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By ROBERT PIERCE

- Leader & Times

With the retirement of longtime supervisor Mike Tabor last October, Seward County's landfill was in need of a new department head.

Soon after Tabor's retirement, Brock Theiner became the interim director, and following an executive session at a recent county commission meeting, he was named the permanent supervisor.

Theiner has worked for the landfill for about 14 years in many capacities, one of which was running the waste hauling program for the facility.

Tabor had created one of the top landfills in Kansas, and Theiner said he wants to continue moving the facility forward.

“Take this thing as far into the future as I can,” he said. “Try to implement any and every new way of waste reduction, and implement any new ways of doing things to preserve the life of what we got going here.”

Theiner said the landfill has some projects in progress at the moment.

“Right now, we have finishing up some old phases of our current cell and opening some new phases of our trash cell,” he said. “We are opening up an old cell that has been closed. We are injecting liquids into it to produce more methane gas production with hopes of shrinking it by decomposition so we can open it back up and put some more trash in it.”

The landfill sells its methane gas to neighboring National Beef, and Theiner said National’s paunch is also processed at the landfill for the facility’s composting operation.

Theiner recently traveled to Topeka to testify against Senate Bill No. 293, a bill that would limit the service area of a landfill.

“It was proposed by the private industry to try to limit government to within their boundaries of competing in the private sector of waste hauling,” he said.

More than a majority of legislators voted against SB 293, so for now, Seward County can continue to serve counties and cities outside county boundaries.

“It would’ve limited to Seward County to Seward County’s boundaries,” Theiner said. “They would not have been able to go outside of Seward County’s boundaries.”

Theiner added passing SB 293 would have likewise meant harm to the regional landfill.

“When they proposed the new regs in the '90s for a regional Subtitle D landfill, they were requiring all landfills to become lined,” he said. “In order to do that and to fund that, you had to get a volume of trash for that.”

Theiner said this is when the idea of a regionalized landfill came about.

“There’s also two state statutes saying in a sense, that counties have to have a proposed plan that they submit to the state on how they are going to deal with the waste in the area,” he said.

In Kansas, Seward County’s landfill services Meade, Haskell, Grant and Stevens counties. The facility also provides services to three Oklahoma counties – Texas, Cimarron and Beaver – as well as some in the state of Texas.

After a long time of not raising its gate prices, the landfill, a couple of years ago, raised the public gate rate. Theiner said, however, city rates have yet to be increased.

“We are currently one of the lowest gate rates in the state of Kansas,” he said.

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