

Liens claim Warren's construction company owes J-A-G \$42,783 for work done on Self-Help Housing homes

By LARRY PHILLIPS

• Leader & Times

Liberal City Commissioner Ron Warren owes J-A-G Construction a total of \$42,783 for "labor and materials," according to claims by J-A-G in copies of five mechanics' liens obtained by the L&T that have been filed with the Seward County Clerk of District Court.

The bills included with the liens look to be mainly charges for pouring concrete at four homes in the 700 block of South Jordan and one in the 800 block of South Jordan.



The five homes were built through the city's Self-Help Housing program, and the liens filed are not only against Ron Warren and Ron Warren Construction Inc., but also include Don Warren and the new owners of each of the homes. The City of Liberal, however, is not listed in the liens.

In the Self-Help Housing program, qualified home purchasers are given low interest loans and must put in a suitable amount of hours helping to build the homes known commonly as “sweat equity.” The role of the City Housing Department is to facilitate the grant but never has any ownership stake in the home.

Copies of the bills provided to the court by J-A-G show charges from May 21, 2013. through Dec. 2, 2013, were not paid by Warren and there were a total of 77 bills included with the liens.

The city commission conducted a special meeting last Wednesday to discuss issues with the city’s housing program and staff, though actual details of the discussion were conducted in an “executive session.”

The commission came out of the third “executive session” Wednesday and voted 4-0 to approve exploratory “procedures necessary for ouster proceedings against commissioner Ron Warren,” as noted in the minutes released by the city, however, no reason for exploring ousting was shared. Warren abstained from voting and left the meeting prior to the vote in accordance with the newly adopted ethics code.

The commission met in private claiming “the purpose of consultation with an attorney for the body or agency which would be deemed privileged in the attorney-client relationship.”

According to the Kansas Open Meetings Act, or KOMA, a publicly elected board can have an executive session with its attorney to discuss information “deemed privileged in the attorney-client relationship.” KOMA also states that executive sessions can discuss “non-elected personnel.” Warren, however, is elected, and any discussions involving the actions or activities of elected personnel are to be conducted in open session.

The commission will be meeting at 6:30 this evening, but this issue is not listed in the formal agenda, though the agenda can be amended by a majority.

