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Board approves hiring county administrator

By Debbie Foss
Times Staff

After years of rejecting the idea, Trempealeau County board members unanimously voted to hire someone to oversee the operations of county government.

The vote Monday came

after members of a special committee and representatives of the Wisconsin Counties Association presented the case for hiring a county administrator who would also assume the role of director of human resources.

Despite committee mem-

bers as recently as last week expressing just "cautious optimism" the proposal would pass, only one board member raised concerns about the position and eventually voted in favor.

"The last time we voted on this question there were

only four votes for," Supervisor Richard Sacia said. "You guys have done a good job."

The proposal adopted by the board includes spending up to \$20,000 with a consulting group to craft a job description, help with recruiting candidates and work

with a new county committee to integrate the new role into the county's structure. A tentative schedule predicts the administrator could begin work in February 2024.

"We didn't find any negatives for an administrator except cost," said Supervisor Dawn Waldera who was a member of the special study committee. "And we think an administrator will be able to find efficiencies and savings that will cover their costs."

In the study group's presentation, they noted the median salary statewide for an administrator is \$158,750. The median wage Trempealeau County pays a personnel director is \$96,720. The committee argued that the new cost would then be just \$62,030, and that it's possible no new support staff would be required.

In conjunction with forming the study group in January, the board appointed corporation counsel Rick Niemeier to serve as county coordinator and head of human resources. While county coordinators have some managerial authority, they cannot discipline department heads and generally have fewer duties than an administrator.

Supervisor Emery Palmer said he was reluctant to back the hiring until he had a clearer understanding of how an administrator, the county board and various county department-specific oversight committees would interact.

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Air at the Fair

Above: One of the bareback riders luckily got out of the way before the horse he was riding landed in the first official event of the rodeo at the Trempealeau County Fair on Thursday night.

Right: Carter Grotjahn of Arcadia held during the mutton bustin' event. See more photographs from this year's fair on Pages 12 and 13.

(Times photographs by Andrew Dannehy)



Galesville attorney fees create budget overage

By Benjamin Pierce
Times Staff

The Galesville city council will need to amend its annual budget after a continuous council disagreement has led the city to spend more than budgeted on legal fees.

The council last Thursday unanimously approved paying \$5,322 to its law firm, Arndt, Buswell & Thorn SC.

Part of that bill comes from attorney Dan Arndt's work following council member Tory-Kale Schulz's restraining order against Mayor Vince Howe as well as Howe's request to remove Schulz from the council.

Paying for the overage will re-

quire money to be moved from the city's general fund, an action that will need to be approved by the council at a further meeting since that money puts the city over budget for legal expenses.

Council gets answers during finance committee meeting

A number of council questions were answered during the city finance committee meeting, which preceded Thursday's full council meeting.

Schulz said during committee discourse that legal documents refer to Howe as "Mr. Howe" and not as "Mayor Howe", and while he understands some of the bill pertains to city business,

he asked whether it should be audited to see if all fees — especially preliminary ones — should be considered the city's responsibility.

"When I look at the fees of our city attorney, the whole front page to the amount of \$803 came before any of this was even served. If this was truly from a taxpaying citizen, would they be going to Mr. Arndt to talk about all of these things on here and would the city then be liable to pay for Mr. Arndt's services," Schulz asked.

Councilor Jean Wallner said she wishes the council would have been consulted about the attorney costs before services were received, but

that isn't often how the legal system works, Arndt said.

Attorneys have "never" needed preauthorization for attorney fees, Arndt said, but he told the committee that he respects the city budget and what is allotted for legal fees.

"I'm cognizant of the city of Galesville budget. I know that and I respect that, but sometimes things — for lack of a better term — blow up and we have to provide the service," Arndt said.

Fellow council member Tom Thatcher spoke in favor of the city paying the bill because he sees the issue as city related.

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