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By ROBERT PIERCE • Daily Leader

Joyce Hibler has been a Seward County Commissioner for six years, and after serving for that period of time, she believes it was time to do her responsibility.

The new chairman of the board of county commissioners is following in some big footsteps, particularly those of former chairs Shannon Francis and Patsy Boles.

“We’ve had some really good chairmen in the last 20 years in Seward County,” she said. “I hope I do as good a job. I try to do the best I can.”

Hibler feels the children of the community are its future, and an investment needs to be made in youth.

“One of the things I’d like to see is 4-H – it’s a great program, and I’d like to see us work with K-State Extension and somehow bridge the gap between times gone by and technology today and see the interests of kids today intertwined with 4-H projects,” she said. “This would involve cooperation between the county and the K-State Extension. I think that would be helpful for the future of our children.”

Hibler said the county likewise needs to support the crime task force in order to help reduce the amount of crime in Seward County.

“I would like to support the efforts of Gena Burnett and Juvenile Justice with their prevention programs for the youth in our community,” she said.

Hibler would also like to continue to provide customer service to the citizens of Seward County.

“Continuing to evaluate the cost of goods and services,” she added.

“With some things, it’s all out of our hands, but we still want to have good service.”

Hibler said in her first campaign in the early part of this decade, one of her goals was to establish a Women, Infants and Children program at the Seward County Health Department.

“We have an awesome WIC program,” she said. “We have from 1,300 to 1,500 clients.”

Some of the other projects started in Hibler’s time on the commission have been the county’s step and grade system, a council of governments and the recent completion of a joint city/county fire station.

Another major accomplishment during Hibler’s time on the commission is the construction of the county’s new administration building.

Beginning Monday, county officials will focus on the Capital Improvement Plan, and Hibler believes crime also needs to be a focus of the current commission.

The chairman feels the biggest current hurdle will be waiting to see what happens in Topeka and in Washington, D.C., as a new president takes office.

“How the money’s going to be coming down the pike,” she said. “This year, I think our biggest is we’re going to have to tighten our belt.”

Today, we don't know what's going to happen. We don't know what programs are going to be cut."

Hibler emphasized Seward County is not hurting, and it is not in financial debt.

"A commissioner's responsibility is baby sitting with the county's money," she said. "We're here to see that the money is spent right, on the right programs and our roads are taken care of. I think this year, we're going to have to really watch it. We could have hard times yet to come if we don't."

Hibler said she is unsure of how the current state of the nation's economy will affect Seward County.

"I don't know if they'll be taking money away from grants," she said.

"The health department's biggest asset is grants that they get from the state of Kansas. If they cut those, that would hurt."

Much of the county's road and bridge department is financed through the state, and Hibler said that department would likewise be hit by cuts in state money.

Seward County's newest commission chair said she has been educated by those who came before her.

"I learned from all the past chairmans," she said. "I've been with the county for 20 years, so I've been able to watch them and attend the meetings. I feel like I've learned something from everyone of them."

Hibler said she is looking forward to her time as chairman of the commission.

“I love Seward County,” she said. “I have Seward County in my heart, and I want to do the very best.”

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