

County plans to take a look at duties of animal control officer in 2013

Written by George Browning

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Commissioner Dave Brown did something that is usually reserved for executive session at the group's regular meeting Dec. 4 – he discussed a personal matter.

Brown said he brought the subject of the position of Washington County Animal Control Officer up at the meeting because he wanted to make the community and recently elected commissioner Phillip Marshall aware of what he thinks are major issues.

Brown said there is a dilemma at the fairgrounds because the person who works there, Randy Lee, has more than one job description.

"It's really hard to separate all the things he does," Brown said. "If he did three or four things at the fair grounds only it'd be a lot easier, then we could work out a job description and be OK with it. When you are the fairgrounds doing all these different jobs and then you have animal control on top of that, then it is more difficult. We have to come up with some way, make some type of decision about that position."

Brown said he didn't want the commissioners to make a decision at the Dec. 4 meeting.

"This is something we need to look at – animal control, taking care of the fairgrounds – and there needs to be job descriptions. I have asked Randy, along with Sheriff (Claude) Combs to give us a monthly listing of what his jobs are.

"The fairground thing I've got already and that won't be a problem, but the second thing is animal control and that's another issue entirely."

Brown pointed out a few recent jobs Lee has been called to do in the way of animal control.

"I was shocked to say the least," Brown said. "I think we are going to have to sit down with the Sheriff and Randy and define just what animal control means in Washington County."

Brown said on Nov. 12 Lee was called out because there were cows in the middle of Shorts Corner Road.

"Wouldn't that fall on the property owner?" Brown asked. "Why is animal control out doing things like that? I don't know if we are responsible for things like that."

Another instance Brown sighted was when Lee was called to move a snake out of the road.

"That's just not jiving with me," Brown said. "Anytime animal control is called out, that is county time, county gas, county wear-and-tear on vehicles. It's a big expense and some of these things needs to be seriously looked at. If we are wasting money doing some of this stuff it's ridiculous."

Brown said the plan is to set up a meeting with Combs and Lee to come up with a plan. Brown said there have been meetings with Salem Mayor David Bower to discuss options.

He said the plan is to meet with the Commissioners' attorney Tom Scifres to discuss the legal issues and responsibility of the county regarding animal control.

"If somebody's cow is in the road, wouldn't it be the sheriff's responsibility to contact the property owner to get it out of the road quickly?" Brown asked. "Does animal control need to be called out for that? There are things like that, that we need to look at."

The yearly budget for fuel for animal control is \$3,500 a year, but Lee uses approximately \$500 a month, which eats up the annual budget in just about seven months.