

Highway Superintendent's salary increased \$2,000 by Scott County Councilmen

Written by Marty Randall

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Scott County Highway Superintendent Todd Carr got an early Christmas present from the Scott County Council during the Council's meeting on December 15.

The Council voted 5-2 to increase Carr's salary by \$2,000 per year because Carr has resumed responsibility for all on-call situations.

As was explained at the Council's November meeting, the highway superintendent did not have that responsibility; rather, the county was paying two Highway Department workers extra money for seven hours of overtime each week for carrying cell phones and/or pagers that alerted them to after-hours situations requiring the help of the department, such as flooded roads, downed trees or the like. That policy, reportedly put in place in the 1990s, cost the county around \$18,000 a year because not only did the workers get extra pay per week but they were also guaranteed a minimum of two hours when call-outs occurred. They were also paid for each hour that they worked over that minimum amount.

County Commissioner Larry Blevins had requested a \$5,000 increase in salary at the Council's November meeting for Carr since the current superintendent was resuming all on-call responsibility. The matter was finally tabled after a lengthy discussion so that information from counties with similar levels of populations could be obtained.

The issue was the first item on the Council's December agenda. Council member Raymond Jones and Dennis Dunlap of HR Consulting Group brought information gathered from other counties. Dunlap, who is rewriting the county employees' handbook and working with the Council on salary matters and job descriptions, brought information from surrounding counties. Jones stuck with counties of a similar size.

Jones' information was interesting. Ten counties with populations of from 20,000 to 25,000 pay an average close to \$39,000 per year to the person who has the head job at their county highway departments. Scott County pays a little over \$45,000. Jones noted that all of those counties have more road miles and more bridges. There is more personnel at those departments to supervise as well, he pointed out.

"Also, Scott County pays more than counties with populations of from 25,000 to 30,000. Much as I'd like to, I really can't support this (increase in pay)," Jones told his fellow Councilmen.

Council President Tommy Herald asked for each member to add comments if they wished on the issue.

Pat Bridgewater noted that Carr is a highway superintendent, not a supervisor, and some of the counties used by Jones for comparison purposes had supervisors. Marvin Richey said the Council could not determine how many times other counties' superintendents were called out on emergency matters.

Mike Zollman said he felt the issue was muddled because of the supervisor/superintendent titles being nearly interchangeable. "We say he is a superintendent. Some counties have one or the other and also employ an engineer," he stated, adding that he was going to support the motion to increase Carr's salary.

Kelley Robbins said, "I traveled around this county a lot, and I've seen that our roads look better (under Carr's supervision)."

Dunlap tried to help the Council clarify the matter by explaining that on-call time limits the individual's actions. "On-call is totally restrictive. Just because they're carrying a cell phone or a pager doesn't mean they are restricted in what they can do," he said.

Carr said he assumed the on-call responsibilities six weeks ago. "I worked every bit of overtime that (the two men assigned under the old system) did. Whatever you decide, I will

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continue to do my job and save the county as much (money) as I can," he promised.

As the time for voting on the matter drew near, Councilman Donnie Richie noted that giving Carr the \$2,000 increase means that the county will save \$16,000 per year, not \$18,000.

Herald said he had always considered Carr a superintendent, not a supervisor. "You've done an excellent job, and I know our roads are in better shape. I believe in rewarding people for a job well done. If you're going to do extra work, I'd rather pay you more, so I support the motion," Herald told him. A superintendent, related Dunlap, does not normally get overtime. He simply works the number of hours the job requires.

In the end, Jones and Richie cast the "no" votes. The remaining Councilmen voted to give him the increase.