

Board of Health bids farewell to two long-term members

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Staff from the Northeast Colorado Health Department, as well as board of health members, gathered during the Dec. 17 meeting to bid farewell to fellow board members Chuck Powell and Gene Meisner.

Powell, a Sedgwick County Commissioner, is not only leaving the board of health after 19 years of service, but also hanging up his hat as a commissioner—a post he has held since 1988.

Meisner, who served all of his eight years as a Logan County Commissioner on the board of health, was term-limited out of office this year. Neither Meisner's nor Powell's replacements on the board of health have been officially named, but their seats are expected to be filled when the new boards of county commissioners reorganize after the first of the year.

NCHD hosted a luncheon in honor of both men, and each was presented with an award by John Crosthwait, NCHD's district public health administrator, in recognition of their service to public health and the citizens of northeast Colorado.

Julie McCaleb, NCHD's environmental health director informed the board that as a part of a proposed fee bill, the state health department is proposing a 50 percent reduction in funding of the Housed Commercial Swine Feeding Operations (HCSFO) contract for the upcoming fiscal year due to budget cuts at the state level.

As a part of that cut, NCHD will only be expected to carry out one inspection per year, rather than the two inspections they currently do per facility, but according to McCaleb, that will only increase problems in the future.

"We have serious concerns about this cut because, even though the number of required inspections is decreasing, our work associated with the HCSFO facilities, particularly in dealing with odor complaints, will then most likely raise," said McCaleb. "We're experiencing our own funding crunch at the local level and this could hamper our ability to protect the public's health because we don't have the money or the manpower to do this either."

Board members agreed with McCaleb and asked NCHD to draft a letter to the state's Water Quality Control division indicating their concerns with the new fee bill and the impact it could have in rural Colorado.

□ In other business the board:

- approved the financial statements for November;
- voted to contract with Litjohn, Kaufman and Peterson to perform the 2008 audit;
- approved an employee compensation proposal for 2008, allowing up to two and one-half percent to be awarded as a one-time bonus, based on a proportion of each employee's salary. The bonus is a merit award based on employee performance.