

## Council faces decision on hiring freeze

Written by George Browning  
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When the Washington County Council met in December they voted to issue a hiring freeze on any position that would come open.

Now a little over a month out from making that decision, the council must decide if they want to replace Soil and Water Conservation District Manager Sandy Hortenberry.

Hortenberry is planning to retire some time around the end of January. She and board member Jim Brown and Tom Godfrey were at the council's meeting Jan. 7.

"Over the past few years I've been serving on the board and we've had some thoughts and considerations about what we are going to do as Sandy approaches retirement," Brown said. "Her concern has been and is today, what will happen when she does retire? She is willing to do whatever to help a new person step in to that position."

Brown said he feels this is an important part of our community and serves a population of agriculture and urban folks in the way of being involved in conserving and preserving our natural resources – soil, water and air.

"The thoughts are that we as a board exactly what to do if that position wasn't filled," Brown said. "Even though I've been on the board for several years I am still not fully aware of everything Sandy does."

Hortenberry, who has served for more than 20 years, went over a list of the duties she performs as well as grants that has been obtained through the Soil and Water Conservation District.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed working where I am at and I'd really like to see this position continue," Hortenberry said.

Tom

"If this position isn't filled I think the success and the things and benefits the county has received would be a loss," he said. "If the success we've had in the past is to continue, we really need to fill the position."

Council President David Hoar said this is one of those positions that the council must decide on due to the hiring freeze.

"We know as we go through the county government, we have a few positions where there is only one person," he said. "This is one of those unique positions where there is only one person."

Brown said the Soil and Water Conservation District board is wanting guidance from the council as to whether or not they should begin a search for Hortenberry's replacement.

Hoar said by the council's February meeting a decision should be made so the SWCD board can know how they should proceed.

"We are waiting for our budget to come back to see what our actual money is," Hoar said. "We are in a transitional period here. I don't know if we can say that the position is going to be available or not. I think there is going to be a discussion. I wanted these guys to come and introduce this and share the need for the position."

The council's next meeting will be Monday, Feb. 4 at 9:30 a.m. at the Washington County Government Building.