

Deputy wage discussions continue

(KLZA)-- Richardson County sheriff's deputies have made it clear they want their wages increased.

For several months Sheriff Don Pounds and members of the Sheriff's Department have expressed their belief that low wages and benefits are keeping good candidates from applying for open deputy sheriff positions and is also a reason some others have left the department for other opportunities.

Tuesday Sheriff Pounds, Deputy Lyle McMann and Deputy Clinton Stonebarger expressed their belief that another officer would be resigning if commissioners did not agree the wages will be increased with the start of the new fiscal year on September 1.

It has been documented the Sheriff's Department is short on deputies and McMann told Commissioners Terry Frank and John Caverzagie that with limited personnel working at night it is a dangerous situation.

McMann suggested that a deputy, new to the Sheriff's Department is paid less than what statute requires. He also suggested it's not fair that deputies for elected officials in the courthouse, are better paid than the deputy sheriffs. He said the deputies are out nights, weekends and holiday's risking their lives while the courthouse personnel work only weekdays.

Audience member and former Richardson County Commissioner Gayle Swisegood suggested the Board ask County Attorney Doug Merz about the statutes concerning the wages.

Swisegood also pointed out that elected officials deputies in the courthouse are chief deputies and by statute, have the responsibility of the office in the absence of the office holder. He pointed out that by statute, there should be one chief deputy Sheriff and despite the other officers being called deputies, they are not responsible for a specific office in the absence of the sheriff. He said the comparison is akin to comparing apples and oranges.

Earlier this spring, a wage proposal was presented to the Board by Deputies Jon Kirkendall and Jeff Frederick. Tuesday the Commissioners offered a counter proposal that would increase the pay for the deputy sheriff's by their customary annual two-percent increase plus an additional \$3 per hour beginning in September.

There was also a suggestion from the law enforcement contingent that a step-plan

for the officers be added to the proposal as well.

Commissioners took no action during the Tuesday meeting concerning wage increases for the deputies.

Many Signals Communications