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Former DA Wheable hired as county manager

Posted by [Kay Lynn Roberts-McMurray](#) | Dec 3, 2021

The White Pine County Commission held a special meeting last week to select a candidate for the White Pine County Manager position.

The county manager position is new and was created to the Chief Administrative Officer responsible for Executive Administrative and Human Resource duties of government operations. The salary range is \$115,000-\$140,498 plus competitive benefit package.

The qualifications were a minimum of a bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration, human resources or a closely related field, eight years of executive experience or an equivalent combination of education, training and experience.

Fifty eight candidates applied, and it was whittled down to two, Michael A. Wheable, former White Pine County District Attorney, and Edward O. Dickie III. It was decided to interview the candidates in an alphabetical fashion, so Dickie was up first. Fourteen questions were asked to both candidates and a 15 minute presentation was required by each candidate, with the same topic, broadband.

Alan Kalt, chief financial officer for POOL/PACT, administered the interview questions.

Dickie introduced himself to the commission. "I have been involved in local government for quite a while, I've been manager for a few counties." He is the current manager for Dewey-Humboldt in Arizona.

Dickie graduated from Utah State University with a BS in geography and earth resources and a MPA from the University of Nebraska. He has more than 20 years working in local government with 12.5 years as a town manager and two years as an assistant to the town manager. He became a credentialed manager with the International City Manager Association in 2012. The contract with Dewey-Humboldt is a one-year contract.

When asked what made White Pine County attractive to him, Dickie replied, "First and foremost I love small towns, and I love rurals, I like the small town atmosphere. I love how people get involved. This is a great community and then I found out that this is the first county manager position—that's very desirable, to be able to come in and help this position grow."

Wheable was up next, and explained his work experience briefly noting that he is currently employed with SWITCH, as litigation counsel.

Wheable served this county for 10 years, managing human resources, employment law issues and executed the will of the commission.

He holds a B.S. and Juris Doctorate Degree, successfully litigated over thousands of cases including three murders, helped found the Boys & Girls Club in Ely, served on the County Audit Board and is currently serving on the hospital board.

Kalt posed the question to Wheable, why was White Pine attractive to him?

"This is a softball question, I have a daughter in high school, not really any traffic, great quality of

living, amazing community that can't be matched. You have the correct balance where you are close enough to Salt Lake, Reno and Las Vegas—I am currently in a one-year position with my employer, and it has come to an end, as of February 1, 2022.”

When asked why he stepped down, Wheable had several explanations, noting that he felt that after six years, the county would benefit by having a new District Attorney.

“This is a new position, it needs to be filled, the commission having to manage from that table has not been the best position. My job is to build this position up, make sure it works,” Wheable said.

Each interview lasted an hour each, and it appeared evident from the commissioner's comments that they were going to have to make a difficult decision on who to select for the position.

After a short break, the commission gave their input on both candidates. Commissioner Laurie Carson noted she didn't want to make the decision, “I would be happy with either one, I feel like, qualification wise and with background in public administration I feel like one candidate is stronger, but lacking in another that I value. Both are fully capable. “

Commissioner Shane Bybee felt differently, “I feel very fortunate, I think we have two amazing, and well-qualified candidates, I lean to one really, based on the fact that we are going to be spending a lot of money for a position that we haven't had before and I think what Mike represents with his knowledge of looking from the inside out, he knows already where our glaring deficiencies are, what needs to be done by a County Manager, he has the relationships developed, he knows where we are lacking, he can hit the ground running day one in building this program. ... I think that Mr. Dickie has the ability to build the same program and execute the program, but it could take him six months because he doesn't have the established relationships.”

Commissioner Ian Bullis explained his decision, “What makes this hard, well, I'm the kind of person that doesn't make decisions off what people think anyway—I don't care, but it is frustrating that we are up against an obnoxious perception here that there are two wonderfully qualified candidates, but it almost feels like I have to work harder to give one candidate any credibility because people will think favoritism is occurring ... Mr. Dickie has a tremendous amount of experience in this specific job, Wheable did not, but Wheable made a valid point that I hadn't considered, that is, when the H.R. the guy didn't have the answer, he was the one helping. He may not have the resume in experience but behind the scenes obviously has the knowledge of the law, it is so hard for me, you could flip a coin.”

Vice Chairman Travis Godon said, “I think whatever everyone else said, is almost to a T,. There is good and bad to both, Mike has the good old boy thing hanging over his head ... and I don't like that, I think either or could be great, they both bring different things to the table, both great gentleman, I think I have to give it, just in my analysis to Mike, just looking at the environment we are in, it's going to take someone with some grit, and has that backbone to deal with the things we have been dealing with these past few years.” Chairman of the Commission Richard Howe spoke last, giving his input on the two candidates. “I think the movement of different jobs, hitting the ground running and being able to have background of what we have going for us, there is one candidate, the savings, we started by combining the H.R. position with this one will save us \$100,000. I know Mike and I have had our differences but it's water under the bridge, and Mr. Dickie could come in and work this position, but right now, not needing to have a training type period, I think we need to have someone with more experience in the community, I'm speaking of White Pine county, not just the entire state.”

Motion was made by Godon, second made by Bybee, and was approved unanimously. Wheable will start in February after his contract with SWITCH has ended.