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Franklin County rescinds order for sheriff to reimburse county, shoes returned

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Abstract

Franklin County commissioners voted Tuesday to rescind an order to have Sheriff Scott Nichols Sr. reimburse the county \$170.37 for a mailing he sent to residents of the county's unorganized territory.

Commissioners took issue with Nichols on Dec. 20 for sending the mailing and buying four pairs of nonslip shoes, one pair each for the full-time jail cook supervisor and cook, and two part-time cooks, all nonunion employees.

Nichols told commissioners the shoes were returned to the company. The shoes cost \$272.50 and were charged to the county's sole credit card and came out of the jail uniform account. Nichols has authority to use the card.

Full Text

FARMINGTON -- Franklin County commissioners voted Tuesday to rescind an order to have Sheriff Scott Nichols Sr. reimburse the county \$170.37 for a mailing he sent to residents of the county's unorganized territory.

Commissioners took issue with Nichols on Dec. 20 for sending the mailing and buying four pairs of nonslip shoes, one pair each for the full-time jail cook supervisor and cook, and two part-time cooks, all nonunion employees.

The total cost requested for reimbursement was \$442.87.

Nichols told commissioners the shoes were returned to the company. The shoes cost \$272.50 and were charged to the county's sole credit card and came out of the jail uniform account. Nichols has authority to use the card.

He said they were bought for the cooks to prevent falls and injuries.

New Commissioner Terry Brann of Wilton said that if Nichols has any questions about buying unique items such as the shoes to bring it to the county office.

Treasurer Pam Prodan said from her perspective, she would like to have requests and questions be made by the department heads. One pair of shoes was for the sheriff's wife, who is cook supervisor.

"I am in charge of the whole operation," Nichols said. The department head came to him and asked for the shoes to be ordered, he said.

Nichols said he was not campaigning for a new patrol position dedicated to the unorganized territory when he sent a letter to the residents. He had requested \$100,000 in the proposed \$1 million unorganized territory budget for start-up costs for a new deputy and a cruiser.

The letter also explained his reasoning behind the proposal, including that it would reduce response time to calls in remote locations and provide proactive patrol in areas where people live seasonally.

The letter basically explained what he was proposing, how the position would be paid for and when the public hearing on the proposed budget was going to be, Nichols said.

"I wasn't campaigning for the position, just trying to get the information out to the public," he said.

Normally, he would do a public service announcement on a local radio station, or get the information out through the media or put it on the county's website or sheriff's Facebook page, he said.

But some people in the remote area do not get radio, newspapers or internet service, he said.

He wanted to make sure everybody had the opportunity to know what was going on and attend the hearing or give him feedback on his proposal, Nichols said.

County Clerk Julie Magoon said Nichols ran the letter by her before he sent it out to make sure it was accurate.

Commissioner Charles Webster of Farmington, the new chairman of the commission, said he wished that commissioners had been asked about this, as he did not feel it was something tax dollars should pay for.

He was OK with a deputy delivering the letters and Nichols spending the \$170 this time, he said.

"I don't think you did it in malice," Webster said.