ve opened these talks, and if there’s better options out there, let’s pursue them,” Denoyer said.

Denoyer also said the city has approved roughly \$52,000 to improve the existing range.



County administrator April Warden then explained that several phone calls had been made to the county commissioners recently due to the changes that the city had made to the shooting range. She said that various members from the Liberal Gun Club had questions regarding the insurance coverage.

“As you are all aware, on the current landfill property there is trash located under that facility and so there’s some concern from our landfill director of any improvements that are going to be made or any changes – we do have to have those approved through the state,” Warden said.

Warden then explained she had spoken to Al Shank who had said that the county has coverage for the gun range because it’s on county property. She said she was notified (Thursday) that while there is coverage on the land, “If there are public people using the gun range, the insurance does not cover that. It will cover it for law enforcement use, but if there was an incident that happened on the gun range due to public use, they will not write a policy for that, Warden said. “They said they could look for us a different policy, but EMC, which is who all our insurance is through, will not insure the gun range.”

A moment later she said she cannot answer for the city, only for the county. And that was that they wouldn’t cover it for public use. She said that last week, Shank had said that it was a good idea for the gun club to still carry insurance.

“Today, I was told it would not cover public use only law enforcement training,” Warden said.

After discussing this a little further, Denoyer said that double checking would be a good idea to be sure, and he asked if there were any other options, possibilities available due to the KDHE requirements on the existing facility. Perhaps another location, he said.

County commissioner Jim Rice replied that the “trap range used to be out there... north side of Tucker Road.” He said he thought it was a possibility it could be directly north of the shooting range.

Who owns shooting range?

Friday, 13 December 2013 12:41

County commissioner C.J. Wettstein said that the other option is where the trap range is now. But that if one is to disturb the soil, "I think anything we would do, we'd have to call KDHE."

He later added, "I think we can see where we have some problems. Putting a lot of money to where the gun range is. To me. it's not really a prime spot to leave a gun range anyway because of where it is, its proximity to the lanfill, trash under it. I'm probably more interested in what the new facility would be."

Mayor Dave Harrison then pointed out that it would be \$88,000 just for the dirt work. City manager Mark Hall added that the price for that would vary depending on the geography of the land, and he also said that National Beef wants to buy the land where the shooting range is now. They want to use it for parking, he said.

"National is checking it, they want it. That's why we're in a holding pattern," Hall said. "If National pays for the dirt work to relocate the range, the dirt work costs, they would pay for it. That's 22,466 cubic yards. They're talking to their contractors to see if they can improve their engineer's estimate. They haven't gotten back at us yet."

A moment later, Vice Mayor Janet Willimon said, "Why don't we just turn it over to the county? I'm not being sarcastic."

"Well, we need one for law enforcement," city commissioner Ron Warren said.

"We are going to need a shooting range anyway," county chair Ada Linenbroker said.

"We need to work together. If you guys have plans, don't scrap your plans," Wettstein said.

"What are you guys willing to do? Split the cost? There's lots of stuff to be determined," Harrison said.

There were numerous unanswered questions asked at the meeting.

“Are you more interested in us redoing the one that exists?” Linenbroker asked the gun club members in the audience.

“We don’t have a problem with the one we have now,” member Jim Stoddard replied.

Linenbroker later said that when she was an officer, she didn’t like using the existing shooting range. She said that she would be “all in” for a new one.

Hall said that with a new shooting range, it would be twice the size that it is now. It would be 15 pistol and 12 rifle lanes and they would be rented out like bowling alley lanes. The current shooting range only has eight pistol and eight rifle lanes.

He also said that people would be able to make reservations up to two days in advance. And that there would also be a trash policy. There would be a fine for those who left trash, and it would be determined by security cameras. Law enforcement and Seward County Community College would be able to make reservations of up to three months in advance for events.

And as far as a time frame, Hall explained that they were hoping to get to work during this bad weather on the shooting range while there’s not many people attending it. He noted that even the college hasn’t been using it since a week ago.

The county commission will talk about the shooting range again at its next meeting, and then they will let the city know what they decide.

Warden is to check what KDHE allows and Hall is awaiting what National Beef decides before moving forward with plans.

“The best laid out plans may be closed if KDHE syas we can’t do it,” Wettstein said.

EDITOR’S NOTE: The Leader & Times had obtained a copy of the Sept. 26. 1994, deed that transferred the tract of land the gun range is sitting on from the City of Liberal to Seward County with a stipulation the city would only have easement rights to the range. That copy was faxed to the city’s counselor Monday and the county’s counselor on Tuesday.